

'Geethanjali Malli Vachindi' has another twist, which will be explored

IN PART 3'



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Monday Mirchi

PAMELA SATPATHY BREAKS THE INTERNET

It requires tremendous patience to be an indulgent mother when her child capers on her work desk at a time when her plate is full, requiring her to carry home a part of her day's work. Karimnagar Collector Pamela Satpathy shared a clip showing her son standing on her massive work desk and jumping about excitedly. Wearing a blue T-shirt emblazoned with 'Superman' and a red cape, he perhaps got into the skin of the fictional character. He is seen delivering heroic dialogues as his mother is engrossed at her work with remarkable composure. While posting the short clip, Satpathy highlighted both sides of a summer vacation -- her point of view as well as her son's. "The most awaited time of the year has now become the most dreaded time of the year. SUMMER VACATION. POV: You are a Boy Mum". Some netizens carped over 'allowing the kid at work'. However, the fact seems to be that the video was taken at her home around 9:00 pm on a busy day and not at her office. As a working mother on duty even after hours, she was appreciably indulgent, instead of yelling at the boy. For newbies, Pamela's profile is among the warmest ones among those of bureaucrats.

BUREAUCRATS CAN BE BETTER THAN TECHNOCRATS

Technology is a key aspect of governance today. Technocrats often complement and complete the skills and expertise of bureaucrats engaged in the delivery of various services to people. However, in Telangana, because of certain aberrations in the immediate past, bureaucrats in the energy department suddenly found themselves back in the limelight and somewhat turbo-charged when they visited New Delhi recently. They realized to their chagrin that there were many schemes that Telangana could not utilize. Central government secretaries, on their part, were happy about the curiosity and learnings of the representation from Telangana. A little bird told us that over the past 10 years proper communication was lacking between the state and central level officials. At last, Telangana bureaucrats got a chance to drive home their point that they are on par with, if not better, than technocrats. For newbies, former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had attributed the supposed successful running of the power sector in the state under his rule to the 'free hand' given to technocrats and subject matter experts in the state. He had blamed bureaucrats, saying they were not able to run the department efficiently. It seems bureaucrats have just plugged into the right source of power.

ARE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN TELANGANA SLEEPING?

Bureaucrats have become the cannon fodder in the ongoing war between the Congress

and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi in Telangana. The collateral damage seems to be the inexplicable silence of the officers' associations. Even when police officers asseverate that they are being targeted in the phone tapping case, the IPS officers' association has not yet taken any stand. When the ruling party had apparently targeted IPS officers belonging to a specific caste, opposition parties dropped a few names while their fraternal colleagues looked the other way. For newbies, a couple of months ago, a few bureaucrats complained to the Chief Secretary about a 'slander campaign' being run against them by some of their peers on social media. Now, although the role of many IPS officers from all sides is under lens in the phone tapping case, not one association has come out and made a statement. A little bird told us that if more and more names keep coming out, trust in bureaucracy will be the ultimate casualty.

AP CEO ROLE UNDER LENS

Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena has been the focal point of administration in Andhra Pradesh since March 16, following the release of the election schedule. Therefore, even his role has come into the picture now, with the opposition parties blaming Saturday's stone pelting at Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's convoy on 'security lapse' during YSRCP's campaigning in Vijayawada. Already YSRCP has lodged several complaints in vain against leaders of TDP and its alliance parties for their 'derogatory' and 'provocative' comments against Jagan and other ruling party leaders.

ELECTION DUTIES MEAN HEADACHE

Officials 'relieved of election duties' at the best of the Election Commission face an uncertain future, though it has become quite common for opposition parties to name and accuse certain officials of "working in favour of the ruling party". In Andhra Pradesh, around 20 officers have been suspended due to various reasons. So, official circles are wondering whether officials can really change the fate of political parties during elections. The opposition parties are claiming that the suspended officials had been working in favour of the ruling YSRCP. The larger question in bureaucratic circles is: When the Election Commission is supposed to be observing everything, how can officials work in favour of one political party? Besides, even if they prefer to do it, can they change the mind of the public? Since in most cases, 'suspension' involves just relieving the named (and, therefore, tainted) officials of election duties, their future hangs in balance. If the ruling party retains power, they may get plum posts. If the opposition alliance wins, they could be sidelined and given insignificant posts. On the whole, it looks like 'election duties' come bundled with headache.

