



‘Why are reports on BRS govt’s graft kept secret?’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP spokesperson NV Subhash asked why inquiry reports on various corruption cases of the BRS government were kept secret and not put in the public domain.

In a release here on Friday, Subhash said that the Congress has ordered an inquiry into the corruption charges against the BRS government.



and the National Dam Safety Authority have submitted reports on the Kaleshwaram

Project, Subhash asked why these reports are not being made public. He suspected a tacit understanding between the Congress and the BRS regarding this.

Referring to statements made by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy that they would not tolerate corruption, the

BJP leader asked are they really committed to fighting corruption or are they compromising with those who are responsible for corruption by the BRS government.

He also wanted to know whether the government is going to fix responsibility for the corruption by the BRS government on officials or the political bosses who ordered the officials.

TDP complains to poll panel about ‘unauthorised tapping’ of Lokesh’s phone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Rajya Sabha MP Kanakamedala Ravindra Kumar on Friday complained to the chief election commissioner (CEC) that the ruling YSRCP government in Andhra Pradesh was allegedly tapping the phone of TDP’s national general secretary Nara Lokesh using the Pegasus software.

Apple has issued a security alert to Nara Lokesh. He had received a similar alert in March as well, he said in a letter written to the CEC.

Kumar said “some police officers at the instance of the state government” are allegedly engaged in “unauthorised phone tapping”. He alleged the state’s Director General of Police Rajendranath Reddy and Intelligence Chief PSR Anjaneyulu have become “lackeys of the YSRCP and are resorting to unethical and unlawful acts to jeopardise the prospects of the NDA alliance partners in the ensuing elections...”

MRPS chief to launch ‘Go back Congress’ campaign

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MRPS founder president Manda Krishna Madiga has stated that the MRPS will launch an election campaign in Lok Sabha with a slogan ‘Go Back Congress’ soon.

While speaking to the media on Friday, Krishna Madiga expressed anger over the Congress for not allocating tickets to the Madiga community in Lok Sabha elections. He alleged that the Congress party is suppressing the Madiga leaders in Telangana. He questioned the TPCC president and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to tell why the latter is not giving appointment to



senior leader Mothkupalli Narsimulu. Why did the government not invite Health Minister Damodaram Rajanarsimha for the inauguration of Babu Jaggi Ram building? Why did the Congress party not provide representation to the Madiga

community in the Lok Sabha elections?, Krishna Madiga questioned.

He found fault with the Congress party for not allocating a single seat to Madigas in LS polls and questioned the Congress to tell why it allocated six seats to Reddys.

Manda Krishna said that he will reveal the details of the MRPS election campaign on April 16 or 17 and give time to the Congress to respond to their questions. If not, the MRPS will launch the ‘Go Back Congress’ campaign, he said, giving a call to the Madiga community not to allow the Congress leaders into the Madiga localities.

Kavitha collected funds via Jagruthi from Sharath: CBI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Delhi court on Friday sent BRS leader K. Kavitha to CBI custody till April 15 in the Delhi excise policy scam.

“The entire case is fake. What can I say about the CBI,” said K. Kavitha after the hearing in the Delhi excise policy case.

The Delhi court reserved the order on an application moved by the CBI seeking five days remand of BRS leader K. Kavitha in the Delhi excise policy case

The CBI custody report said that Kavitha paid Rs 100 crore and that Rs 80 lakh was paid by Sharath Chandra Reddy to Kavitha’s Jagruthi organisation. The CBI



revealed that Kavitha threatened Sarath Chandra Reddy and demanded money.

It is mentioned in the remand report that Kavitha threatened Sarath Chandra Reddy that if the land deal was not done, she would see how he would do business in Telangana. The CBI remand report said that agreements and registration documents were created to purchase agricultural land without any actual land.

Owaisi launches LS re-election bid, undertakes door-to-door campaign

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi, who is seeking re-election from Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency, launched his campaign on Friday, undertaking door-to-door canvassing in the Bahadurpura Assembly segment here.

Polling for the parliamentary elections would be held in Telangana on May 13.

Owaisi campaigned at Osmanbagh, Bandalguda and other areas under Bahadurpura Assembly constituency, AIMIM



said.

Owaisi (55) has so far won from the constituency four times since 2004. Before that, he was a member of the undivided Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly for two terms. Prior

IISc researchers...

Continued from page 1

To mimic this in the lab, the team crushed food container lids and other daily-use plastic products to create two of the most common microplastics existing in nature: polyvinyl chloride and polypropylene.

“Along with treatment or removal of microplastics, another major problem is detection. Because these are very small particles, you cannot see them with the naked eye,” explains Soumi Dutta, first author of the

study published in ‘Nanoscale’, and SERB National Post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Materials Engineering.

To solve this problem, the researchers added a fluorescent dye to the microplastics to track how much was being adsorbed and degraded by the hydrogel under different conditions.

“We checked the removal of microplastics at different pH levels of water, different temperatures, and different concentrations of microplastics,” explains Dutta.

Revanth to do what KCR...

Continued from page 1

The BRS leaders of Maharashtra, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have shifted their loyalties to other political parties. Maharashtra leaders quit the BRS after sending a letter to KCR.

The Congress is yet to release its star campaigners’ schedule. However, Revanth would attend public meetings in constituencies which share borders with Telangana.

According to sources, Revanth will participate in five public meetings in Andhra Pradesh as well as in Maharashtra.

While Revanth is merely following AICC orders, Revanth is inadvertently doing what KCR wanted to do. Revanth would participate in nearly 50 public meetings (three in each Lok Sabha constituency).

BJP govt respects...

Continued from page 1

“What kind of alliance is this that wants to make India powerless,” he asked.

Modi said the Congress’ thinking was anti-development and the country’s border districts were deliberately deprived of development by former Congress governments,” he said.

“The Congress stands with every anti-national force. It ruled for decades but there is not a single major problem of the country for which it gave a complete solution,” Modi said.

The country’s border districts were deliberately deprived of development by former Congress governments,” he said.

While Modi is busy making India a powerful nation, people of the INDI alliance are trying to make India weak, he said.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Panchami:

Apr 12 01:12 PM to Apr 13 12:04 PM

Shashthi:

Apr 13 12:04 PM to Apr 14 11:44 AM

Nakshatram:

Mrigashirsha: Apr 13 12:51 AM to Apr 14 12:49 AM

Ardra:

Apr 14 12:49 AM to Apr 15 01:34 AM

Rahukalam:

9:10 AM to 10:43 AM

Yamagandam:

1:49 PM to 3:22 PM

Varjyam:

09:29 AM to 11:08 AM

Gulika:

6:05 AM to 7:38 AM

Amritakalam:

04:01 PM to 05:37 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:51 AM to 12:41 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 34°C

Humidity: 50%

Sunrise: 6:01 AM

Sunset: 6:32 PM

Updated: April 12, 2024 5:00 PM

Mary Kom quits as...

Continued from page 1

The celebrated boxer, who is also a bronze medalist from the 2012 London Olympics, was to be the logistical in-charge of the country’s contingent at the July 26-August 11 Games.

“We are sad that Olympic medal winning boxer and Chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission Mary Kom has stepped down citing personal reasons. We respect her decision and her privacy,” Usha said in a statement.

“I shall make the appropriate consultations and soon make an announcement about the replacement for Mary Kom.”

Usha said she had a conversation with Mary Kom after receiving her letter. “I completely understand

her request and respect her decision. I have also conveyed to her that she will always have my own support and that of IOA. I also request everyone to respect the legendary boxer’s privacy,” she said.

Mary Kom has also won gold in the 2010 Asian Games besides being a multiple-time Asian champion.

IOA has appointed six-time Winter Olympian and luger Shiva Keshavan as deputy chef-de-mission, while veteran table tennis player and reigning Commonwealth Games champion Sharath Kamal will be India’s male flag-bearer.

A female flag-bearer will be named later since many quotas for the Games are yet to be filled.

Let’s get water from Karnataka’s..

Continued from page 1

The Chief Minister reminded that although more drinking water is being supplied compared to last year, it is not enough to meet the water requirements of the people.

The present situation has arisen due to the depletion of groundwater levels as people are dependent more on tap water. The Chief Minister directed officials to continuously monitor the supply of drinking water without interruption. The officials were

also directed to address complaints immediately and to restore the drinking water supply on a war footing.

The Chief Secretary will hold a review meeting on drinking water supply every day with top officials of Mission Bhagiratha, Municipal, Irrigation and Energy departments.

The special officers for drinking water supply to old districts have been directed to visit places where drinking water problems arise and take steps to solve the problem and

bring it to the attention of higher officials.

The CM noted that drinking water supply was interrupted at a place in Hyderabad due to the officials’ excessive action.

The Chief Minister issued orders to immediately remove those who intentionally blocked drinking water supply.

Strict action will be taken against those who damage the government’s image. The CM also warned that action will have to be taken against officials if they ignore erring employees.

KTR offers to undergo lie...

Continued from page 1

“Revanth is a lucky guy. He achieved his goal of becoming the Chief Minister,” he said.

He said that he is not arrogant but self-confident. He said that the opposition is projecting him as arrogant but that’s not the case and asked the audience to cite an example of his arrogance.

“Cases are being filed against many people in this state today. If you post on social media, the CI, SI, or ACP will call and

threaten you. If an effigy is burnt, bind-over cases will be filed,” he said.

Speaking about Danam Nagender, KTR said, “All these days that Daman Nagender was in our party. The 700 yards of land behind his house was not occupied. When he joined the Congress, he removed the board saying that it was government land and occupied the entire land.”

“Some technical issues are

involved in converting the BRS back to TRS. Only the name has changed. The flag has not changed, the symbol has not changed, and our connection with Telangana is not gone,” he said.

“Nobody cheated KCR like Kadiyam Srihari. Kayava wanted to meet KCR. I facilitated it. They had food and after a few hours they joined the Congress,” he said.

CP: No DJs, fireworks during Sri Rama Navami procession

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an effort to ensure the peaceful celebration of the upcoming Sri Rama Navami festival, Hyderabad city police implemented a strict ban on DJ systems, firecrackers, throwing of vermilion colours, carrying of sticks, swords and firearms. During an inter-departmental coordination meeting held at Draupadi Garden, with Zonal Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Srinivasa Reddy emphasised compliance to the election code implemented by the Election Commission of India, prohibiting political symbols, banners and speeches to ensure the smooth conduct of Sri Rama Navami procession.

Srinivasa Reddy urged the organisers to address key issues that led to delays in last year's procession. He said, comprehensive security plans should be in place for the Shobha Yatra and called for cooperation from both organisers and attendees to ensure a successful and enjoyable festival. The Commissioner also asked the



Hyderabad Commissioner of Police, Kothakota Srinivasa Reddy and members of the Sri Rama Navami Programme Committee inspect the Shobha Yatra route in Hyderabad on Friday

programme committee to assist the sub-processions to meet the main procession route in a proper manner. Members of Sri Rama Navami Programme Committee and senior officers from various departments such as R&B, Electricity, Fire, RTA, TSRTC and Water Works participated in the meeting. Discussions centered around tasks including tree-felling, barricading, road repairs, streetlights and mobile trans-former placements.

During the meeting, feedback and suggestions were collected from officials regarding challenges faced during the previous year's Shobha Yatra. He said, "As our city prides itself on its multi-culturalism, devotees should comply with the rules and cooperate with the authorities, so as to conduct the Ram Navami Shobha Yatra with peace and tranquility."

Srinivasa Reddy asked for immediate contact with the control room which will be set up at ICCO, Banjara Hills

“ As our city prides itself on its multi-culturalism, devotees should comply with the rules and cooperate with the authorities, so as to conduct the Ram Navami Shobha Yatra with peace and tranquility. ”

from April 17, 6 am, for emergencies and ensuring less disturbances to the Shobha Yatra. He also requested not to indulge in rumours, spreading provocative posts, fake messages on social media and use of drone cameras is prohibited without proper permission of the Police department. Later, Srinivasa Reddy, Zonal Commissioner B Hemant Sahadev Rao and officials from other departments inspected the 6.8 kilometers procession route.

RTC to provide talambralu through logistic centres to devotees

RTC MD Sajjanar initiated this programme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It is a feast for the eyes of all to witness Sitarama Kalyanam which is held every year in every village. Devotees across the Telugu states (Talanagna and Andhra Pradesh) visit Bhadradi to witness this ceremony. With regards to this ceremony which will be held on Sri Rama Navami, the Road Transport Corporation (RTC) has announced plans to provide talambas through logistics centres of Sitarama Kalyanam on Friday.

If you pay only Rs 151 and enter the details, the goti talambalu will be delivered at your doorstep. If booked in advance, it will be served after Sri Ram Navami. Bookings can be made at RTC Logistics Centres as well as Marketing Executive Officers. Recently, RTC MD Sajjanar initiated this programme. Devotees believe that if Bhadrachalam Kalyana talambalu are mixed together and placed in a pooja room, especially during weddings, then everything will be auspicious.



These Bhadradi talambalu can be booked till April 18. The talambalu are mixed with rice that has been strained with a goti. Initiation is carried out with the Goti. Booking facility has been provided at 90 logistic centres in Hyderabad and Secunderabad regions and bookings can be made at RTC Marketing Executives as well. Some of the contacts for bookings are

Medipally areas, Ramesh - 9154298833 for Kushaiguda, ECIL and Keesara areas, Shekar - 9154298827 for Tarnaka, Cantonment and Tirumalagiri areas, Kishan - 9154298791 for Ibrahimpatnam, Mall and Turkayamjal areas. Executives Shruvan Kumar and Pradeep Kumar said, "Dy CTM (Logistics) / Greater Hyderabad Zone, Madhu Sudhan, ATM (Logistics) / Greater Hyderabad Zone, Venkata Narayana and Regional Marketing should take advantage of this opportunity provided by TS RTC Logistics."

CONTACTS

- **Nageshwara Rao - 9154298793 for Uppal, Boduppal, Habsiguda areas,**
- **Anil Kumar - 9154298831 for Ghateskar, Chengicherla, Medipally areas,**
- **Ramesh - 9154298833 for Kushaiguda, ECIL and Keesara,**
- **Shekar - 9154298827 for Tarnaka, Cantonment and Tirumalagiri ,**
- **Kishan - 9154298791 for Ibrahimpatnam, Mall and Turkayamjal.**

Hyd-based CDFD ropes in start-ups for healthcare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) on Friday said they have roped in start-ups to explore avenues for adoption of artificial intelligence in healthcare. The start-ups will benefit from personalised support and guidance from CDFD's technology incubator as they work towards developing their prototype, launching and commercialising the product and services in the market.

"In line with CDFD's motto of 'Innovating to benefit society', we are committed to nurturing the next generation of innovators and startups and provide them with the resources they need to succeed," said CDFD Director Professor Ullas Kolthur-Seetharam, in a statement here.

CDFD is an autonomous institution under the Department of Biotechnology. iDeaNA-CDFD Technology incubator provides a conducive environment for startups to grow and thrive, offer-



ing state-of-the-art facilities, mentorship programmes, access to funding opportunities and networking events, the statement said.