-- Yours truly

Will welcome if Revanth wants to join BJP: Arvind

- Arvind asks CM to think about his future as he has around 15 years of politics left
- Revanth is efficient but will remain inefficient if he continues in Congress: Arvind

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stating that the BJP will welcome Chief Minister Revanth Reddy if he wants to join the party, the BJP's Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency candidate, Dharmapuri Arvind, said that Revanth has at least 15 more years of political life but the Congress has no future.

It may be recalled that BRS Working President KTR has been stating that Revanth will join the BJP after the Lok Sabha elections.

Arvind said that the BRS lost elections due to corruption. The Congress will lose the next Assembly elections due to its inefficiency. He said that the Congress government is neglecting farmers and concentrating on politics.

"Revanth is an efficient CM,



but he will remain inefficient if he continues in the Congress. Revanth should think about his future. Revanth Reddy's 'Aap Ki Adalat' show is a big comedy and so Revanth supported Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal ruling the state from jail. Is Revanth also preparing to rule the state from jail,' Arvind said.

Demanding that Revanth should reveal his stand on the Gyanvapi and Mathura issues, Arvind said that the Congress government has been wasting time in the phone-tapping case. The Congress government is diverting attention from problems by creating hoo-ha in the name of phone tapping.

"Why is the Congress government not taking action

against former CM K. Chandrashekar Rao and former Minister KT Rama Rao if they are involved in phone tapping?" he asked.

Arvind said that the public thinks that the CM engages in land settlements and added that the Revanth Reddy government deceived people regarding the 6-guarantees.

"The Congress government too is deceiving people like the KCR government. The days are very near when the people would chase the Congress government away. The zero power bills were limited to just one month," he said.

The Congress assured farmers that it would procure paddy by giving a bonus of Rs 500 per quintal, he said and asked the CM to respond on that.

KAVITHA'S ARREST

KCR's silence

surprises political circles

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Why former chief minister and BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao is silent on BRS MLC and his daughter K Kavitha's arrest? Exactly one month has been passed since Kavitha's arrest by the Enforcement Department in Delhi liquor scam. Two days ago Kavitha was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in this case. From day one of the arrest of Kavitha, her father KCR has been silent. Only once KCR reacted on this, that too after the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the same case.

KCR did not go to Delhi to meet his daughter Kavitha who is in Tihar jail. KCR is participating in public meetings but not a word about his daughter. Even in these public meetings also, KCR did not mention about his daughter's arrest. He is only mentioning about the ED. Kavitha's mother once met her in the Tihar jail. The BRS leaders also did not meet her because they are busy with Lok Sabha elections. The ED and the CBI are

revealing surprise things over the role of Kavitha in the Delhi liquor scam and how she collected money. Surprisingly, the people of Telangana did not react to the arrest of Kavitha as expected by the BRS leadership. When KCR is touring in the districts for the election campaign, why is he is not going to Delhi to meet his daughter? When KCR is silent the BRS leaders are maintaining silence. The reason for the silence of KCR on Kavitha's arrest may be because if he speaks there will be opposition to the BRS in the public at the time of crucial of Lok Sabha elections. When the ED had issued a notice to Kavitha to appear before it in the Delhi liquor scam in the past, KCR who was at Delhi, consulted the senior advocates on the issue. But after Kavitha's arrest KCR has become silent. Even BRS leaders are surprised over KCR not meeting his daughter Kavitha who is in Tihar jail. They feel if KCR meets it will bring some confidence to Kavitha. Under the circumstances, Kavitha may feel that she was left alone when she is in trouble.

'Congress leaders have a habit of issuing dud cheques'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy countered Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's statement terming the BJP manifesto as a post-dated cheque drawn on a failing bank saying that

Congress leaders have a habit of issuing bouncing cheques, evading I-T and defrauding banks.

The 2G, Coal, Urea and Commonwealth scams were engineered by Congress leaders, Kishan said and added that Revanth and Rahul have no

right to criticise the BJP manifesto.

Addressing the media at the State BJP office here on Sunday along with Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind, Kishan asked Revanth to reveal whether he has the guts to speak on the BJP's Sankalp

KCR to Rajaiah: Work for Warangal BRS candidate Sudhir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Station Ghanpur MLA Tatikonda Rajaiah met BRS supreme K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday at the Erravalli farmhouse and KCR handed over the responsibilities of Station Ghanpur Assembly constituency to Rajaiah.KCR asked Rajaiah to ensure the victory of BRS's Warangal LS candidate Dr Sudhir Kumar by working strategically.KCR stated that it is certain that the BRS MLAs who joined Congress party will face disqualification at any cost.Rajaiah is currently the main BRS leader in Station Ghanpur as Kadiam Srihari, who won as an MLA on a BRS ticket from Station Ghanpur, joined the Congress along with his daughter Kavya.

Work hard, win 15...

Continued from page 1

Venugopal was angry with some leaders due to complaints that they were behaving like dictators in their constituencies. He asked the leaders to keep their egos aside and allow inductions from other parties.

He also pointed out some candidates are saying that they are not working properly. He also explained their strengths and weaknesses and how to overcome them by using the report given by election strategist Sunil Kanugolu.

The important meeting of Congress leaders held at the Shamshabad Novotel Hotel on Sunday night is over.

The strategy to be followed in Parliament elections, the selection of candidates, the

election campaign and arrangements for public meetings were discussed at the meeting.

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal, Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Deepa Das Munshi, Congress election strategist Sunil Kanugolu, Revanth Reddy, ministers and 14 LS candidates attended the meeting.

Venugopal directed state leaders and LS candidates on the strategy to be followed in Parliament elections. The meeting was held to win 15 LS seats in Telangana.

The leaders have not decided on candidates in Khammam, Karimnagar and Hyderabad constituencies. As there was no consensus, the selection of candidates is still pending.

KTR meets...

Continued from page 1

A special court sent her to the CBI custody till April 15. Sources said with court's permission, K T Rama Rao met his sister for half an hour at the CBI headquarters.

Kavitha, a member of the Telangana Legislative Council and daughter of former state chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, was lodged in Tihar jail under judicial custody after the ED arrested her in Hyderabad on March 15.

It is alleged that Kavitha is a key member of the 'South Group', which has been accused of paying Delhi's ruling AAP kickbacks of Rs 100 crore in return for a big share of liquor licences in the national capita.

'Explain your views'

Probe panel on power sector sends letters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chairman of the judicial inquiry committee on the power sector, Justice L. Narasimha Reddy, in a note issued on Sunday, said that the committee has sent letters to officers/members connected to the Yadadri, Bhadradi power plants and the Power Purchase Agreement with Chhattisgarh during BRS rule. "Today, letters have been sent to officers/members (former or presently holding office, as the case may be), as identified by the Commission, requesting them to put forward their version/ views about the part, if any, played by them in decision making on subjects contained in the Terms of Reference of the inquiry," the note said.

He said in the note that a public notice inviting the views of persons or organisations connected to the subjects contained in the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry has also been finalised.

'BJP manifesto post-dated..

Continued from page 1

The CM uploaded a post on his 'X' account regarding this on Sunday.

The CM posted photos of the 2004 and 2024 campaigns with the heading 'History repeats itself.' He said in his post, 'In 2004 the BJP's propaganda wing launched the 'India Shining' campaign with photos of AB Vajpayee and LK Advani.

However, the people voted for a Congress government. In the same post, he said, '2024 BJP's propaganda 'Viksit Bharat.' However, the peoples' verdict will be a Congress government. He also said 'BJP will lose-- INDIA will win'. The CM predicted in his post that the Congress came to power in 2004 and now in 2024 the Congress will come to power again.

BRS tried to...

Continued from page 1

Every programme that KCR had taken up for the poor had come from the ideas of Dr BR Ambedkar, KTR said. "There is a need to continue the spirit of the Constitution if one wants equality. People have to understand the conspiracies of some political parties if they want to ensure that the constitution should not face danger," KTR said.