"We are excited to be a part of CDFD's incubation programme and grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with academic/industry experts and other stakeholders in the ecosystem. We look forward to contribute to AI adoption in healthcare," said Ravi and Sateesh, Co-Founders of Turnit AI Pvt. Ltd. Gopi Kadiyala and Uday

Saxena, Co-Founders of Utopia Therapeutics Pvt. Ltd., expressed confidence to scale their business and make a meaningful and revolutionising impact in the healthcare industry with access to state-of-the-art facilities, resources and mentorship at CDFD Technology Incubator. The launch of the incubator underscores CDFD's commitment to driving innovation, translational research and fostering entrepreneurship in the field of life sciences, the CDFD statement said.

Prof Sachidananda Mohanty appointed as UGC member

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prof Sachidananda Mohanty has been appointed as a Member of the University Grants Commission for a period of three years, effective from April 10, 2024 as per the Ministry of Higher Education, Govt of India.

In a career spanning over three decades, Prof Mohanty has received many distinctions in the field of education and culture nationally and internationally. He is a former Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Hyderabad (UoH) and former Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Odisha. Prof Mohanty is also an alumnus of Dept. Of English, UoH, MA 1977-79, the second batch. Winner of many national

and international awards, such as the Katha, British Council, Fulbright, Charles Wallace and the Salzburg, he has published extensively in the field of British, American, Gender, translation, and post-colonial studies. His books have appeared in Oxford, Sage, Routledge and Orient Longman, among other notable publishing houses. His contributions to the academic genres of travel writing, cosmopolitanism, institutional history, early women's writing in Eastern India, and post-colonial cultural history of India have been widely recognised as path-breaking at the national and international level. Currently, Dr Mohanty works as the Sri Aurobindo Chair Professor at Punjab University, Chandigarh.

Group 1, 2, 3, 4 posts should be increased: R Krishnaiah

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

R Krishnaiah, Member of Parliament and President of National BC Welfare Association demanded to increase the Group 1, 2, 3 and 4 posts and provide two lakhs jobs to the BCs. Hundreds of unemployed people rallied from Osmania University to Vidyannagar BC Bhavan on Friday.

Krishnaiah said, "According to the promise given by the Congress party in the election, the group posts should be increased. About 503 posts have been announced under Group-1 Service. But if the direct recruitment of new posts are calculated correctly, out of 1,600, 783 posts are being filled under Group-2 service. If these are also calculated correctly, out of 2,200, Group III posts are 1,383, which are actually more than 3,000 and 8,500 posts have been announced under Group-4 service quota. These are more than 25,000 thousand. He said 11,000 teacher posts were announced. According to the PRC report, 24,700 teacher posts are vacant. Therefore, 24,700 teacher posts needed to be filled."



R Krishnaiah speaking at a rally

He also said that merit candidates will be selected for all these posts as Group 1-2-3-4 and Teacher, Lecturer, Professor posts are being filled at one time. If all types of 6-7 category posts are selected at once then the candidate will be selected for the same posts. Remaining 5-6 types of posts will remain. According to the current system, other candidates will not get it, because there is no waiting list system. There is no option. That's why the option method and waiting list time limit needs to be introduced to fill the posts so that everyone will get a chance. Moreover, government school posts, SC / ST / BC / Minority teacher school posts and Adarsh school posts are also held separately. So merit candidates will be

selected in these three and four types of schools with merit. They will join in a single ownership school. The other three selected are wasted. That's why he suggested to the government to take steps like putting option methods, waiting lists and announcing all the results at once. Bringing the new generation - the youth - into the government machinery through direct recruitment will lead to efficient and corruption-free governance. Youth power-strategies can be used for community development. If the youth are brought into the governance sector, they will work honestly with enthusiasm and dedication. It is a great thing that the Chief Minister issued orders to fill 2 lakh jobs at once, he said.

Rs 13.33 crore seized in the district: DEO

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A significant cash seizure of Rs 13.33,19,960, along with 2,541 licenced firearms in the district, has been announced by the District Election Officer and GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose. Additionally, illegal liquor totalling 19,902.7 liters and goods worth Rs 87,98,039 were also seized. Ronald Rose said, 19,902.7 liters of illegal liquor and goods valued at Rs 87,98,039 were seized. Legal action, including the arrest of 148 individuals out of 153 against whom cases were registered, was taken. Along with 312 complaints concerning

election-related cash and other items were addressed and resolved, FIRs against 205 individuals have been filed and there was a total deposit of 2,541 licenced firearms. Ronald Rose said, "In the past 24 hours, Rs 1,40,900 in cash and goods worth Rs 66,603 were seized. The Excise Department confiscated 29.98 liters of illegal liquor, leading to the arrest of four individuals after cases were filed against three. Six complaints regarding cash and items were resolved, and FIRs have been filed on five individuals. Moreover, 29 licenced weapons were deposited.

Hyd to witness Poila Boishakh celebrations at Shilparamam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's Shilparamam will come alive with the vibrant celebration of Poila Boishakh, (the Bengali New Year) by Uttaran Bangiya Samiti on April 15. This occasion promises a captivating immersion into Bengali culture, filled with traditional dance, music and a delightful 'Bongo Mela' - a fair showcasing the rich heritage of Bengal. Enthralling dance performances will take centre stage, captivating audiences with their graceful movements and colorful attire. Visitors can expect to witness dances like the rhythmic Chhau, the elegant Rabindra Nritya and the

playful Jhumur, each steeped in Bengali tradition. Beyond the captivating performances, the Bongo Mela will be a treasure trove for the senses. Stalls brimming with Bengali handicrafts will showcase the artistic legacy of the region. From intricate embroidery and handloom textiles to exquisite pottery and sculpture, visitors can discover a piece of Bengal to take home. The mela will also offer an array of Bengali cuisine. Food stalls will be a haven for gourmands, offering iconic dishes like kosha mangsho (mutton curry), shondesh (sweetmeat) and the quintessential Bengali fish curries.

Sri Chaitanya students excel in AP Inter exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sri Chaitanya students excelled in the Intermediate 2024 results announced on Friday. The State top marks for different streams of Junior Intermediate are State top marks of 467 in MPC, 436 (in BiPC) and in Senior Intermediate State top marks are 992 in MPC and 991 in BiPC. In the Junior Intermediate (MPC) stream, Chintu Revathi secured State top marks of 467 out of 470 marks. Additionally, 17 students scored 466 marks and above. In all, 116 students scored 465 marks and above, and 1,763 students achieved 460 marks and above. All these accomplishments are of the students of Sri Chaitanya. In the Junior Intermediate (Bi PC) stream, T Divya obtained State top mark of 436 out of 440 marks. Furthermore, 18 students scored 435 marks and above,

and 360 students achieved 430 marks and above. Again, these achievements are attributed to the students of Sri Chaitanya. In the Senior Intermediate (MPC) stream, AV Durga Madhulika achieved State top marks of 992 out of 1,000 marks. Similarly, in the Senior Intermediate (Bi PC) stream, S Pavani obtained State top marks of 991 out of 1,000. Additionally, 12 students scored 990 marks and above, 301 students scored 985 marks and above and 1,061

students achieved 980 marks and above. In all, 20,569 students secured 900 marks and above. SushmaSri Boppana, the Academic Director of Sri Chaitanya Educational Institutions, expressed confidence in the well-structured programmes, excellent teaching methodologies by top-notch faculty and consistent performance of the students in Intermediate subjects. She said the students will appear for highly competitive exams like JEE-MAIN,

ADVANCED, and NEET, aiming for top ranks. On this occasion, she reminded that Sri Chaitanya had broken the record by scoring number one hat-trick ranks in the national level competitive exams like IIT-JEE Main, Advanced and NEET last year. She congratulated the high-achievers, supportive parents and dedicated teachers on the occasion. She said, "Let's continue to believe in Sri Chaitanya students' abilities and strive for excellence."



A.V. Durga Madhulika



S. Pavani



Chintu Revathi



T. Divya

Plan to eliminate garbage vulnerable points

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Over 1,604 awareness meetings were conducted to eliminate garbage vulnerable points (GVPs), with the implementation of a weekly action plan in all basti areas upon the directions given by the Commissioner of the GHMC. The objective of the plan is to achieve 100% door-to-door solid waste management (SWM) collection and eliminate garbage vulnerable points (GVPs) with the participation of Self-Help Group members (SHG).

The aim of the weekly plan is to ensure thorough SWM collection and GVP elimination. As per the GHMC report, currently 1,604 meetings have



been held involving SHGs, SAT Auto drivers, and SLF members and major garbage collection gaps were identified in slum areas with 1,97,847 households attached to SATs for garbage col-

lection out of 1,46,547. Over 921 rallies were conducted, with around 1,006 motivational programmes, and 1,031 Rangoli sessions have been conducted engaging 2,024 citizens.

About 229 TVC meetings have addressed households which are not connected to SATs, alongside 1,604 awareness sessions targeting GVP elimination were conducted, while SHG workers have been recognised for their dedication and hardwork.

The weekly plan starts with basti meeting on Day 1, identification of households not tagged to SAT vehicles on Day 2, conducting rallies in all basti areas on Day 3, motivational programmes on Day 4 and Rangoli on Day 5, town vending committee meeting (TVC) on Day 6 and concluding the weekend programme with a pledge and resolutions on the last day.

‘Drop Everything And Read’ drive today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

St Peter's High School, Bowenally, Hyderabad, will organise Drop Everything And Read (DEAR), a unique programme to cultivate the habit of reading, particularly among pre-primary and primary kids on Saturday at 8:30 am for about an hour at its premises. This programme will be held for the kids of Nursery till Class V. About 800+ kids and parents will participate in this unique initiative.

T Alphonse Reddy, Correspondent of the school said, "This is an initiative to enable children to read books along with

their parents. For this purpose, the entire school campus will be turned into a reading zone. Theme-based reading corners are being set up, where kids will read books along with their parents. St. Peter's High School is probably the first of its kind school in India to come up with such a bold initiative and introduce "Reading" as a subject. A dedicated period is kept for Nursery to Class III to read the choice of their book or literature during the hour."

Reading is important because it develops the mind and gives knowledge and lessons of life. But, my reading habit is

slowly and steadily decreasing. Technology is impacting how we read and write. With smartphones, tablets, and e-readers, children have become 'screenagers' (using mobile, tablet, PC, Laptop, OTT, TV, Cinema and many other such screens). It is no big surprise that kids of the day read more digitally. This shift in reading habits has prompted much discussion about the future of book reading. In this light of background, the school which is known for innovative initiatives like this in the past has come out with the DEAR-Drop Everything And Read initiative.

A drought and a perfect farm storm

“Crops withered only in two lakh acres, not in twenty lakh acres”. “Only 33 farmers have committed suicide since the Congress came to power in Telangana, not 209”. These two statements, made by Telangana Planning Board vice-chairman Chinna Reddy and Congress National Kisan Cell vice-president Kodanda Reddy, respectively, were intended to downplay the crisis the state’s farmers are currently facing due to drought-like conditions in Telangana. Instead, the Congress leaders’ statements in the face of criticism by the Opposition for the state government’s lack of relief measures only exposed its apathy.

The current crisis is not the result of one season’s deficit rainfall. It results from the exploitation of the farmers’ needs by the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the

Congress parties. While those running the previous BRS government, headed by Chandrasekhar Rao, used the farmers’ need for irrigation as a ruse to empty the state’s coffers and enrich themselves, the Congress saw farmers only as a vote-bank to be lured to gain power by making promises it had no intent of keeping.

The two-week lockdown during the Covid pandemic, which dented revenue sources from liquor, petrol and diesel, exposed the dire financial straits the state’s exchequer was in when the state government could not pay salaries to its employees. One season’s deficit rainfall is all it took to expose the BRS government. When the Opposition criticised the then BRS government for escalating project costs and spending humongous amounts - almost a couple of lakh crores of rupies of

The two-week lockdown during the Covid pandemic, which dented revenue sources from liquor, petrol and diesel, exposed the dire financial straits the state’s exchequer was in when the state government could not pay salaries to its employees.

public money on water projects, especially the Kaleswaram Lift Irrigation Project and Mission Kakatiya, they claimed that the utility of the projects would be obvious when drought strikes. It did not take a severe drought to expose the truth; just deficit rainfall for one season was more than sufficient. The withering crops are a direct testimony to the fraud the BRS committed on the farmers of Telangana.

In addition, the Chandrasekhar Rao govern-

ment discontinued the only safety net available to farmers. Claiming the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (crop insurance) was useless, it discontinued the scheme without creating an alternative, leaving farmers’ fates to the vagaries of nature. Though the current Congress government promised to revive the crop insurance scheme from the following season, it did not promise any compensation to farmers who had lost their crops this season.

To come to power, the



KISHORE POREDDY

Congress party falsely promised to waive farm loans up to two lakh rupees by December 9th, Sonia Gandhi’s birthday. Not only did it not waive the loans, but it also avoided speaking on the topic from the day it came to power. Now, the farmers who stopped paying their loans expecting the Congress government to pay

them as promised have become defaulters and are receiving notices from the banks.

The Congress has effectively cut off farmer’s access to low-interest credit from banks for the next crop.

In addition, the Congress government promised farmers and tenant farmers an input subsidy of 15,000 rupees per acre as Rythu Bharosa. If implemented promptly, farmers could at least get some money into their hands before the next planting season, which is only two months away.

Unfortunately, the last season’s experience shows no hope of this happening. It also promised to pay an additional 500 rupees per quintal of paddy on top of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) as a bonus. A few days back, the Food Corporation of India (FCI)

started procuring paddy from the last season. Once again, the Congress government has reneged and kept mum on this promise, too.

Currently, farmers’ only option for raising funds for the next planting season is to approach money lenders for input costs. This means paying usurious interest rates ranging between 36 and 48 per cent per year.

The average land holding in Telangana is a meagre 1.12 hectares (2.8 acres), and 86 per cent of farmers in the state are small and marginal. This makes for a precarious financial situation even when everything goes right. Crop loss in a single season is enough to push them into a debt trap.

One shudders to imagine the situation when such small farmers lose their crops, but receive neither insurance nor compensation for their lost

crops and are cut off from all institutional credit as well as timely input subsidies. We have been there earlier and saw our farmers sink into despair and commit suicides in the thousands per year.

The current Congress government’s apathy is shocking. No Minister has conducted a field study to date. Instead of providing assistance and confidence to farmers, the Chief Minister is busy with politics, luring BRS MLAs into the Congress.

The CM has openly declared that his current priority will be his role as the state Congress president. There is no more time to lose. It’s time the current government acknowledged its responsibilities and focused on saving our farmers from an impending financial disaster.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)

‘BJP deceives people’

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

Minister for Information Technology D Sridhar Babu exhorted Congress workers to strive for the party’s victory from the Peddapalli Parliament constituency in the ensuing Lok Sabha polls.

Speaking at a party workers meeting in Bellampalli town on Friday, Sridhar Babu said the BJP and the BRS were trying to destabilise the Congress government in the State.

The Minister recalled that former Union minister G Venkata Swamy, father of Chennai MLA G Vivek had contributed greatly to the growth of the region. He said that Vivek had requested Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to ensure a better drinking water facility in Bellampalli town.

He alleged that the BJP went back on its promise to create 20 crore jobs for the youth. The Central government was attempting to sell the public sector undertakings and LIC to private firms. The



The Minister recalled that former Union minister G Venkata Swamy, father of Chennai MLA G Vivek had contributed greatly to the growth of the region. He said that Vivek had requested Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to ensure a better drinking water facility in Bellampalli town

BJP-led government at the Centre neglected the interests of youth.