'We should ...

Continued from page 1

Dr Ambedkar ushered in far-reaching changes in a country that was riddled with inequalities and institutionalised discrimination peacefully through the Constitution he authored. He was a great philosopher who provided equal rights to women on par with men in the Constitution.

It was he who laid down eight hours of work, established rights for the working class and proved himself pro-working class. The right to vote for everyone irrespective of economic, social and gender is a boon that enables the public to elect the government of their choice. Ambedkar's revolutionary thought process ensured India's

place as a strong democracy, he said.

Bhatti said that the Congress implemented the Constitution in letter and spirit after the country gained Independence inspired by Ambedkar philosophy but some political parties were now conspiring to amend the Constitution, he said.

Calling upon all democrats to unite to protect the Constitution, he said amending the Constitution is akin to an assault on democracy. Protection of the Constitution is equal to protection of democracy, he said.

He warned that if democracy was destroyed, citizens would be in danger of foregoing their right to free speech and the right to vote.

Tallest...

Continued from page 1

Reacting to this, BRS leaders said that the Revanth government 'insulted' Dr Ambedkar. Former BRS MLA Balka Suman asked Revanth to explain why he did not pay floral tributes to the Ambedkar statue located beside the Secretariat and added that the CM had 'hurt' the self-respect of Dalits.Suman asked whether Revanth had ignored the 125-foot Ambedkar statue as KCR had installed it. Why is the CM sitting in the secretariat constructed by KCR? Suman demanded Revanth to apologise for 'insulting' Dr Ambedkar.Suman asked Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka to reveal what he was doing when Revanth was behaving with a 'feudal' mentality.

BJP shuns...

Continued from page 1

The government has taken some concrete steps for their implementation.

The BJP promised to include all senior citizens above the age of 70 years in the 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme, which provides health insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh.It also spoke of considering bullet trains in north, south and east India and expanding "new age" trains like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat and Nammo Bharat.

Promising to strengthen the sports ecosystem to make India a world leader in sports, the BJP manifesto - Sankalp Patra - said its government will facilitate the Indian Olympic Association to bid for hosting the Olympic Games in 2036.

The party also promised to continue efforts to remove the Armed Forces (Special Powers)

Act (AFSPA) in a phased manner in the northeast states and leverage the region as a strategic gateway for the "Act East" policy.It underscored the commitment to defending India's citizens and interests at "home and abroad from all threats of terrorism" as it cited surgical and air strikes during the first term of the Modi government to highlight its zero-tolerance.

Modi gave the first copies of the manifesto to a few beneficiaries of his government's schemes at the function organised at the BJP headquarters here.Touching on its cultural agenda after having fulfilled its decades-old promise of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the BJP said its government will undertake "significant new projects" across the country to develop religious and tourist sites inspired by the Kashi Vishwanath corridor model.

Repaid Rs 25,911 cr...

Continued from page 1

However, sources said that loans taken by the state government in the last four months are not enough to clear the debts and the interest incurred by the BRS government.

"The government gave priority to paying interest and debt instalments incurred by the BRS government. The government borrowed market loans within budget limits and utilised them for plan and non-plan expenditure.

US & UN condemn...

Continued from page 1

Biden said "We helped Israel take down nearly all" of them.

His comments came as American forces joined efforts to down drones and missiles launched by Tehran."Earlier today, Iran--and its proxies operating out of Yemen, Syria and Iraq--launched an unprecedented air attack against military facilities in Israel. I con-

demn these attacks in the strongest possible terms," Biden said after his call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday.Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said the attack was aimed at "specific targets".

Iran had vowed to retaliate for a strike on its consulate in Syria on 1 April which killed seven IRGC officers, including a top commander.

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PART-II

Are there no detention centers in India?

The Rules under Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 are different from the Rules under the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Let us be clear about this. The NRC was made part of law in 2003 by an amendment to the Citizenship Act. Then there is the third dimension: creation of comprehensive identity data base of every resident in the country for the National Population Register. In this context, there are some more important claims that warrant a close look.