He asked people to give a thought before casting votes for BJP candidates.

The Minister said that the Congress government in the State has already fulfilled the majority of promises given to people ahead of elections. He assured the people that the government would implement

all the promises. He stressed the need to inflict a crushing defeat both on the BRS and BJP.

The Congress candidate from Peddapalli Vamshi said that he entered politics with a motto to serve people. Chennai MLA Vivek, Vinod, former government whip N Odelu, INTUC leader Venkat Rao and many others were present.

Neither BJP nor INDIA bloc will get majority: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KTR said there is no possibility of the Congress or the BJP alliances getting a majority in the country.

“If we get 10 or 12 LS seats we will turn the wheel at the Centre. The CM, Gumpu Mestri, and Prime Minister Tapi Mestri are making Telangana a graveyard. Both of them are working together to destroy the BRS.”

He was speaking at a meeting of BRS activists of Ibrahimpatnam constituency held on Friday.

“A majority of 50,000 should be given to Kyama Malleshham from Ibrahimpatnam. KCR is the only leader who put the words of Mahatma Phule and Dr Ambedkar into practice. Remember that it is KCR who ‘increased’ the people’s wealth. KCR gave priority to manual and caste occupations,” KTR said.

“KCR gave the maximum number of seats to BCs in the Assembly elections. KCR also

gave 50 per cent of tickets to BCs in Parliament seats as well. KCR is the only leader who has implemented Phule’s ideas,” he said.

KTR said that KCR sent Kyama Malleshham to the Bhuvanagiri Parliament constituency to give preference to weaker sections.

“Revanth Reddy is Mike Veerudu. Real estate means Revanth Reddy said. How is the real estate situation now? Real estate rates fall only when the government is not smart. Being in power for 10 years, we did good things. We brought another company named Keynes here along with Foxconn. With the coming of the new government, that company went to Gujarat saying that we are leaving,” KTR said.

“We prepared everything for Pharma City. There are some incompetent leaders in the Congress. If industries come, real estate prices will jump. Even the government does not have that understanding.

‘Voting for BJP is like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire’

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Former minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader T Harish Rao on Friday urged the people not to vote for BJP out of anger towards the Congress government. “It is like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire,” he pointed out.

Speaking at the party workers meeting here, Harish Rao expressed confidence that the BRS would bounce back to power soon. He came down heavily on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for moving the veterinary college, which was under construction in Siddipet, to Kodangal.

The Congress leaders ahead of Assembly elections pledged to fulfil all promises within



100 days of coming to power. Now, they have been beating around the bush. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has no stuff. The BJP is anti-poor, he said.

The BJP had merged

Telangana village with Andhra Pradesh. There was not single a good thing the BJP did during the last 10 years. He recalled that Revanth Reddy ahead of Assembly elections accused BRS of being B-team of BJP. Now, Revanth Reddy is calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi an elder brother.

He cautioned the BRS activist to remain vigilant as some forces were bent upon harming the party and leaders. He urged the party activists to repulse the attacks on the party leaders through social media platforms. The BRS would exert pressure on the government to fulfil all the promises it gave to the people ahead of the Assembly elections.

Adivasi women raid liquor shops; destroy liquor, toddy bottles

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Adivasi women in Pulsi and Kosai villages under Talamadugu mandal in Adilabad on Friday revolted against liquor lobby and conducted raids on “belt liquor shops.”

The “belt liquor shops” meant that they were not licensed outlets but put up by liquor lobby for profit.

For the first, the angry women took to the streets to protest against indiscriminate sale of liquor everywhere in the villages. They snatched the liquor bottles as well as the buckets filled with toddy and poured it on the road. They forced the shop owners to close down the business activity.

The protesting women directed their anger at the liquor lobby spreading their tentacles through the villages and making high profits. The youth are growingly addic-



Adivasi women in Kosai village destroying liquor bottles on Friday

ed to alcohol. They said that the youth are risking their lives by getting addicted to alcohol.

The women threatened to intensify the agitation if the officials took immediate action to shut liquor shops.

They highlighted the dangers of addiction to alcohol and adulterated toddy. They appealed to the district authorities and also the government to protect the youth from wasting their lives by getting addicted to alcohol.

Rajgopal confident of Cong victory in Bhongir LS seat

PNS ■ JANGAON

Congress MLA and Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency in-charge Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy on Friday expressed confidence that the Congress candidate for the Bhongir Lok Sabha seat Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy would win with a huge majority.

Speaking at Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency preparatory constituency, BJP candidate Burra Narasaiha Goud would lose the elections miserably. Jangaon District Congress Committee president Kommui Pratap Reddy, former MLA N Ramaling and others were present.

Continuing his speech, Rajgopal Reddy accused former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao of amassing crores of rupees of illicit wealth in the name of con-



Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy speaking at a meeting in Jangaon on Friday

struction of projects and by exploiting the Dharani portal. He pushed Telangana into a debt trap. He said Kiran Kumar Reddy always would remain accessible to people. He urged the party cadre to strive for the victory of the party. He recalled that people had been elected from the constituency

in 2009 which enabled him to extend his support for a separate Telangana State. He stressed the need to drive out the BRS.

Kiran Kumar Reddy said that he would remain a Congressman. He appealed to the party cadre to work for the party’s victory.

Bring back Indian workers from Israel, says Owaisi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday demanded that the Indian workers who are currently in Israel should be brought back immediately.

He hit out at the NDA government at the Centre alleging it is sending Indian workers to Israel even after an advisory by the same dispensation discouraging countrymen to go there citing safety.

In a series of posts on “X”, Owaisi, also referring to a news article, asked why Prime Minister Narendra Modi doesn’t tell the country what the “prolonged situation” on the border is and how much territory was there that Indian soldiers were unable to patrol. He further asked, whether Modi wants a return to “status

quo ante” or seeks peace on China’s terms.

“Modi govt has issued an advisory, asking Indians not to go to Israel. Why is India then sending Indians to Israel? If it’s not safe, then why are Indians being sent to a deathtrap?”

Is @narendramodi taking personal responsibility for their security? Israel is in the middle of committing a genocide, it doesn’t care about the safety of poor

Indians. The export of Indian workers should be stopped immediately, and those already there should be brought back,” Owaisi said.

He further charged that whether it is Manipur or Ladakh or the China border, the PM Modi government has failed spectacularly and no amount of “spin, PR (public relations) and propaganda can hide the truth.”



Judson complains to NCW about phone tapping by Sri Nidhi MD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Suspended Congress leader Bakka Judson filed a complaint with the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Friday alleging that Sri Nidhi Managing Director G. Vidyasagar Reddy engaged in phone tapping.

In his complaint, Judson said that Vidyasagar has been tapping the phones of women who were engaged in self-help group activities after taking loans from Sri Nidhi.

Judson said that Vidyasagar Reddy provided four lakh SIMs to women through women’s groups and is listening to the phones of women and disturbing their personal lives.

He appealed to the National Women Commission to take action against Vidyasagar Reddy as he had submitted evidence also.

Don’t believe Naidu’s ‘Super Six’: Jagan

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The streets of Guntur overflowed with enthusiastic citizens, braving the elements to catch a glimpse of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy during his 13th day of ‘Memantha Siddham Yatra’ on Friday.

Navigating through the sea of supporters, Chief Minister Jagan finally arrived at Prathipadu to address the patiently awaiting public. Despite a delay of over two hours due to the massive turnout along the 16-kilometre stretch leading to the venue, the crowd’s energy remained undiminished.

Acknowledging the resilience of the gathered crowd in adverse weather conditions, Chief Minister Jagan posed a crucial question: Would they stand firm in safeguarding and perpetuating the welfare initiatives initiated by the YSRCP government in Andhra Pradesh?

“Are you all committed to upholding the transformative welfare measures in education, healthcare, agricultural support, women’s empowerment, assistance to the underprivileged, and other vital services established by the YSRCP administration?” inquired Chief Minister Jagan.



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In a scathing attack on the opposition, Chief Minister Y S Jagan asserted, “Previously, welfare schemes were often linked with bribes, but under our governance, we’ve ensured equitable distribution without any prejudice or corruption. Through Direct Benefit Transfer alone, we’ve disbursed over Rs 2.7 lakh crore.”

He then urged the citizens to support the YSRCP by pressing the fan symbol on the upcoming ballots, emphasising that the election isn’t merely a contest between individuals but a battle between the marginalised and those, like Chandrababu, associated with deception.

“Like 2014, Chandrababu-Pawan Kalyan-Modi has once again presented a colourful manifesto, destined to fade into oblivion,” remarked CM Jagan.

Highlighting Chandrababu’s track record of unfulfilled promises, Chief Minister Jagan pointed out the failure to deliver on pledges such as farm loan waivers (amounting to 87,612 Crore) and assistance to Self-Help Groups (14,205 Crore), along with the Mahalakshmi Scheme promising Rs 25,000 deposit upon the birth of a girl child.

“Did any household receive financial aid between 2014 and 2019 due to the birth of a female child, as promised by Chandrababu?” queried CM Jagan, referencing Chandrababu’s 2014 pamphlet that assured employment or a Rs 2,000 unemployment benefit to each household during his tenure.

Further underscoring Chandrababu’s unmet commitments, CM Jagan highlighted assurances like allotting 3 cents of land to eligible beneficiaries, a BC sub-plan amounting to Rs 10,000 crores, loan waivers for power loom and handloom units, establishment of a women’s protection force, and the ambitious plan to develop the state akin to Singapore, including the construction of hi-tech cities.

NON-DISCLOSURE OF TDP CASES

AP HC adjourns hearing to April 16

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court expressed its ire over the failure to provide details of cases involving public figures.

The court specifically addressed the issue of undisclosed cases against prominent TDP members including Chandrababu, Nara Lokesh, Atchannaidu, P Narayana, Ayyannapratrudu, and Ramachandra Yadav. Senior advocate Dhammalapati Srinivas highlighted the lack of response from the AP DGP despite a letter sent on March 1, demanding case details.

Srinivas underscored the absence of information on cases against Chandrababu. Advocates Dhammalapati, Umesh Chandra, and VV Satish emphasized the neces-

sity of disclosing case details in Form 7 during the nomination process, warning of potential rejection if omitted.

Advocate Umesh Chandra cited the provision of case details regarding Raghurama Krishnaraju by the DGP, prompting the judge to question the delay in disclosing other cases.

The court issued directives for the immediate appointment of four officers to furnish case details as nominations are set to commence on the 18th and conclude on the 25th of this month.

The High Court instructed the government advocate to urgently seek details from the DGP. Given the impending nomination deadline, lawyers urged swift action. The court adjourned the hearing to April 16 following deliberations on the matter.

INDIA CORNER

Committee set up to probe Haryana school bus accident

A committee has been set up to probe the factors leading to Thursday's accident involving a school bus in which six children were killed and around 20 injured in Haryana's Mahendragarh, officials said. Police arrested three people, including the principal of the private school as well as the driver of the bus who was allegedly drunk and driving rashly. According to an official statement, the committee has been set up by Mahendragarh deputy commissioner Monika Gupta for a thorough investigation to ascertain the causes leading to the accident. "In the light of the tragic incident where a school bus of G L Public School, Kanina carrying students met with an accident near Unhani resulting in the loss of lives of six students and injuries to several students, it is imperative that a thorough investigation be conducted to ascertain the causes and circumstances leading to this unfortunate event," according to an order issued by Gupta on Thursday.



Smriti Irani accuses Rahul of neglecting development of Amethi for 15 years

Union Minister and BJP's candidate from Amethi, Smriti Irani, on Friday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and the Congress of neglecting the development of Amethi. "The government at the Centre was of his 'mataji' (mother, Sonia Gandhi) and that in UP had their support. But Rahul Gandhi never thought of the development of Amethi," said Irani, while speaking with the people from the Yadav community at her residence here. Irani defeated Rahul Gandhi in Amethi in the 2019 polls. The Congress party is yet to announce its candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha election from the seat. Irani said the Gandhi family, especially Rahul Gandhi, wanted the people of Amethi to remain poor. That is why they cannot digest it when a poor man's son becomes the prime servant of India. "Neither the Congress nor the Gandhi family is able to accept Narendra Modi, becoming the 'pradhan sevak' of the country.



SC rejects plea seeking review of verdict on compensation to veteran

The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea seeking review of its judgement directing the Indian Air Force (IAF) to pay around Rs 1.54 crore as compensation to a veteran who contracted HIV due to transfusion of infected blood at a military hospital in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba in 2002. A bench of justices Dipankar Datta and P B Varale said the verdict of September 26 last year does not suffer from any error warranting its reconsideration. "We have perused the review petition including the grounds urged in support of the prayer for review of the judgment and order dated September 26, 2023... The judgment and order under review does not suffer from any error, much less apparent error, warranting its reconsideration," the bench said in its April 3 order. "That apart, no other sufficient ground has been set up for granting the relief claimed in the review petition.



Conspiracy to impose Prez rule in Delhi: Atishi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi on Friday alleged that a big political conspiracy is being hatched by the BJP-led central government to impose President's rule in the national capital.

"Arvind Kejriwal's arrest is a political conspiracy to topple his government. We have learnt from reliable sources that in the coming days, President's rule will be imposed in Delhi. But imposing President's rule in Delhi will be illegal and against the mandate of people," she said at a press conference here.

Reacting to the AAP leader's charge, the BJP said it was surprising that the fear of President's rule is haunting the AAP, which has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi Assembly.

At the press conference, Atishi claimed that in recent times, many events have taken place that indicate the possibility of the imposition of



President's rule in the national capital.

In the last few months, no senior IAS officer has been posted in Delhi, she said.

"Posts are lying vacant in departments but no postings have taken place. Bureaucrats have stopped attending meetings called by ministers, citing the Model Code of Conduct. The lieutenant governor has been writing letters to the MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) over the functioning of the Delhi government," she said.

Atishi further said the BJP

already knows that it cannot come to power in Delhi.

"The AAP defeated the BJP in the Delhi assembly elections in 2015 and 2020. That is why they want to topple the Delhi government. However, the imposition of President's rule would be illegal since the Delhi government enjoys a majority. We proved our majority through a floor test on February 17 this year," she said.

Later in the day, Atishi's cabinet colleague Saurabh Bharadwaj spoke in the same vein.

"The BJP and the lieutenant governor are talking about a constitutional crisis in Delhi. This shows that there is a conspiracy to impose President's rule in Delhi. The BJP has been defeated twice in Delhi in 2015 and 2020 and it knows it cannot form the government in Delhi. Even if elections are held today, Arvind Kejriwal will win," he said.

"President's rule was imposed in Delhi throughout 2014. We had approached the Supreme Court at that time. Subsequently, elections were held and the AAP came to power in 2015.

"People gave them a reply for imposing President's rule. If President's rule is imposed in Delhi, the people of Delhi will again give them a reply," he said.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva hit out at the AAP, saying it was surprising that the fear of President's rule is haunting the AAP, even though it has a majority in the assembly.

Bihar getting a lot of support from Centre: Nitish at poll rally

PNS ■ NAWADA (BIHAR)

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday said the state was getting "a lot of support" from the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, and urged people to vote for the BJP-led NDA.

Kumar, who heads the JD(U), also referred to his flip-flops in the past one decade and asserted that his return to the NDA, in January this year, was for good.

"I have been with the BJP for long. We formed government in Bihar, in 2005, together. I may have gone hither and thither a couple of times. But now I am back, for ever", Kumar told a rally in Nawada, where he was canvassing for BJP candidate Vivek Thakur.

He said "What was there in Bihar before we took over? Infrastructure was in a mess. Things began to look up once we took over. Now, we are getting a lot of support from the Centre (Kendra Sarkar ka sahyog bahut zyada hai)".

"I therefore urge you all to



vote for the NDA", said Kumar, who, incidentally, was one of the key architects of the anti-BJP INDIA bloc.

Kumar, who has always been careful to project himself as a "secular" leader, also said "so much of Hindu-Muslim clashes Bihar used to witness until we came to power and set things in order. So much was done for the minority community during my tenure. I hope all that will not be forgotten just because I am back with BJP".

The JD(U) president, who has forged short-lived alliances with arch-rival Lalu Prasad's RJD, first in 2015 and then again

in 2022, also launched a stinging attack on his ally-turned-adversary. "He first ruled the state himself and when his own continuance in power became untenable he handed over the reins to his wife", said Kumar, without mentioning Prasad or Rabri Devi by name.

Hurling the charge of nepotism at his arch rival, the JD(U) chief said while "nobody even knows the names of my immediate family members", Prasad had been promoting "wife, sons and daughters".

"Just look at how many family members have enjoyed power and how many have got tickets", said the JD(U) chief, in an oblique reference to the RJD president's sons Tejashwi Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav, who are former ministers, and daughters Misa Bharti and Rohini Acharya, who are RJD candidates from Patliputra and Saran respectively.

In an indirect reference to corruption cases against the RJD supremo and his family, Kumar said "They want to enjoy power and pelf.

Woman dies at temple in Odisha's Balasore

PNS ■ BALASORE

A 58-year-old woman from West Bengal died while performing rituals at a temple in neighbouring Odisha's Balasore district on Friday, police said.

The incident happened at the Chandaneswar Temple in Bhograi near the inter-state border where the famed Chadak Mela was going on, they said.

The woman, a resident of Gomariyapal village in Paschim Medipur's Kharagpur, was circumambulating the temple after taking a bath in the 'Nila Pokhari' when she collapsed.

She was immediately taken to a health camp set up for the fair. Doctors there declared her dead, police said.

"Arrangements are being made to send the body to her native place after post-mortem examination," a police officer said.

Cong to become extinct like dinosaur in few years: Rajnath

PNS ■ GAUCHAR (U'KHAND)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh claimed on Friday that the Congress will become extinct like the dinosaur in a few years and likened the infighting in that party to the reality show "Bigg Boss".

"The exodus of leaders from the Congress continues. They are quitting the party one after another and joining the BJP," he said at a rally in Uttarakhand's Gauchar.

"I am afraid that in a few years from now, the Congress will become extinct like the dinosaur. In a few years after 2024, if we take the name of the Congress, children will ask, who?" Singh added.

He also commented on the infighting in the opposition party. "They are fighting with each other daily. The party has become somewhat like the



house of 'Big Boss' on TV. They are tearing each other's clothes daily," Singh said.

The senior BJP leader was here to campaign for the party's candidate for the Pauri Lok Sabha seat Anil Baluni.

The defence minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has emerged as a strong country. Its voice is heard distinctly on international forums and taken seriously, Singh added.

He claimed that the Russia-Ukraine war was suspended for over four hours following Modi's talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Joe Biden for the safe evacuation of 22,500 Indian students stranded in Ukraine.

Singh said the world is acknowledging the progress made by India over the last few years.

He also quoted US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti as saying that if the world has to see the future, it should come to India.

"We are manufacturing most of our defence equipment in India now. Earlier, we used to export defence equipment worth only Rs 600 crore. Over only seven years, we are exporting defence equipment worth over Rs 21,000 crore.

India asks its citizens not to travel to Israel, Iran

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday asked its citizens not to travel to Iran or Israel amid escalating tensions between the two countries following a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago.

Iran blamed Israel for the strike and there have been fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israel soon.

In an advisory, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also urged the Indians residing in Iran and Israel to exercise utmost

precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to minimum.

"In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice," it said.

"All those who are currently residing in Iran or Israel are requested to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves," the MEA said.

"They are also requested to observe utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to the minimum," it added.

Pilibhit has decided to defeat BJP: Akhilesh Yadav

PNS ■ PILIBHIT (UP)

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said Friday that the BJP government at the Centre scrapped the three "black" farm laws after realising the strength of the farmers and inflation has been caused due to the "money extorted by the BJP through electoral bonds".

At a rally here in the support of party candidate Bhagwat Saran Gangwar, Yadav also said the people of Pilibhit have made up their mind to defeat the BJP and that the saffron party is scared.



"The faces of the BJP people turn 'peela' (yellow) on hearing the name of Pilibhit," Yadav said.

This is the first political

rally of Yadav in Uttar Pradesh after the polls were announced. He started his campaign after releasing the poll manifesto in Lucknow on Wednesday.

The former chief minister also attacked the BJP government over the issue of electoral bonds and demonetisation.

"Tell me whether this electoral bond and the demonetisation are not the ways to turn black money into white. They have turned all their black money into white," he alleged.

Yadav attacked the state government for trying to crush the protest called by the farmers against the farm laws.

'Priority is to free farmers from clutches of middlemen'

PNS ■ PATNA

Former Union Minister and NDA nominee from Karakat Lok Sabha seat Upendra Kushwaha has voiced concern over farmers of his constituency in particular and Bihar in general not getting minimum support price and being vulnerable to middlemen.

The Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief said the economy of my constituency in particular and Bihar in general is agriculture-based. Paddy, wheat and maize are the main crops. This area is called the rice bowl of Bihar.

"My top priority is to ensure a better price for the produce of the farmers and also free them from the clutches of middlemen," Kushwaha told PTI in an interview.

"The NDA government at the Centre, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken several steps to ensure the elimination of middlemen and to guarantee better prices for produce of the farmers. Steps have been taken to empower farmers and provide them with the benefit of modern technology. The NDA government gives 100 per cent guarantee for protection of the farmers' interests," he said.

Kushwaha said our PM is committed to the welfare of villages and farmers of the country. "Protection of farmers' rights at any cost is the top priority of the Central government. I am making farmers of my area aware of the



steps taken by the Central as well as the state government", said Kushwaha expressing confidence that his party will do its bit in ensuring victory of the BJP-led coalition in all 40 Lok Sabha seats of the state.

Kushwaha-led Rashtriya Lok Morcha has its base among the Kushwahas or Koeris, a dominant other backward caste (OBC) in Bihar.

Earlier, Kushwaha, who had floated the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) in 2013 merged the party with JD(U) eight years later, fought the 2014 Lok Sabha polls as an NDA partner and became a minister in the first Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre.

Later, he merged his party with the JD (U). However, in February 2023, Kushwaha resigned from all positions in JD (U) and formed his own party called Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM). Now, his party is part of the NDA alliance in Bihar and contesting from Karakat Lok Sabha seat.

As part of the seat-sharing arrangement in the NDA, the BJP is contesting on 17 seats, the JD-U 16, the LJP-R of Chirag Paswan five and the HAM-S of former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi and the RLM one each.

Maintaining that there is no alternative to PM Modi in the country, Kushwaha, said, "The NDA under the leadership of PM Modi will win more than 400 Lok Sabha seats in the country and all 40 parliamentary seats in Bihar.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a plea moved by a transgender activist seeking directions to quash the FIRs registered against her for fasting until death to protest against ethnic clashes in Manipur.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, however, granted liberty to the activist, Malem Thongam, to approach the Manipur High Court for the redressal of her grievances.

"The petitioner would be at liberty to move the High Court of Manipur in the exercise of



its jurisdiction under section 482 of the Code of criminal Procedure, 1973. Hence, we are not inclined to entertain a petition under Article 32 of the Constitution of India," the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said.

Thongam began her hunger strike in the Delhi University

on February 22. She left Delhi for Manipur on February 27, where she continued her hunger strike at Imphal's Kangla western gate.

The Manipur Police arrested Thongam on March 2 on charges of attempt to die by suicide and promoting enmity between groups, but released her on March 5. A day later, she was arrested again on charges of protesting in public.

Manipur descended into chaos and untrammelled violence in May last year over a high court order directing the state government to consider including the non-tribal Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs).

"This 'undeclared emergency' worse than in 1975"

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah Friday said there was an "undeclared emergency" in the country and it was in more danger than during the Emergency in 1975.

"The usual complaint is that what we are going through is a worse phase than the Emergency. The only difference is that (former prime minister) Indira Gandhi declared it an Emergency.

"Today, the situation is like an emergency, but, it is not

called an emergency," Abdullah told reporters here when asked to comment on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's statement on the issue.

The former J-K chief minister said democracy was in greater danger today than what it was during the Emergency in 1975.

"Tell me, how much of freedom do you enjoy to report the truth?... Today, democracy is in more danger compared to those times. Indira had the courage to hold elections then. She did not arrest anyone before the elections.



Look at what is happening today. Wherever the BJP feels danger, candidates are arrest-

ed through some agencies. If this is not emergency, then release the opposition leaders and see whether the people support them or not," he said.

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi's barb on dynastic politics directed at the NC, PDP and the Congress, the NC leader said, "He (PM) rakes these issues when he comes here. We wait for his programmes so that he says something new."

Abdullah said Modi, who has been in power for the last 10 years, only talks about 'parivarwad'. "The BJP is not

opposed to families in politics. They are only opposed to those families who are opposed to the BJP," he said.

"If you see the distribution of their mandates this time, almost one-fifth of it belongs to political families. The BJP has given tickets to the families of its leaders.

"If that 'parivarwad' is fine for the BJP, then why do they have an objection when it comes to us? It is only because we oppose them. We have been opposing them and we will continue to oppose them," the NC vice president said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Softening stance

China responds positively to Modi's peace overtures, says it is for stability in relations

In the realm of international relations, the delicate nurturing of ties between nations often involves a mixture of diplomatic rhetoric, strategic manoeuvrings and the occasional statement to assuage tensions. Recently, two of the world's most populous nations, India and China, indulged in this exercise, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on the border situation drawing a positive response from China. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Modi underscored the importance of urgently addressing the ongoing border situation; he expressed optimism that through constructive engagement, peace and tranquillity could be restored. In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning emphasised the importance of "sound and stable" ties, highlighting mutual interests in regional peace and development. This response underscores China's commitment to maintaining constructive relations with India despite the border challenge. Mao's statement also sought to contextualise the border issue within the broader



framework of bilateral relations. Acknowledging the significance of the boundary question, she stressed that it should not overshadow the entirety of India-China relations. This perspective reflects China's nuanced approach to managing bilateral issues, advocating for dialogue, cooperation and strategic thinking to navigate differences.

The backdrop against which these statements unfold is the protracted border standoff that began in May 2020, following a violent clash near Pangong Tso. A research paper shared at the DGPs' Conference revealed that India's access to 26 out of 65 Patrolling Points (PPs) has been compromised. In Ladakh, an

estimated 1,000 sq km of territory has reportedly fallen under Chinese control. However, these figures have not been officially acknowledged. Subsequently, in June 2020, India and China withdrew their troops from Patrolling Point 14 in Galwan Valley. This was followed by disengagement from both the north and south banks of Pangong Tso in February 2021 and from Patrolling Point 17A near Gogra Post in August the same year. Despite numerous rounds of talks at the Corps Commander level, significant areas of contention remain unresolved. India's insistence on disengagement from specific regions, such as Depsang and Demchok, underscores the challenges involved in reaching a comprehensive resolution. The thawing of relations between India and China is not only crucial for both but also carries implications for the broader region and the world at large. As economic powerhouses and nuclear-armed States, their ability to manage their differences and cultivate stable ties is essential for regional peace and stability. Looking ahead, the path to normalised relations between India and China will likely be characterised by continued dialogue, confidence-building measures and pragmatic compromises. While the road may be fraught with obstacles, their shared interests provide a foundation upon which to build a more stable and constructive relationship.

PICTALK



Security personnel during a rehearsal for the Hirmachal Day Parade, in Shimla

PTI

Honouring the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh

As the nation commemorates the 105th anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, it reaffirms its commitment to justice, equality and nonviolence

Somen Sengupta, in his piece "Jallianwala Bagh revisited" published in his paper's April 10, 2022 edition on its 103rd anniversary, reflected, "This incident alone serves as a damning testament to the collective atrocity of firing upon an unarmed gathering." The actual number of casualties likely far exceeded the reported count. Somen further notes, "Dyer, facing the Hunter Commission in Lahore, ultimately lost his position with a measure of reprimand." April 13, 2024, marks the 105th anniversary of this tragic episode. It was amidst the auspicious Baisakhi celebrations on April 13, 1919, that Punjab was engulfed in tragedy, as around 20,000 rural attendees congregated at Jallianwala Bagh, oblivious to the impending horror. Durgadas Vaidya, editor of Waqt newspaper, addressed the peaceful protesters who were voicing opposition to the oppressive Rowlatt Act, passed on March 21, 1919. The non-violent Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi against the Act on April 6, 1919, culminated in his arrest on April 9 near Delhi, along



with Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. The unjust repercussions sparked widespread anger, leading to violent clashes, including the tragic killing of nearly 30 Indians on April 10 by police gunfire as they sought to cross Hall Gate Bridge into the civil lines. However, at Jallianwala Bagh, the scene turned chaotic as Brigadier-General Reginald ('Rex') Dyer arrived unannounced. Dyer, with meticulous planning, ordered troops to open fire on the unarmed crowd, plunging the gathering into chaos and leaving an indelible mark on history and the land. The bullet-riddled walls and the well, where desperate individuals sought refuge, continue to evoke shudders. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre claimed the lives of 379 individuals, with numerous others sustaining injuries.

The relentless firing of 1,650 rounds by British troops under Dyer's command resulted in a bloodbath. Moreover, Dyer's imposition of a curfew post-massacre exacerbated the tragedy, denying grieving families access to their deceased loved ones. The scale of suppression delayed the event's revelation in the media, only brought to light by courageous journalists like B G Horniman of Bombay Chronicle and later Amrita Bazar Patrika, prompting global leaders like Lenin to express solidarity with the suffering Indian populace. Professor K L Tuteja, a historian at Kurukshetra University, describes the massacre as a pivotal moment that drew sharp criticism both in England and India. Winston Churchill labeled it a 'monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation,' while former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith deemed it 'One of the worst outrages in the whole of history.' These reactions underscored the profound shock and dismay even among those who believed in the justness of British rule in

India. Within India, the massacre left a deep scar, with many viewing it as an unparalleled atrocity. Mahatma Gandhi's poignant response encapsulated the sentiment: "We do not seek to punish Dyer. We harbor no thirst for vengeance. We seek to transform the system that bred Dyer." The massacre significantly influenced the trajectory of the anti-imperialist struggle, bolstering forces that challenged British rule in India. Prominent figures like Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and Annie Besant vehemently condemned the massacre, advocating for peaceful resistance against British colonial oppression. Gandhi relinquished the title of 'Kaiser-i-Hind,' bestowed by the British, while Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest. Nehru denounced it as a 'monstrous crime,' emphasising the nation's duty to honour those who sacrificed their lives for political freedom. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

A harbinger of justice and equality

As the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar laid down the bedrock of fundamental rights and protections for all citizens

Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar, born on April 14, 1891, will ever be revered for his contributions towards building a just and inclusive India. He was a guardian angel of social justice, a harbinger of inclusivity, justice and equality. As an eminent jurist, economist and social reformer, he dedicated his life to eradicating caste-based discrimination and uplifting the marginalised communities in our country. As the architect of the Indian Constitution, he ensured fundamental rights and safeguards for all citizens.