The fourth claim: The NRC and the National Population Register are not linked. Amit Shah says the NPR has nothing to do with the NRC.

The truth: The Rules notified in 2003 for NRC state that the process will begin with the house-to-house enumeration for the creation of a National Population Register (NPR). The Rules for the NRC in Clause 4 say: "A population register will be prepared by collecting information relating to all persons who are

usually residing within the jurisdiction of the local registrar. The local register of Indian citizens (as part of the national register) shall contain details of persons after due verification made from the population register."

It means NRC will be completed only after verification of Population Register. Rule 3 of Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, (2003 Rules) mentioned in the gazette, is about the concept of "NRC and its sub-rule (4) provides for "Preparation of the National Register of Indian Citizens".

The fifth claim: Former Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar had claimed that the National Population Register was only for the purpose of the Census and that it had nothing to do with the NRC or citizenship.

The truth: The Home Ministry, in its annual report of 2018-2019, stated in Ch 15, para 15. 40: "Government of India has approved a scheme

The Central government on 9.1.2019 sent consolidated instructions for the construction of detention centers to all state/union administrators. The Ministry of Home Affairs sent instructions on 24/29 April 2014 and again on 9-10 September 2014. On this basis, a model detention center/holding center/camp manual was issued to all states/union territories in 2018. In an affidavit, the Centre told the Karnataka High Court on November 28 that it wrote to all State governments in 2014 and a follow-up letter in 2018 to have detention centers.

of creation of NPR which is the first step towards creation of NRI."

The sixth claim: Government of India says: There are no detention centers at all.

The truth: The Home Ministry told the Rajya Sabha in November 2019: *In Assam detention camps, where suspected immigrants are confined, 28 people have died, and 988 'foreigners' were lodged in six detention centers in Assam. Home Ministry told the Rajya*

Sabha on December 11, 2019: The instructions have been issued to all States for setting up detention centers to detain illegal migrants or convicted foreigners pending deportation.

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PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

this basis, a model detention center/holding center/camp manual was issued to all states/union territories in 2018. In an affidavit, the Centre told the Karnataka High Court on November 28 that it wrote to all State governments in 2014 and a follow-up letter in 2018 to have detention centers.

MHA told the Lok Sabha on July 9, 2019 (Question Number 2660) the detention centre in Goalpara of Assam, housing 267 detainees and

another one at a cost of Rs 46.51 crore was sanctioned. Karnataka & Maharashtra earmarked sites for detention centres. MHA sanctioned Rs 46.51 crore for one detention centre to house 3,000 detainees. MHA estimated that a total of 26,658 detention centres are needed, costing Rs 12.4 lakh crore in all. This amounts to 8.8% of GDP in Financial Year of 2019.

The seventh claim: "The people of India need not fear about these processes. Only infiltrators and enemies of the country will be excluded. It is for the protection of our nation" -BJP leaders & Ministers.

The truth: *The Home Ministry stated that citizenship is not automatically accorded to people. This means that it is presumed that each person is not citizen, and the burden is on each to prove that he/she is Indian.*

The eighth claim: "The CAA 2019 is not discriminatory"-Government:

The truth: *The Articles 5 to 11 of Constitution explain the citizenship of people at the time*

of commencement of the Constitution, without referring to religion. The Citizenship Act 1955, enacted under authority given by Article 11, had no provision to consider religion. The Citizenship Amendment Act 2003 introduced Section 2(1)-b that defines 'illegal immigrants'. It did not define illegal immigrant by religion.

The CAA 2019 it amends Sec 2(1)-b to include "any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan who came on or before 31 December 2014 will not be considered an illegal immigrant."

For the first time in the independent India, in 2019 religion was prescribed as ground to secure citizenship of India. Among two such immigrant residents if one is Hindu or Christian or Sikh with proof of their residency even if there are no documents about his ancestors, he can still be considered legal immigrant. In similar circumstances, another person belonging to religions other

than six specified in CAA 2019, including Muslim, will be considered illegal. Because of this, one lakh Hindu Tamils residing in south India for several decades may not be considered 'legal' immigrants.

The ninth claim: "The CAA 2019 or NRC are meant to give citizenship and not to deny the citizenship"-Government.

The truth: *The process of NRC in Assam resulted in loss of citizenship for more than 19 lakh persons. It will affect persons belonging to all kinds of religions, not just Muslims. Out of 19 lakh new 'foreigners' found by officers in Assam, only five lakhs were Muslims, and others include Hindus and others belonging to various religious communities. Most of them are being sent to detention centers. The Centre has added six new questions in making NPR. The new six questions include name of the father and mother, their places and dates of birth and others.*

(Concluded)
The first part was carried on 14-04-2024

Bandi incensed over KTR calling people 'unintelligent'

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

BJP national secretary and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday took BRS working president KT Rama Rao for making remarks belittling the people of Telangana. He said that KTR called the people not intelligent because they had voted against BRS.

Sanjay Kumar, who is also the BJP nominee from Karimnagar Lok Sabha seat, was incensed over the remarks of the KTR who described Andhra people as more intelligent than the people of Telangana.

He took objection to KTR making unsavoury remarks against the people of Telangana who waged a struggle to



How can KTR call the Telangana employees who went to the extent of sacrificing their jobs and took part in the Sakala Janula Samme "brainless", he questioned KTR.

who did a small job in the US, was elected to power by the people. But, he chose to belittle the very people who elected him and helped him hold the reins of power.

How can KTR call the Telangana employees who went to the extent of sacrificing their jobs and took part in the Sakala Janula Samme

The BJP leader accused KTR of forgetting the sacrifices made by 1400 youths to secure statehood for Telangana.

Going one step further, Sanjay appealed to the electorate to vote for the BRS only if they were not intelligent. He urged the people to vote for BJP to prove they are intelligent.

The agenda of the BJP is to resolve the problems of the people and appeal to the voters to teach a lesson to the BRS and the Congress. To a question from his BRS rival B Vinod Kumar, Bandi Sanjay said that he is free to run for the Lok Sabha election though he lost the Assembly elections. In a democracy, anybody can contest elections.

Jagadish Reddy calls Cong rule 'demonic'

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Former minister G Jagadish Reddy has described the Congress rule in Telangana as demonic rule and expressed concern over famers' misery. He said that no Minister visited the villagers to assure the farmers whose crops were withering away of help.

The Congress leaders cannot run the administration except foisting the false cases and giving leaks to the media.

He claimed that his mobile phone was tapped in the undivided AP rule at the instance Jagadapati Rajgopal and asked the Congress government to



take action against him. During the course of Telangana movement, phones of the leaders of the movement were tapped, but the BRS during its 10-year stint did not misuse the police machinery

for the party benefits.

Calling the Congress Ministers inefficient, Jagadish Reddy said that they were paying no attention to providing irrigation facilities to the standing crops.

He recalled how the BRS provided water from Nagarjuna Sagar to irrigate fields even when the water level was at the dead storage level. He accused the Congress leaders of not providing irrigation facilities even though there is water in the project. He appealed to the party workers to confront the Congress leaders wherever it is possible on the six guarantees.

Rajgopal urges voters to support Cong

PNS ■ TUNGATURTI

Munugode MLA and Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency in-charge Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy has pointed out that the Congress lived up to its promises of unseating KCR from power in Telangana. He complimented Congress workers in burying the BRS in the grave.

He was addressing the meeting attended by important aides of the Congress of Tungaturti Assembly segment at Tirumalagiri on Sunday. Tungaturti MLA Mandula Samel presided.

Addressing the gathering, he appealed to the voters to support Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy in Bhongir LS constituency. Turning his attention to former minister G Jagadish



Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy speaking at a meeting in Tungaturti constituency on Sunday

Reddy, he vowed to ensure that the latter cough up lakhs of crores of money looted by him and his boss KCR. He dared Jagadish Reddy to specify how he could amass so many crores of rupees improv-

ing his position from living in a rented house and touring on an old scooter.

He charged the BRS with claiming the lives of the students by stoking Telangana sentiment among them.

He predicted that the victory of Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy is certain and maintain that no force on earth could stop this even PM Narendra Modi.