As his legacy continues to inspire millions globally even today, standing as a beacon of hope for deprived communities striving for dignity and equality, there is a lot we can learn and inspire ourselves from his vision of social justice, which was profoundly rooted in the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. He recognised the deep-rooted inequalities entrenched within Indian society, particularly the caste system, which relegated millions to a life of discrimination and oppression. He fought for the abolition of untouchability, which is against the teachings of the Vedas, the Atrocious caste system had jolted him from within. To give shock treatment to Hindu society, he embraced Buddhism, which is so deeply rooted in Indian ethos and value system. He was not inimical to Hindutva. He had resentment against Hinduism but he was not opposed to Hinduism. He did not embrace any other alien religion though Islamic and Christian scholars tried their best to influence him. Coming from a very poor family, Dr Ambedkar suffered multiple social and economic hardships but he did not give up. He fought against the odds bravely. He was the 14th child of his parents. His father gave him good Zanskar and used to share stories and thoughts of great saints like Sant Tukaram, Sant Gyaneshwar, Sant Shiromani Ravidas, teachings of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He did his matriculation in 1908 from Elphinstone High School. He studied Economics and Political Science at Elphinstone College. In 1912,



he got a degree from Bombay University.

With a scholarship from Maharaja of Baroda, he went to Columbia University, New York City from where he got a Master's degree in June 1915 after completing his thesis on 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. In 1916, he went to the London School of Economics. In 1920, received the D Sc by London University! He also went to the University of Bonn, Germany. In June 1927, he was awarded a Doctorate by the University of Columbia. He was a rare Indian politician of his time who studied at Columbia University, LSE and University of Bonn.

Dr Ambedkar inspires us to imbibe the principle of 'Study and Struggle' to create an incredible niche for himself as an intellectual as well. His vision of social justice emphasised the importance of education and political representation for the oppressed castes, viewing them as essential tools for empowerment and emancipation. He laid the foundation for a more inclusive and just society. He believed in the idea and ideals of dialogue. He was against armed struggle to restore the glory of every human being. He believed in the principle of co-existence, following the teachings of truth, non-violence and

HIS VISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE OPPRESSED CASTES, VIEWING THEM AS ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION

respect for the people of all castes and religions.

Dr Ambedkar viewed education not merely as a means of acquiring academic qualifications but as a catalyst for the liberation of the oppressed and marginalised communities.

He emphasised the importance of universal access to education, particularly for those historically denied opportunities due to caste discrimination and social inequality. He was also an ardent champion of the cultivation of values such as empathy, justice and equality. According to him, the cultivation of the mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence. He was also a great champion of women's empowerment.

He famously said: "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." Dr Ambedkar held strong convictions about national unity and integrity, recognising them as fundamental pillars for the progress and stability of any nation. Dr Ambedkar advocated for a society where every individual had equal rights and opportunities, emphasising the need for social harmony and mutual respect. He also played a significant role in shaping India's

labour laws. His tireless efforts as India's first Law Minister paved the way for landmark legislation like the Factories Act, the Minimum Wages Act and the Industrial Disputes Act, which continue to serve as cornerstones of labour rights and industrial progress in the country.

He stressed the significance of upholding the principles of democracy, secularism and constitutionalism to ensure the protection of the rights of weaker sections of society and the preservation of national unity.

His vision for India was one of inclusivity and pluralism, where diversity was celebrated as a source of strength rather than division. He saw untouchability as not just a moral wrong but also a significant impediment to the social progress and unity of India. He advocated for its complete abolition, stressing the need for legislative measures and social reform.

As we remember Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary today, let us express our gratitude to him and commit ourselves to a democratic, secular and inclusive nation.

(The author is the Governor of Haryana. The views expressed are strictly his personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KEJRIWAL GAINS WEIGHT IN JAIL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Kejriwal weight has increased by one kg in jail, say jail authorities", published on April 11, this is my response. The conflicting reports on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's health and treatment during his judicial custody have ignited a fierce debate. Tihar jail authorities claim a weight gain of 1 kg, contradicting earlier assertions by AAP leaders of a significant weight loss. While Tihar's report indicates stability in Kejriwal's weight and fluctuating blood sugar levels, AAP alleges deteriorating health conditions and infringement of basic rights, drawing parallels to historical atrocities.

The rhetoric escalates as AAP accuses the Modi Government of employing draconian measures akin to Hitler's regime, emphasising PM Modi's suppression of Kejriwal's rights. Allegations of emotional manipulation and restrictive measures during legal meetings further intensify the political turmoil surrounding Kejriwal's incarceration. This saga not only reflects the contentious relationship between AAP and the central Government but also raises concerns about the treatment of political detainees and the politicisation of health issues in judicial proceedings.

Amanullah | Hyderabad

YOGI'S DEVELOPMENT PITCH

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Vote for Modi for continued peace, progress: Yogi at JK", published on April 11, this is my response. In a passionate appeal, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath advocated for the re-election of a Narendra Modi-led Government, highlighting peace and development as its cornerstones. Speaking at a rally in Kathua, he lauded the Government's efforts in combating terrorism and fostering development nationwide.

Dr Jitendra Singh emphasised regional progress, invoking sentiments among voters. His critique of the Congress Party underscored historical grievances, while

Byju's crisis



Apropos the news article, "Decacom's fall signals startup governance crisis", published on April 11, this is my response. The recent turmoil at Byju's, culminating in the ousting of its founder, highlights deeper issues plaguing India's startup ecosystem. The shift from edtech to hardware sales led to a loss of core value, undermining investor trust and causing a stag-

gering 95% drop in valuation. Corporate governance lapses, including financial opacity and delayed audits, have further eroded confidence. The Extraordinary General Meeting's decision to reconstitute the board signals a necessary step towards accountability. However, legal challenges and interim orders cloud the path forward. Amidst this uncertainty, one solution emerges: allowing investors a larger role in reshaping Byju's trajectory, akin to successful interventions in other startups. Beyond financial recovery, the focus must remain on Byju's original mission: democratising education for Indian students. Restoring faith in Byju's not only revitalises the startup landscape but also sustains aspirations nationwide. Ultimately, the road to redemption demands a return to Byju's roots as an edtech innovator, guided by transparent governance and investor stewardship.

Swapna Singh | Ranchi

praising the recent construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as a symbol of faith's resurgence. The event signals the BJP's concerted push in the Udhampur constituency, with Prime Minister Modi set to address a rally shortly. However, the opposition, notably Choudhary Lal Singh's camp, questions the fairness of campaign resources allocation, alleging undue favouritism. With a diverse electorate and a fierce triangular contest, the upcoming polls on April 19 in Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat promise to be closely contested, with each candidate vying for the crucial support of first-time voters.

Pritam Dubey | Gwalior

CHARITY IS A UNIVERSAL VIRTUE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Essence of Charity: Insights from the Gita", published on April 11, this is my response. The essence of charity, extending beyond monetary assistance, resonates through various religious and philosophical teachings. The Bhagavad-Geeta delineates charity's nuances, emphasising its virtue in goodness, devoid of expectation or com-

pulsion. It stresses discernment in selecting worthy recipients, cautioning against enabling dependency.

Lord Krishna's discourse distinguishes charity in passion, highlighting its pitfalls of transactionalism and begrudging giving. In contrast, true charity transcends materiality, manifesting through diverse forms — money, goods, labour, words and emotions — each bearing significance in uplifting others. Across faiths, the ethos of charity endures. Jesus' exhortation to aid the needy echoes alongside Islam's emphasis on generosity and compassion. Such teachings underscore that charity isn't merely an act but a reflection of one's inner disposition towards humanity. In essence, charity embodies a universal virtue, fostering empathy, kindness and communal upliftment. Beyond religious dogma, it stands as a testament to human solidarity and the intrinsic value of extending a helping hand to those in need.

Sumit Sharma | Bhopal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

MONEY MATTERS

Retail inflation declines to 5-month low of 4.85 % in March

Retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food prices, according to official data released on Friday. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was 5.09 per cent in February and 5.66 per cent in March 2023. Previously, CPI-based inflation was the lowest at 4.87 per cent in October 2023. The inflation in the food basket was at 8.52 per cent in March, down from 8.66 per cent in February, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). The government has tasked the Reserve Bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. According to the Reserve Bank, which factors in consumer inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, food price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward. The central bank has projected retail inflation at 4.5 per cent for the current fiscal assuming a normal monsoon.



Surge in customer queries for water-related services

Key urban cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad saw a sharp rise in customer queries for water-related services due to severe water scarcity, according to a report on Friday. Bengaluru experienced a 101 per cent surge while Hyderabad saw a 56 per cent jump in consumer queries related to water resources, suggesting that these two major metropolises are severely impacted by water scarcity, the report by local business search engine Justdial revealed. The recent El Nino phenomenon has further compounded the issue, leaving a significant portion of the country reeling under severe drought conditions, it said. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also issued warnings of a hotter and drier summer this year, attributing it to the El Nino effect, it noted. There has also been a significant rise in searches for water-related services.



Vodafone Idea shares tank nearly 6% intra-day

Shares of Vodafone Idea on Friday declined nearly 6 per cent in intra-day trade after the floor price of its follow-on public offer was fixed at a discount to the last closing price, but the stock bounced back to settle flat. Struggling telecom operator Vodafone Idea on Friday said it plans to raise up to Rs 18,000 crore through share sale in the biggest follow-on public offer as it scrambles to mobilise resources to stay afloat. Voda-Idea shares will be issued, under the FPO, in a price band of Rs 10-11 apiece against Friday's closing price of Rs 12.96 on the BSE. The stock tanked 5.41 per cent to Rs 12.23 in intra-day on the BSE. However, later it recovered the early lost ground and climbed 2.55 per cent to Rs 13.26 during the flag-end of trade. The stock finally ended at Rs 12.96, marginally up by 0.23 per cent. At the NSE, the stock ended flat at Rs 12.95 after falling 5.79 per cent to Rs 12.20 in intra-day. The share sale will open on April 18 and close on April 22, Vodafone Idea, the country's third-largest telecom carrier, said in a stock exchange filing.



Gold breaches Rs 73k-mark

SILVER TOO HITS FRESH PEAK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rallied for the fourth straight session and hit fresh peaks on Friday, with the yellow metal gaining sharply by Rs 1,050 to breach Rs 73,000 per 10 grams level amid bullish global trend.

According to HDFC Securities, gold price surged Rs 1,050 to hit its lifetime high of Rs 73,350 per 10 grams in Delhi. It had closed at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Similarly, silver prices zoomed Rs 1,400 to hit a new record of Rs 86,300 per kg.

"Spot gold (24 carats) prices in the Delhi markets are trading at a record high of Rs 73,350 per 10 grams, up by Rs 1,050, taking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Commodity markets were partially closed on Thursday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex traded at USD

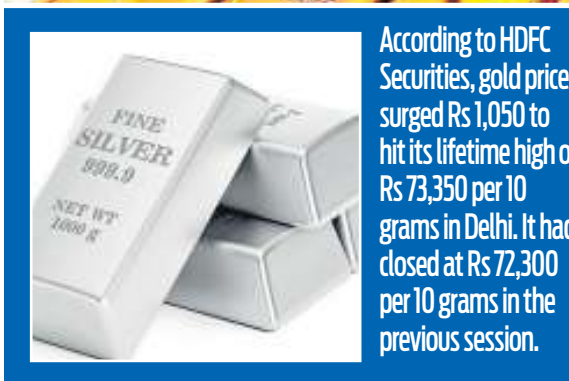
2,388 per ounce, up USD 48 from the previous closing level.

Gold reached a new all-time high in the early hours of the European trading day on Friday. Safe haven demand supported the spike in precious metals following heightened Middle East tensions and the possibility of Iran retaliating against an Israeli strike on its embassy in Syria, Gandhi said.

In addition, silver was also quoting higher at USD 28.95 per ounce. In the previous session, it had settled at USD 28.05 per ounce.

Meanwhile, in the futures trade on the MCX, gold climbed to an all-time high of Rs 72,828 per 10 grams in the intra-day trade. The most-traded June contract of the yellow metal was trading at Rs 72,681 per 10 grams, up by Rs 1,037 or 1.45 per cent.

According to Praveen Singh, Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, upcoming macroeconomic numbers to be announced by the UK and Germany as well as Chinese trade data will provide



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further direction for gold prices.

"The European Central Bank (ECB), as expected, kept the benchmark rates unchanged, but gave the indication that it could cut interest rates in June. The

ECB President Christine Lagarde signalled that growing confidence on cooling inflation would lead the central bank to cut rates at its next policy meeting on June 6," Singh said.



Industrial production grows 5.7% in Feb

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production grew 5.7 per cent in February 2024, according to official data released on Friday. The factory output measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) witnessed a growth of 6 per cent in February 2023. India's Index of Industrial Production grew by 5.7 per cent in February 2024, an official statement said. The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew 5 per cent in February 2024, down from 5.9 per cent in the year-ago month.

In February this year, mining production rose 8 per cent, and power output increased 7.5 per cent.

India commands over 50 % of Global Capability Centres

PNS ■ CHENNAI

India commands over 50 per cent of the Global Capability Centres, and it remains the most preferred destination to set up such GCCs, a report by business consulting company ANSR said on Friday.

ANSR Global is a consulting firm that enables organisations to build and manage teams through Global Capability Centres. The company has established over 110 Global Capability Centres, using 12 million sq ft of office space and employs over 1.20 lakh people.

According to the quarterly report released on Friday, India commands over 50 per cent of the GCC market with a mix of unique talent and a robust startup system, and the country remains the most preferred destination to set up a GCC.

The study also revealed that nearly 80 per cent of GCCs were directing their focus on Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Data Analytics.



According to the quarterly report released on Friday, India commands over 50 per cent of the GCC market with a mix of unique talent and a robust startup system, and the country remains the most preferred destination to set up a GCC.

"We are witnessing a transformative shift in the Global Capability Centres landscape, with a strong focus on digital capabilities such as AI/ML, analytics, and cyber security driving unprecedented growth," said ANSR Co-founder Vikram Ahuja.

As per the findings, Bengaluru and Hyderabad have solidified their presence in GCCs with 30 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively followed by Delhi 15 per

cent, Mumbai 12 per cent, Pune 10 per cent, and Chennai 9 per cent.

As businesses aim to leverage India's skilled workforce and favorable economic conditions, the GCC sector, valued at USD 46 billion, is forecast to surge to USD 110 billion by 2030, the report said.

This growth trajectory is expected to employ over 4.5 million professionals across 2,400 Global Capability Centres.

CNH expands India Technology Centre



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Italian-American off-road construction and agriculture firm CNH on Friday inaugurated the cutting-edge Multi-Vehicle Simulator (MVS) at the company's India Technology Centre (ITC).