Jagadish Reddy, who lived in a rented house, acquired a huge mansion in Nagaram and built a farm house on a 100-acre site at Shamshabad.

The BRS has no candidates to field them in various Lok Sabha constituencies, he alleged.

He said that his prediction of MLC K Kavita playing Bathukamma in Tihar jail came true. If the Congress took a serious view of the BRS, the whole of BRS would become empty, he said predicting that the Congress would rule Telangana for another 20 years.

Sports car set on fire over money issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Lamborghini worth Rs 1 crore was set on fire by a group at the Pahadi Shareef area.

According to Pahadi Shareef police, Neeraj, the owner of the Lamborghini car put it up for sale. A man, named Ahmed posting as potential buyer, approached the former. He asked Aman, the friend of Neeraj to bring the vehicle to a farmhouse at Mamidipalli on the evening of April 13.

Ahmed and his men poured petrol and set the sports car on fire. They claimed that Neeraj owed them money.

Medak BRS nominee exudes confidence of winning the seat

PNS ■ MEDAK

BRS nominee from Medak seat P Venkatrami Reddy has claimed that Medak is the home ground of the BRS and exuded confidence of BRS bagging the Medak seat in its kitty.

Addressing the activists of the Toopran and Manoharabadmandal units of the BRS here on Sunday, he claimed to have worked as GADA official, collector and joint collector in the region and recalled how the Gajwel constituency achieved remarkable progress putting it ahead of other regions by at least 50 years under the KCR regime. He claimed himself to be not aware of duping the people, but jumped into the political bandwagon only to serve the public. Statehood to Telangana has been achieved deriving inspiration from Architect of Indian Constitution Dr BR Ambedkar.

He claimed to have taken no fancy for piling up of



Medak BRS candidate P Venkatrami Reddy speaking at party workers meeting at Toopran on Sunday

money and always focused on public service. He vowed to support the people by constituting a trust with Rs 100 crore. He promised to set up coaching centers for the youth and professional training centers for them. He promised the unemployed to create employment and livelihood opportunities. He offered to set up sewing centers for women. Therefore, he appealed to the people to bless the BRS to serve them by voting for the car symbol.

2 tiny polling stations to be set up in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to demonstrate the importance given to every single vote and accessibility, the Election Commission is setting up two smallest auxiliary polling stations in Telangana's remote tribal areas which will likely witness only 10 voters each exercising their franchise in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

In order to ensure that the voters who earlier were forced to trek rugged terrains close to 20 km to cast their votes are spared of the difficulty, officials said,

Under Achampet Assembly constituency of Nagarkurnool Parliamentary segment, an auxiliary polling station will be set up in a private building in Mallapur 'penta' for 10 voters, which would help them save a 20-km trek for casting vote.

Similarly, another auxiliary polling station will be at an

Anganwadi centre in Budidgattu in Devarakonda assembly segment under Nalgonda Parliamentary constituency, which too has 10



voters. They earlier had to travel eight km to vote, EC and district administration officials said.

Overall, 10 smallest polling stations will be set up in Telangana under Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda and

Mahabubabad Parliamentary segments which have electors numbering between 10 to 26, belonging to STs-Chenchu, Lambadi and Koya tribes, who earlier had to travel a distance ranging from 3 km to 20 km.

The voters comprise different families.

In Achampet assembly constituency of Nagarkurnool district, there are certain Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) --'Chenchu' families living in deep forest in small groups, Nagarkurnool Collector and District Electoral officer P Udaykumar said.

They stay 20-40 km deep inside the forest and due to various limitations earlier, only one polling station used to be established inside the forest for all these habitations forcing them to travel upto 20-30 km for casting vote, he said.

Polling would be held on May 13 for 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

STONE ATTACK ON JAGAN

Political slugfest on in AP

A pre-planned and cold-blooded act which the Opp is trying to downplay: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP and the TDP in Andhra Pradesh engaged in a war of words on Sunday after a stone was hurled at ruling party chief and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy when he was canvassing for votes, which left an injury on his left temple.

The Chief Minister was hit by a stone on the left side of his head in Vijayawada on Saturday night while canvassing. The stone was allegedly hurled by some unknown persons at high speed, leading to a small cut.