The company also announced an expansion of the ITC with a new floor, spanning 32,000 square feet equipped with high-tech amenities including three R&D labs as well as collaborative work areas. "This is the first-of-its-kind simulator technology in the off-highway vehicle segment in India," the company said in a statement.

Speaking at the inauguration, Friedrich Eichler, Chief Technology Officer, CNH, said the expansion and enhancement of ITC exemplify the company's unwavering commitment to innovation, harnessing India's rich talent

pool. "This technological advancement also supports our sustainability goals by helping us reduce waste and improve quality by testing and evaluating our products in the virtual world before developing a prototype or testing them in the real world," he added.

Ashish Sharma, Vice President and Managing Director of ITC, CNH said, "This development is a further step towards CNH's vision to position India as a key technology location, in addition to its role as an industrial hub."

The MVS will play a pivotal role in CNH's global operations, the company said, adding that it will serve as a key platform for various functions, including ergonomics simulation, user experience testing of controls, customer clinics, design reviews for product development teams, product validation and employee training.

Sensex, Nifty tank 1% after record-breaking rally

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty plunged by 1 per cent on Friday as investors booked profits after a recent record-breaking rally amid weak trends from Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 793.25 points or 1.06 per cent to settle at 74,244.90 with 27 of its components in the red. During the day, it dropped 848.84 points or 1.13 per cent to 74,189.31.

The NSE Nifty declined 234.40 points or 1.03 per cent to close at 22,519.40 with 45 of its constituents ending lower.

From the Sensex basket, Sun Pharma, Maruti, Power Grid,

Titan, JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were the major laggards. Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services and Nestle were the gainers.



Street ended mostly with gains on Thursday.

"US inflation soared by 0.4% MoM, surpassing expectations and triggering a spike in US Treasury yields. Investors are questioning the feasibility of the US Fed's anticipated three rate cuts this year, leading to underperformance in EMs. Meanwhile, European markets excelled as the ECB maintained policy rates but hinted at a potential rate cut soon.

"Indian markets consolidated amidst worries over delayed US rate cuts, escalating Middle East tensions driving oil prices up, and subdued Q4 earnings projections," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

HFCL subsidiary bags Rs 65 cr order to supply optical fiber cables

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic telecom gear firm HFCL's subsidiary HTL has bagged an order of around Rs 65 crore to supply optical fibre cable to a domestic private telecom operator, the company said on Friday.

The company has to execute the order by July, it said in a regulatory filing.

"The Company along with its material subsidiary, HTL Limited, has received the purchase orders aggregating to approximately Rs 64.93 crores for supply of Optical Fiber Cables to one of the leading Private Telecom Operators of the



Country," HFCL said in the filing.



TCS net profit rises 9 % to Rs 12,434 cr in Q4

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Country's largest software services company TCS on Friday reported a 9.1 per cent growth in its March quarter net profit at Rs 12,434 crore.

The Tata Group company's post tax profit during the January-March period last year stood at Rs 11,392 crore.

In the fiscal year 2023-24, the company's net profit grew 9 per cent to Rs 45,908 crore, as per an exchange filing.

In the March quarter, its revenue grew 3.5 per cent to Rs 61,237 crore year on year.

Its operating profit margin expanded by 1.50 per cent to 26 per cent.

TCS scrip closed 0.45 per cent higher at Rs 4,000.30 apiece on the BSE on Friday as against a 1.06 per cent correction in the benchmark.

Rupee falls, closes at 83.44 against US\$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 13 paise to close at 83.44 against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by a massive sell-off in domestic equities and a strong greenback against major crosses overseas.

Forex traders said elevated crude oil prices also dented investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.36 and touched an intraday low of 83.44 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 83.44, registering a loss of 13 paise from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed flat at 83.31 against the US dollar.

Forex markets were closed on Thursday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the

greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.51 per cent higher at 105.82.

The US dollar rose to a five-month high on hot inflation. Headline and core inflation topped the forecast, leading to diminishing expectations of a rate cut by the US Federal Reserve in June. Hawkish FOMC meeting minutes supported the greenback.

Forex traders said rising crude oil prices will have a negative impact on the rupee as it will threaten the current account dynamics of the country. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.97 per cent to USD 90.61 per barrel.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on weak global equities amid hawkish US data and surge in global crude oil prices.



1 in 4 women feel inconsistency in workplace equity

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Even as companies are stepping up efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector, a report on Friday revealed that one out of every four women employees feel inconsistency in terms of recognition, fair pay, and workplace equity.

According to workplace assessment and recognition organisation Great Place To Work India, gender disparities persist despite overall positive sentiment within the BFSI sector, underscoring the need for focused efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.



Women employees are 5 per cent less satisfied with workplace equity compared to their male colleagues, the 'Insights from India's Best Workplaces in BFSI 2024' report, which presented insights gathered from a survey

among 12 lakh employees from 167 organisations, added. The report also revealed that there were notable disparities between Gen Z and Millennial employees, particularly in their intent to stay long-term, sense of pur-

pose at work, and perceptions of job security. Generation Z are those born between 1997 and 2012, while Millennial are those born between 1981 and 1996.

Almost 21 per cent of Gen Z and 15 per cent of Millennial employees are seeking meaningful work and a sense of impact within their roles, reflecting a shift in priorities and expectations.

Meanwhile, the report found that there has been a decline in employee sentiment in fintech, health and general insurance, and investment verticals.

This decline in employee sentiment is highest (10 per cent) among Millennial and Gen-Z managers early in their tenure, said the report.

These findings emphasise the importance of targeted strategies to address challenges unique to each vertical and demographic group, the report noted.

"The BFSI sector is witnessing robust hiring fuelled by both established players and innovative fintech companies. Banks are growing stronger, fintech is expanding, and investments and insurance are on the rise.

"Despite offering unique benefits and healthy profit-sharing practices, a concerning trend of disparity emerges within BFSI workplaces, which cannot be ignored," Great Place To Work, India, Serial Entrepreneur and CEO Yeshasvini Ramaswamy added.

Bharti Hexacom shares make remarkable debut

SETTLE NEARLY 43% HIGHER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Bharti Airtel's arm Bharti Hexacom Ltd listed with a huge premium and ended with a gain of nearly 43 per cent against the issue price of Rs 570 on Friday.

The stock started the trade at Rs 755.20, registering a gain of 32.49 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 54.36 per cent to Rs 879.90. Shares of the company later ended at Rs 813.75, up 42.76 per cent.

On the NSE, the stock made its debut at Rs 755, rising 32.45 per cent. It ended at Rs 814, a jump of 42.80 per cent.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 40,687.50 crore. In traded volume terms, 20.94 lakh shares of the company were traded at the BSE and over 534.65 lakh shares at the NSE during the day.

The rally in the stock came on a day when the equity benchmark indices declined 1 per cent each. Bharti Hexacom's initial public offering received 29.88



times subscription on the last day of bidding on April 5.

This was the first public issue of the financial year 2024-25. The company's Rs 4,275 crore initial share sale was open for public subscription from April 3-5. The company had fixed a price band of Rs 542-570 per share for the Initial Public Offer (IPO).

'I STAY IN GACHIBOWLI, AND IT LOOKS LIKE THE USA FOR US'

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Growing up in Hyderabad since her childhood, Ratna Mehera Balabhadra's fascination with the runway ignited a dream: to grace the ramp at least once in her lifetime. Last year, that dream began to take shape when she participated in the Mrs. India Telangana pageant. After auditions and rigorous rounds, the culmination of this journey occurred in September 2023 during the grand finale held right here in Hyderabad.

"The city's vibrant energy and rich cultural backdrop undoubtedly influenced my path, infusing my pageantry experience with a unique blend of tradition and modernity." As she continues to explain, "I was passionate about ramp walks from my childhood, so that inspired me to believe that I should be ramped at least once in my lifetime, so my journey started last year in September with the Mrs. India Telangana pageant."

As a proud Hyderabad, she has witnessed a remarkable change in her beloved city—from its traditional roots as Nizams to the home of several global IT companies. The city has gone through a transformation and has emerged as a magnet for technology and innovation. The establishment of numerous IT companies, including her venture, reflects the city's dynamic business ecosystem. She expresses, "I am into business, so me and my husband started an IT company, therefore, every time we started something new, we received a good response from Hyderabad businesswise."

However, having grown up in this vibrant city, she shares her sentiments about the stark contrast between the past and the present. The Hyderabad of yesteryears exuded a regal charm with its historic monuments, bustling bazaars, and the iconic Charminar. Today, however, it is in a different landscape—one that resonates with modernity, progress, and global connectivity.

Take Gachibowli, for instance—a neighborhood that has become synonymous with cutting-edge technology and innovation. Its skyline boasts sleek glass towers, multinational corporations, and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. As one walks through its streets, it's hard not to draw parallels with cities like San Francisco or New York. The fusion of tradition and modernity is palpable, creating an ambiance that feels both familiar and exhilarating! In her words, "I was born and brought up in Hyderabad, and I see a huge difference between the present Hyderabad and the one that is different now. The current Hyderabad is different. I stay in Gachibowli, and it looks

Ratna Mehera Balabhadra, who was recently crowned as the Classic Mrs. India Telangana, gets candid with *The Pioneer* for our special weekly segment of Hyderabad.



like the USA for us."

In this transformed Hyderabad, the aroma of Biryani still wafts through the air, but it mingles with the buzz of startup pitches and late-night coding sessions. Ratna Meher has some long-lasting memories in this city about her childhood at one of the renowned schools in Hyderabad, St. Ann's School. "I grew up in Secunderabad, so I attended St. Ann's School in my childhood; it was a very famous school in both the twin cities. I was proud to be in a famous school in twin cities. We used to have a fun and fair competitive spirit."

But ramp walking was always her dream, though she was unaware that a Mrs. India pageant even existed. She had always assumed it was only for unmarried women. When she discovered the truth, she wondered if it could also be a part of the pageant. She says, "I never knew that something called the Mrs. India pageant existed; we always thought it was for unmarried women. Only when I got to know, I was wondering if it's true or not and if it could also be part of the pageant."

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in the world of pageantry, impacting both the contestants and the events themselves. Hyderabad provided access to good infrastructure for pageantry and crowned Mrs. India. As she says, "We wore a crown in the Novotel hotel in Hitech City, and it was arranged very elaborately and nicely. We felt good while doing that ramp. We usually don't expect that much, but Hyderabad's infrastructure is good; we can do pageantry more in Hyderabad." Hyderabad's infrastructure, particularly exemplified by the elaborate arrangements at the Novotel Hotel in Hitech City, played a pivotal role in creating a memorable pageantry experience for her.

Her words resonate: "Hyderabad's potential for hosting more pageantry events is indeed promising. During the Mrs. Telangana pageant, the mentors provided invaluable guidance and assisted with various tasks, including wardrobe and time management. The pageant experience taught me the art of reusing clothing, and I participated in grooming sessions to improve my stage presence. Not everyone is naturally extroverted, but these sessions helped me overcome stage fright. My mentors were unwavering in their support throughout every task and session."

She is also fortunate to have a supportive husband who has been there for her from the very beginning. His encouragement extends beyond the pageant, and he helped her in all aspects of life. Additionally, her children are understanding and supportive, allowing her to dedicate time to herself.

When asked about her hometown, Hyderabad, she expressed a longing for the lush greenery that adorned her surroundings as the concrete dreams took center stage, and while travelling across the city, she recollects all her memories of school and college life. She says, "I like everything about Hyderabad. As I was born and brought up here, each road holds a memory. Whenever I travel from Gachibowli to Secunderabad, all memories of my childhood, fun I had with my friends flash, and of course developments in the city, I dislike the traffic and way we are cutting down the trees."



A LOOK AT THE HOTTEST TATTOO TRENDS OF 2024

Tattoos have always been a timeless form of self-expression, and in recent years, they've become even more popular among individuals of all ages in India.

Here's a look at some of the latest tattoo trends captivating the hearts of Gen Z and Millennials across the country, from celebrity tattoo artist Vikas Malani, also the founder of BodyCanvas Tattoos!

Minimalistic floral designs: These tattoos are all about simplicity but still look stunning. They feature delicate flowers drawn with clean lines and soft colors, adding a touch of elegance to anyone's style.

Geometric patterns tattoos: These are modern and sleek. Think of intricate shapes and lines creating cool designs that look like they belong in an art gallery. From simple triangles to fancy mandalas, these tattoos are for those who want to stand out.

Finger tattoos: Couples are ditching traditional rings for tattoos on their ring fingers. The ring finger tattoo trend offers a stylish and permanent alternative to traditional wedding rings, symbolising love, commitment, and partnership in a personalised way.

Sports player tattoos: For sports enthusiasts, tattoos honouring their

favourite athletes have become a popular way to showcase their passion and allegiance. Whether it's a portrait of a beloved player or a depiction of a memorable moment on the field, sports player tattoos capture the adrenaline and excitement of the game, creating a lasting tribute to athletic heroes and iconic sporting moments.

Watercolour tattoos: These tattoos look like they've been painted on with watercolours. They're colourful, dreamy, and add a fun twist to any design, whether it's a landscape or a portrait. Watercolour tattoos add a splash of colour and creativity to any tattoo collection.

Script tattoos with personal significance: Script tattoos allow individuals to carry their favourite quotes, phrases, or mantras with them wherever they go. Whether it's a word of inspiration, a reminder of strength, or a tribute to a loved one, script tattoos hold personal significance and serve as constant reminders of what matters most in life.

Tattoo trends in India are as diverse and vibrant as the country itself. Tattoos reflect a blend of tradition, modernity, and personal expression, allowing individuals to wear their stories and passions on their skin with pride. So, if you're thinking about getting inked, there's no better time to join the trend and express yourself in your own unique way!

Restoring glory is the goal!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Managing Director of Myraa Group Ajay Chauhan's inspirational path is proof of the strength of resiliency and willpower in the face of difficulty. When he was sixteen years old, he was responsible for providing for his family when they were forced to flee because of the total collapse of the financial system. The hustler, on the verge of bankruptcy, was forced to put his studies on hold in order to support his family! Taking the plunge into entrepreneurship and offering some thoughts on it, he says, "For me, it has been an extremely hectic trip from the start. It all began when I was only 16 years old, driven by the stark truth of my family's financial collapse to travel to a different city with just 1500 rupees and an enormous amount of resolve. The metropolis, with its frantic pace, turned into my hub for bustle. I had to take odd jobs to make ends meet, therefore I had to start from scratch and learn the ropes of the hospitality business."

Equipped with doubt and unmatched tenacity, he began his journey at the busy VT station by meandering around until he happened to find his first position in the hotel sector. He applied the same strict work ethic to every hospitality position, no matter how tiny, and he was well-versed in the inner workings of the restaurant industry from the ground up. A turning point was reached at one of the eateries! At his place of employment, a fortuitous meeting led to a change in focus towards recruitment. This change signalled the start of an adventure that would completely alter his course.

"However, things changed when I happened to run into someone by accident while waiting tables at a restaurant. I wandered into the recruitment industry, and all of a sudden, I had a new road ahead of me! At Al Taher, which served as my launching pad, I put in a ton of work. And when the chance presented itself, I jumped at it, and my tenacity enabled me to transform my faltering company into a major player on the world stage. Yes, the journey from modest beginnings to managing director of Myraa Group has been quite an experience. However, I wouldn't alter a thing. Since each obstacle has helped me become the person I am today," the speculator spoke to us in a tone that conveyed

a distinct kind of spirit. "Moving from the hospitality industry to recruitment marked a significant turning point in my career," he says, continuing with the same level of zeal.

"The choice to switch to recruitment after starting my career in hospitality was not taken lightly, but it ended up being one of the best ones for my professional path. The disparities between the two industries made it difficult at first, but I made the decision to face it head-on and adjust as needed. I am appreciative of the mentorship I got, which enabled me to make the adjustment." The adventure that shaped him into the person he is today started in 1995. He put everything he had into working full-time at Al Taher, where he developed his client management skills and helped close the demand-supply gap. He soon left for the UK to seek a career in management course that served as the basis for a new chapter, and while working in the UK gave him experience, he began to doubt whether it was in line with his aspirations.

"Although going worldwide was a challenge, my life's events had equipped me to never give up. When the company underwent a restructuring in 1999, I recognised that the African market, which was then beginning to gather traction, had a lot of promise. I have to say that entering the African market was not easy, and the first three to four years were difficult without any significant clients. One pivotal milestone occurred in 2004 when, in spite of several challenges, including a short timeline, visa issues, and a dearth of technology, I managed to successfully hire 300 people for a project in Mali," he continues. After completing his management school and returning to India, he happened to speak with his boss, who had paid for his studies in the UK, about an unforeseen opportunity. The recruitment firm was about to close, so Ajay took the opportunity to suggest taking over. Along with the same tenacity and will, he traversed the complex terrain, turning the little hut into the cornerstone of a workforce that would eventually expand not just throughout India but the entire world! He continued, "Taking over the company when it was facing closure wasn't just a business move; it was about restoring its glory."

He revealed more such intriguing insights. "In February, we will have been together for 25 years, although it doesn't seem like that long. I'm glad I

took advantage of the chance to grow the business at the time and made it even better. My career with the company began when I decided to take a risk and transfer my emphasis to Africa, where prospects awaited. At the time, I was working with the Middle East market, but I also saw how saturated the sector was. My career was defined by the move from hospitality to recruitment, which also made me an entrepreneur." He reorganised the business in 1999 and set out on an arduous quest to acquire clients. The first major project involving the recruitment of 300 people for Mali in Africa in 2004 marked the beginning of new opportunities brought about by the expansion to Africa! His remarkable journey of diversification did not end there. Amidst the difficulties caused by COVID-19 in 2020, the firm changed its focus to contracting and building, landing a significant project in Madagascar. Investing in vocational skills training in 2019 demonstrated a dedication to upskilling the African labour force.

"Although obstacles are unavoidable, I have learned to view them as chances for improvement. Overcoming barriers has become simpler thanks to technological improvements like e-visas and better diplomatic services. In addition, my robust network—which is based on mutual respect and trust—has been crucial in getting over obstacles. The pandemic had caused havoc, and manpower consulting had stopped. Everyone was going through a difficult period, and my people's safety came first. I had to make a difficult decision since I couldn't jeopardise anyone's safety. However, obstacles might occasionally present unanticipated chances. I had a moment to reflect and take a



Myraa Group's MD Ajay Chauhan's inspirational path is proof of the strength of resiliency and willpower in the face of difficulty. He speaks to *The Pioneer* sharing his journey, shifting multiple career paths, and more.

step back during the break. It became evident to me that, in order to weather such storms in the future, I needed to diversify my business. At that point, the notion of going into contracting and building was raised. Since I witnessed some of my clients liquidate their businesses during the epidemic, I was initially hesitant to enter the industry. Although it wasn't a snap choice, my long history of closely collaborating with African construction companies gave me the courage to take the risk."

He made the decision to take the risk because he was confident in his knowledge and connections inside the construction sector. Although it took him some time to get the hang of the construction industry, he managed to succeed with the help of regional companies and the African government. The path has been full of benefits as well as hardships. Above all, it has enabled him to maintain the safety and well-being of his workforce.

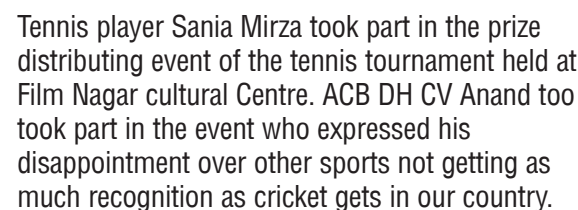
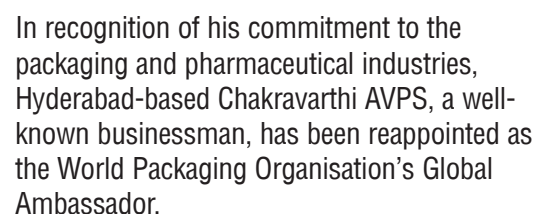
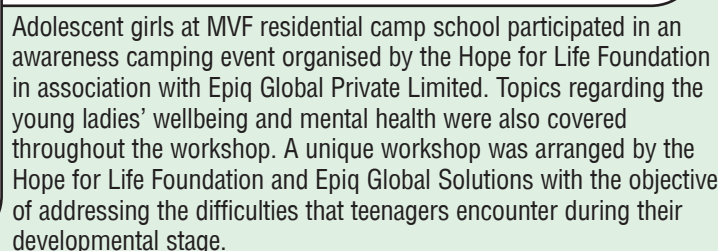
He made sure to include, "Since 2012, taking up marathon running has evolved from a pastime to a lifestyle decision that has taught me discipline, which I use in both my personal and professional life. Running has allowed me to have more time for reflection. This path has influenced not only my physical health but also my outlook on life, which goes beyond the workplace." Running is Ajay's escape from the boardroom; he has been pursuing this hobby for the last seven or eight years. His participation in marathons all over the world—from Berlin to Bhutan, Amsterdam to Mumbai—testifies to his tenacity and resolve, both on and off the field.

what's brewing?

CoinSwitch PRO announced the biggest crypto trading league for the Indian crypto community. The trading league offers a prize pool of INR 1 crore to skilled traders who use their expertise to increase their ranking, and the top trader will win the contest. To win, participants must actively trade on the CoinSwitch PRO platform. The top trader will be rewarded with a crypto world tour, an extravagant, all-expenses-paid journey to Davos, Switzerland, Dubai, and Singapore. The second-place winner will receive a high-performance Kawasaki Ninja ZX-10R superbike, and the trader in third place will be awarded with Bitcoin (BTC) worth INR 10 lakhs.

Till when: 5 PM IST on May 31, 2024

Time: 12.30 PM to 4.00 PM




Rules

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

SOLUTION

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Playback singer Suryansh, who has been associated with various films so far, spoke about his latest song *Baaja*, his long association with AR Rahman, and more.



PONNIYIN SELVAN SINGER MAKES HIS B'WOOD DEBUT

K. RAMYA SREE

Introducing playback singer Suryansh, an artist whose mesmerising voice has woven melodies that resonate with the soul. Hailing from Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, Suryansh has carved a niche in the realm of music with his unique blend of talent and passion. With a repertoire spanning across various genres, the singer has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the world of music, especially in South India and Bollywood.

He has been a music composer, arranger, producer, and playback singer in his career thus far. Well known for his work in films like *Vikram Vedha*, *Ponniyin Selvan*, *Master*, *Dil Bechara*, and *Mimi*, among others, the singer's work has been widely shared by the legendary AR Rahman, with whom he collaborated on a few projects.

Join me in exploring the enchanting world of Suryansh as he speaks about his latest release, *Baaja* from *Amar Singh Chamkila*, working in south films, especially *Ponniyan Selvan*, and more.

Beginning with his journey for *Ponniyin Selvan*, Suryansh finds working on the music for the film an extraordinary experience. He shared, "Being part of the creative process alongside legends like AR Rahman and Mani Ratnam was nothing short of exhilarating. The journey began in 2019, and from the outset, it was evident that we were embarking on something truly special. Witnessing the synergy

BEING PART OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS ALONGSIDE LEGENDS LIKE AR RAHMAN AND MANI RATNAM WAS NOTHING SHORT OF EXHILARATING.

between AR Rahman and Mani Ratnam was awe-inspiring. Their collaborative spirit was palpable as they delved into the intricacies of the film and its music, exchanging ideas and insights with a passion that was infectious.

As a music programmer and vocal arranger, his role was to assist in bringing their vision to life. Whether it was fine-tuning melodies, orchestrating arrangements, or ensuring the perfect vocal harmonies, for him, every step of the process was infused with creativity and dedication.

Taking us back to the most memorable moments he had from the sets of the *PS* franchise, he shared, "One of the most memorable moments from working on *Ponniyin Selvan* was walking into the recording room for the first time and witnessing AR Rahman and Mani Ratnam engrossed in discussion. Their shared enthusiasm and commitment to perfection set the tone for the entire project, inspiring everyone involved to strive for excellence."

As *Ponniyin Selvan* continues to captivate audiences with its enchanting melodies and compelling storytelling, he feels privileged to have played a small part in bringing this cinematic masterpiece to life.

He next spoke about his latest release, *Baaja*, which he considers his most special project so far, which is also again with AR Rahman, and he explained, "I received a

call from Rahman sir's team to sing a song, which turned out to be *Baaja*. I recorded the *Baj Baaja Baaja* parts in Mumbai in Rahman sir's studio, and the intro part where I sing *Ain Ishq Da Pehla Akkhar* was recorded in Rahman sir's Chennai studio."

This song is special for him because it marks his Bollywood debut as a singer. "It is a song for a film directed by Imtiaz Ali, with music by A. R. Rahman and lyrics by Irshad Kamil. Working with this trio is a dream come true. I believe *Amar Singh Chamkila* stands out now that *Baaja* is out. Since the first time I heard the music of *Rockstar*, I dreamed of working with Rahman sir, Irshad sir, and Imtiaz sir, and seeing that dream come true for such a huge film is incredible," he added.

Giving a gist of how his musical journey happened, the young composer and singer explained, "I've been singing since I was four and had the opportunity to sing with Late. Ravindra Jain. I gained recognition with an impromptu rendition of *Billo Rani* in 2011 with Richa Sharma. Around this time, I started doing YouTube covers and learned music production. I released my first single, *Chal Phir Wahin*, last year, which was well-received."

Having worked with legendary AR Rahman on so many hit projects, we asked him what's the biggest takeaway he learned from him, and his crisp answer was: "His passion for music, dedication to delivering the best, and fearlessness in trying new things."

Furthermore, the singer, who loves the richness of the music in South films, has some interesting Tamil music coming up soon, whose details he wishes to reveal in a little while.

He also has a few singles coming up, including one with *Ghodey Pe Sawaar* singer Sireesha Bhagavatula.



Kartikeya's next is Bhaje Vayu Vegam

Actor Kartikeya Gummakonda has announced his next film with UV Concepts. It has been a while since the actor did a film in Telugu and this announcement has taken everyone by surprise.

On Friday, Superstar Mahesh Babu took to social media to unveil the title, first look poster, and motion poster of Kartikeya Gummakonda's upcoming film. Mahesh Babu expressed intrigue at the title and the first look poster, extending his best wishes to the entire team.

The film has been titled *Bhaje Vayu Vegam*. In the first look poster,

Kartikeya is depicted running with a cricket bat, surrounded by a flurry of money. This intriguing visual has piqued curiosity among viewers, setting the stage for an exciting narrative. With the film nearing completion, fans can anticipate the announcement of its theatrical release date in the near future.

The film features Iswarya Menon as the female lead, with Rahul Tyson of *Happy Days* fame in a significant role. Directed by Prashanth Reddy, the film promises to offer fresh and engaging content to the audience. It has music by Radhan and BGM by Kapil Kumar.



RAJ TARUN'S NEW MOVIE LAUNCHED

Exciting news for Raj Tarun fans! The actor's next venture has been officially announced as a crime comedy, marking a departure from his previous roles. Directed by debutant Ramesh Kadumulu, the film is set to commence shooting from April 15.

The film was inaugurated with a puja ceremony attended by esteemed personalities from the industry. Notable figures such as director Maruthi, producer SKN, and Nakkina Trinadha Rao graced the event, adding to the anticipation surrounding the film.

Speaking at the event, Raj Tarun expressed, "We are starting regular shooting from April 15. This is a very good story. This is a crime comedy genre film which is my favourite." He emphasised that the film boasts a captivating storyline bound to resonate with audiences.

Director Ramesh revealed that the film's shooting will kick off on April 15, with plans to release it in October.

On the other hand, the heroine Rashi Singh said, "I thank the director and the producers for giving me the opportunity to act in this movie. When I heard the story, I liked my character very much. It is a pleasure to act with Raj Tarun."

Shekhar Chandra will be composing the music, while Aditya Jawwadi serves as the cinematographer and Praveen Pudi as the editor, ensuring a high-quality production on all fronts.

With its intriguing premise and talented team, Raj Tarun's upcoming crime comedy is poised to captivate audiences and add another feather to the actor's cap. Fans eagerly await further updates as the project progresses towards its release.



PRASANNA VADANAM WRAPS DUBBING SCHEDULE

Suhas starrer *Prasanna Vadanam* has wrapped up its dubbing formalities, gearing up to captivate audiences on the big screen from May 3. Starring a talented cast including Payal Radhakrishna, Rashi Singh, the film promises to deliver thrills and excitement. Directed by Arjun YK, the film is bankrolled by Little Thoughts Cinemas and Arha Media. The teaser of the film was released recently and it suggested that the film will be a dark thriller with a lot of black humor and a unique concept.



Sivakarthikeyan, Sai Pallavi's Amaran may release in Sept

The buzz surrounding Sivakarthikeyan's highly anticipated film, *Amaran*, continues to grow as it gears up for a September release, say sources. The movie, a biopic of Major Varadarajan, has been making headlines due to its compelling concept and powerful portrayal of real-life events.

With Sai Pallavi playing the female lead, this Kamal Haasan's production is nearing completion. Sources suggest that the makers are meticulously crafting a trailer to provide audiences with an immersive cinematic experience.

In *Amaran*, Sivakarthikeyan embodies the role of Major Mukund Varadarajan, a brave soldier posthumously honored with the Ashoka Chakra for his heroic actions during an anti-terrorist operation in Jammu and Kashmir.

With its poignant narrative and stellar cast, *Amaran* promises to be a compelling cinematic experience, shedding light on the valor and sacrifice of India's unsung heroes. Fans eagerly await its release, poised to witness Sivakarthikeyan's transformative performance in this poignant biopic.



Varalaxmi is hopeful that Sabari will be loved just like HanuMan

The Telugu audience is in for an exhilarating treat as versatile actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar gears up for her first female-driven film in Telugu, *Sabari*. With notable appearances in popular films like *Crack* and *Veera Simha Reddy*, Varalaxmi's transition into the spotlight with *Sabari* marks a significant moment in her career. Directed by Anil Katz and produced by Mahendra Nath Kondla under the Maha Movies banner, this action-packed thriller promises to keep viewers on the edge of their seats.

At the unveiling of the theatrical trailer, Varalaxmi expressed her excitement about venturing into the realm of female-driven cinema in Telugu. She commended the producer, Mahendra Nath, for his dedication to bringing this lavish and engaging project to life. She expressed, "This is my first time doing a female drive film in Telugu and I am very excited about it. I am sure that *Sabari* will offer a thrilling experience to the viewers. I hope this film will be as big of a hit as *HanuMan*. This film is a straightforward thriller and it will keep you on the edge of your seat from start to end. This is a wonderful script and the film shaped up extremely well."

Others present at the event, including actors Varun Sandesh, Shashank and others, echoed their anticipation for *Sabari*, emphasising its unique storyline and Varalaxmi's stellar performance.

YASH JOINS PRIME FOCUS STUDIOS TO PRODUCE RAMAYANA

The announcement of the collaboration between Namit Malhotra's Prime Focus Studios and Rocking Star Yash's Monster Mind Creations to produce a global epic adaptation of the *Ramayana* has sent waves of excitement throughout the entertainment industry. Joining forces with acclaimed director Nitesh Tiwari and backed by DNEG's expertise in visual effects, Namit and Yash are embarking on a monumental journey to present the *Ramayana* in a never-before-seen cinematic experience.

Yash feels, "It has been my long-term aspiration to make films that will showcase Indian cinema on a global level. In pursuit of that, I was in LA to ally with one of the best VFX studios, and to my amazement, the driving force behind it was a fellow Indian. Namit and I had various ideation sessions, and coincidentally, our synergy on the vision for Indian cinema aligned perfectly. We brainstormed various projects, and during these discussions, the subject of *Ramayana* came up. Namit had a part of it in the works; *Ramayana*, as a subject, deeply resonates with me and I had an approach in my mind for it. By joining forces to co-produce *Ramayana* we are bringing together our collective vision and experience to create an Indian film that will ignite excitement and passion in audiences across the world."

On the other hand, Namit Malhotra expressed, "After years spent living between the US, the UK, and India, my personal journey has led me to the point that I feel ready to do justice to the incredible story of *Ramayana*, treating it with the due care and reverence that it deserves. My challenges from the start have been two-fold: to respect the sanctity of a tale which is held in such high regard by all of us who grew up with it, while also bringing it to the world in such a way that this incredible story is embraced by international audiences as a compelling big screen experience. In Yash I recognise a similar aspiration to share the best of our culture with the world. Inspired by his journey from Karnataka to the incredible international success of *K.G.F: Chapter 2*, I can't think of a better partner to help create a major global impact with this, the greatest of all our stories."

Bhagyashri Borse in talks for two big T'wood films

Bhagyashri Borse is swiftly making waves in the Telugu film industry, capturing attention with her promising debut in Ravi Teja's *Mr. Bachchan*, helmed by director Harish Shankar. Amidst the buzz surrounding her debut, news has surfaced that she is in talks to star opposite Vijay Deverakonda in Gowtam Tinnanuri's upcoming project, marking another significant opportunity in her burgeoning career. Adding to the excitement, Bhagyashri Borse is also reportedly in discussions to feature alongside Nani in a film directed by Sujeth. The talks are said to be progressing well, raising anticipation about her potential involvement in the project. If finalised, this opportunity could indeed be a defining moment in Bhagyashree Borse's career, solidifying her presence in the Telugu film industry.

With multiple high-profile projects on the horizon, Bhagyashri Borse is undoubtedly poised for an exciting journey ahead, as she navigates her way through the dynamic world of Telugu cinema.

Zee 5 organises one of a kind event for Gaami

Gaami, the epic survival drama starring Vishwak Sen, has taken audiences by storm since its theatrical release on March 8, 2024, and is now available for streaming on ZEE5. In a remarkable promotional strategy, ZEE5 organised a press interaction at Snow Kingdom, recreating the chilling Himalayan ambience where the film was predominantly shot. Attendees were left impressed by the immersive experience, further enhancing their anticipation for the film's streaming release.

Both Vishwak Sen and director Vidyadhar Kagita praised ZEE5 for their innovative approach in bringing the Himalayan setting to life for the press meet. They expressed confidence that viewers would appreciate the film's immersive quality on the platform, especially those who may have missed certain aspects during its theatrical run.

Vishwak Sen shared insights into his challenging role as an Aghora in *Gaami*, reflecting on the harsh conditions endured during filming in the Himalayas. Despite initial skepticism about the film's commercial prospects, he expressed gratitude for its success and emphasised the importance of believing in compelling storytelling over commercial elements.

He also expressed regret for not exploring such creative promotional ideas before the film's theatrical release.

Gaami, produced by Karthik Sabarish under Karthik Kult Creations in association with V Celluloid, boasts a talented ensemble cast and promises an enthralling cinematic experience.





RAJASTHAN ROYALS NEED BETTER EXECUTION OF PLANS

PTI ■ MULLANPUR

A disappointed Rajasthan Royals will have to focus on better execution of their strategies for a swift turnaround when they face a highly inconsistent yet capable Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Saturday. The Royals had an excellent chance to register their fifth win on the trot and consolidate their totem pole position, but Rashid Khan's daring assault helped Gujarat Titans snatch a last-bat victory on Wednesday. It might have come as a rude shock for the Royals at Fort Jaipur, and as such, they would want to treat it as an aberration and dish out a more refined outing against the Punjab side. But it also highlighted some muddled thinking. The Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan outfit lost to the Titans because of the below-par effort from Kuldeep Sen (19th over) and Avesh Khan (20th over) at a vital passage, when they conceded 35 runs across 12 balls. Here, the Royals made a slight tactical error by not letting Trent



Boult complete his quota in that match as the veteran left-arm pacer ended the match at 2-0-8-0. There is no gainsaying that Boult could have made a change in the script, but Samson leaving that option unused was a tad perplexing.

Of course, Boult has been largely used with the new ball in this iteration of the IPL, but in crunch situations nothing counts more than experience. So, the Royals will be looking for an improvement in the strategising and execution part

against the Kings.

The Shikhar Dhawan-captained side has blown hot and cold so far in the tournament, winning two and losing three out of five matches.

The primary reason for their middling run this year is the

patchy form of their fancied batsmen as Punjab relied on cameos by uncapped Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma to boost their batting.

Opener Jonny Bairstow (5 matches, 81 runs) and middle-order batter Jitesh Sharma (5

matches, 77 runs) are the most underwhelming of the lot, and it has robbed them of momentum upfront and in the business end of their innings.

Sam Curran has been above average with the ball, taking six wickets from five matches but the England all-rounder's needle has fallen behind from the halfway mark with the bat, despite scoring a 63.

The absence of injured Liam Livingstone from the middle-order too has reduced their firepower, and Kings will hope to have the Englishman back in their ranks at the earliest. On the contrary, the Punjab bowlers have done marginally better, but their propensity to concede big runs while bowling first will be a concern.

A group consisting of bowlers such as Kagiso Rabada and Arshdeep Singh has given away 199, 199 and 182 runs in their last three matches and they will have to break the pattern against the Royals.

It's easier said than done as the Royals' batting unit has been in good shape as 185 is the lowest total it posted while batting first. Outside the match calculations, the Royals will have another bigger worry to nullify. Over the last few editions of the IPL, the

Royals had begun strongly, just as they did this year, before tapering off after the mid-season.

As a result, they have managed to qualify for the play-offs only twice across the last six seasons. Royals would dearly hope that the defeat against GT was not the beginning of another meltdown.

The Teams (from): Punjab Kings: Shikhar Dhawan (c), Matthew Short, Prabhshimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taidie, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajann, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw. Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj.

Hardik enjoys challenges, fans will start loving him: Kishan



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Hardik Pandya might have been at the receiving end of fans' ire in this IPL, but Ishan Kishan has little doubt that the Mumbai Indians skipper is "enjoying the challenge" of winning them over. Pandya, who replaced Rohit Sharma as the regular skipper of Mumbai before the start of this IPL, has been consistently getting booed by the spectators inside the stadium and the situation was no different on Thursday night when MI faced Royal Challengers Bengaluru. But he also found a small

corner of supporters at the Wankhede Stadium as MI registered a big win over RCB, and they were encouraged by star batter Virat Kohli. "He (Pandya) loves challenges, he has been in this situation before and he is in that situation right now. He is not someone who will come out and talk about it and say let's stop this or that," Kishan told the media here after MI defeated RCB by seven wickets. "I know that he must be enjoying it. I know him personally. I have spent a lot of time with him. He is ready for the challenges because you cannot complain to the fans,

they will come up with their explanations and their point of views," Kishan added. Kishan said the 29-year-old all-rounder could turn all anger around with his performances. "But knowing how Hardik Pandya thinks, he is happy with people doing it but I know that in the coming games he will do it with the bat and people will start loving him (again)," he said. Kishan highlighted Indian fans' tendency to recognise the hard work of a cricketer, irrespective of their personal feelings towards him. "People also recognise your hard work, what you are going through and still you

are doing so well for your team. I think people do recognise that." "Our fans will be a little harsh on you but at the same time when you do well, or when you show that it is (still) not bothering you and (that) you are in a very good headspace, that might change. If not today, tomorrow. If not tomorrow, day after tomorrow," he said. Kishan said Pandya's focus was on improving his outings. "I feel happy about him that even in this situation he is so keen on performing, hitting six on the very first ball knowing that things can go different way and people will question you again. But that is something which Hardik has in himself and other players don't," Kishan noted. Jasprit Bumrah was at the top of his game returning with 4-0-21-5 against RCB but the other MI bowlers were wayward. Kishan backed them to do well. "We will get through that because planning is always there, we keep talking to our coaches, our captain, our video analyst," he said. "The wicket was very good (for batters). When the wicket is so good, we cannot complain about our bowlers, who were also good, but (then) we finished the game in the 16th over. "We have to look at the positives that the bowlers did a great job in restricting RCB below 200," he added.

It is in my muscle memory: Suryakumar on his audacious shots

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The world's number one T20 batter, Suryakumar Yadav attributed the audacious array of shots he played against Royal Challengers Bengaluru to "muscle memory" and constant practice at nets. Suryakumar dazzled with a 19-ball 52 studded with four sixes and five fours to help Mumbai Indians chase down RCB's 197-run target in just 15.3 overs. "I just try to play the field. I practice these shots. It is in my muscle memory," Suryakumar said after MI's seven-wicket win in the IPL on Thursday night. Asked about his favourite shot in the match against RCB, he said, "I think all the shots. The slice over point was my favourite." Suryakumar was playing in his second match of this IPL after recovering from a sports hernia surgery. "It is always good to be back in Wankhede. Joining the squad was great. Mentally I was here, just physically in Bangalore (for recovery at NCA). "Coming at Wankhede, chasing 200, if there is dew it is important to take a chance. We wanted to finish early for the net run rate," said the 33-year-old. Asked about Jasprit Bumrah's five-wicket haul, Suryakumar said, "It is always good to have Jasprit by your side. It has been 2 to



3 years, have never batted Jasprit in the nets. Either he breaks my bat or my foot." On Ishan Kishan who make 69 off just 34 balls, he said, "That's what we have told him. Just go out and enjoy. His intent has been great. He

is enjoying the fruits." Later in an interview with 'JioCinema', Suryakumar said whenever he came out to bat he would try to see how he could change the course of the game. "I think about the shots I

play beforehand, because I have practiced all of them during the nets. I try to make sure that I bat according to the situation of the game. If the game is progressing slowly, then I think of how I could possibly speed it up. "Whenever I go into bat, I always try to see how I can change the game and how I can control it with my abilities," he said. On MI's performance so far, he said, "I think the train was always on track, it just took a while to get going. It's fine, we're coming back and have found our rhythm. "It feels great to have won two games in a row at the Wankhede. It gives us great confidence and has improved the team's atmosphere as well." Former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson said sky is the limit for Suryakumar when he's batting at his best. "When his mind's free, he just lets loose. The sky is the limit for him when he's batting like that. He can hit them and does hit them all around the ground," said Watson. "When he's in the type of form like he showed tonight, the poor bowlers, no one can bowl anywhere. "He's got an incredible awareness of the field but then the skill to be able to manipulate the ball into those gaps, it's freakish stuff. The Mumbai Indians are very lucky to have him."

OTHER SPORTS

Mary Kom steps down as Paris Olympics Chef de Mission

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six-time world champion Boxer M C Mary Kom on Friday stepped down as India's chef-de-mission for the upcoming Paris Olympics, saying she is "left with no choice" due to some personal reasons. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha announced that Mary Kom had asked to be relieved from her position in a letter addressed to her. "I consider it an honour to serve my country in every way possible, and I was mentally prepared for it. However, I regret that I will not be able to uphold the prestigious responsibility and would like to resign, owing to personal reasons," the 41-year-old stated in a letter to Usha. "It is embarrassing to retreat from a commitment, which I seldom do, but I am left with no choice. I am there to cheer on my country and the athletes



competing in this Olympic Games, with great expectations," she added. The IOA had announced her appointment on March 21. The celebrated boxer, who is also a bronze-medallist from the 2012 London Olympics, was to be the logistical in-charge of the country's contingent at the July 26-August 11 Games. "We are sad that Olympic medal winning boxer and Chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission Mary Kom has stepped down citing

personal reasons. We respect her decision and her privacy," Usha said in a statement. "I shall make the appropriate consultations and soon make an announcement about the replacement for Mary Kom." Usha said she had a conversation with Mary Kom after receiving her letter. "I completely understand her request and respect her decision. I have also conveyed to her that she will always have my own support and that of IOA. I also request everyone to respect the legendary boxer's privacy," she said. Mary Kom has also won gold in the 2010 Asian Games besides being a multiple-time Asian champion. IOA has appointed six-time Winter Olympian and luger Shiva Keshavan as deputy chef-de-mission, while veteran table tennis player and reigning Commonwealth Games champion Sharath Kamal will be India's male flag-bearer.

Indian wrestlers Akash Dahiya and Anirudh Kumar kept themselves in contention for bronze medals at the Asian Championships but three of their team-mates exited the tournament after losing at different stages in their respective categories, here on Friday. Competing in the non-Olympic 61kg category, Akash began with a close 10-8 win over Sardor Ruzimov from Uzbekistan and followed it up with a comfortable 7-3 victory over Korea's Sanghyeon Son in the quarterfinal. However, Kazakhstan's Assyl Aitakyn proved to be too strong for the Indian in the semifinal and could not score a single point, losing his bout by technical superiority.



He will now fight it out with Mongolia's Enkhbold Enkhbat. Yash Tushir (74kg) went out

of contention after losing his repechage round by technical superiority to Syrbaz Talgat from

Kazakhstan. Also bowing out early was Sandeep Singh Maan (86kg), who lost his qualification

bout 0-5 to Japan's Tatsuya Shirai. Vinay (92kg) also fizzled out in the 92kg qualification round, losing his bout by fall to veteran Kazakhstan wrestler Adilet Davlumbayev. In 125kg, Anirudh Kumar began with a 3-0 win over Pakistan's Zaman Anwar but was outplayed by Iran's Amir Hossein Abbas Zare in the quarterfinal, losing by technical superiority. Since the Iranian reached the final, it kept the door open for Anirudh and now he will fight for bronze against Bahrain's Shamil Magomed A Sharipov. India had won three medals on Thursday through Udit (57kg, silver), Abhimanyou (70kg, bronze) and Vicky (97kg, bronze). The men's free-style competition will conclude today and the women's bouts will begin on Saturday.