YSRCP general secretary S Ramakrishna Reddy claimed that the attack was a pre-med-



itated cold-blooded attack on the CM. "Who would have planned such an attempt? It stems from the insecurity that the TDP is experiencing as they are witnessing the response our leader is getting through the poll campaign, through the roadshows and 'Siddham sabhas' (meetings)," he said, addressing a press conference.

Ramakrishna Reddy

alleged that TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu had recently instigated the crowd in his 'prajagalam' (canvassing) meetings to attack Jagan Reddy, and claimed that Naidu and his party would benefit if the YSRCP chief could not mingle with the masses.

"This leads us to presume that the TDP and their leader (Naidu) are responsible for the attack," he said, adding that the injury is a fact and location sensitive.

Further, he claimed that the opposition party is trying to downplay the incident due to the 'fear of exposure' and also resorting to making inhumane comments.

INDIA CORNER

Girl stabs to death neighbour over water

The Delhi Police on Sunday apprehended a 15-year-old girl for allegedly stabbing a neighbour to death in a fight over water from a common tap in Delhi's Farsh Bazar area, an officer said. The victim was a 34-year-old woman, who received several cuts in her left hand and a stab wound in the stomach, they said. According to the police, on Friday at 10.59 pm, a PCR call was received with the caller saying that his wife had been stabbed in the stomach and needed an ambulance. "Acting on the call, the police team reached the spot which was Gali no 2, Bhikam Singh Colony and found injured Soni in her room. She had three cut marks on her left hand and a small wound on her stomach," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said. Soni was immediately taken to Hedgewar Hospital where she was declared dead on arrival by doctors.



India gifts 101 vehicles to various organisations in Nepal

India on Sunday donated 35 ambulances and 66 school buses to various organisations across Nepal, enhancing the local infrastructure in the health and education sectors. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava handed over the vehicles to the Nepalese officials in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun at a ceremony. Out of 101 vehicles, two ambulances were handed over on location in the earthquake-affected Jajarkot and West Rukum districts by the representative of the Embassy of India in the presence of district officials and local residents, a statement from the Indian Embassy here said. "This donation, part of a longstanding initiative coinciding with India's national celebrations, underscores the deep-rooted partnership between India and Nepal, aimed at fostering development and strengthening bilateral relations through improved access to essential services," the statement said.



Indian prisoner Sarabjit Singh's killer shot dead in Pakistan

Amir Sarfaraz Tamba, an accused in the murder of Indian death row prisoner in Pakistan Sarabjit Singh and a close associate of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit founder Hafiz Sayeed, was killed by unidentified gunmen in Lahore on Sunday, official sources said. Tamba was attacked by motorcycle-borne assailants in the Islampura area of Lahore in Pakistan and was rushed in critical condition to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, the sources said. Singh, 49, died of cardiac arrest in Jinnah Hospital Lahore in the wee hours of May 2, 2013, after being comatose for nearly a week following a brutal assault by inmates including Tamba, inside the high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. Tamba, son of Sarfaraz Javed, was born in Lahore in 1979 and was a close associate of the LeT founder who felicitated him for killing Singh.



NO EVACUATION AS YET

Indian missions in Israel, Iran issue fresh advisories for Indians

PNS ■ TEL AVIV/TEHRAN

The Indian diplomatic missions in Israel and Iran on Sunday issued fresh advisories for its nationals after Tehran launched an unprecedented drone and missile attack on the Jewish state, advising them to stay calm, adhere to safety protocols along with activating additional helpline numbers.

Iran and its proxies launched 330 missiles and drones on Israel late on Saturday night in retaliation to an alleged attack by Israel on a diplomatic mission of the Islamic Republic in Damascus on April 1 in which several people, including two top commanders, were killed.

The Indian embassy in Israel issued a fresh 'important advisory' for its nationals after the overnight attacks by Iran. "In light of the recent events in the region, all Indian nationals in Israel are advised to stay calm and adhere to the safety protocols issued by the local authorities,"



the Indian mission said in the 'important advisory' posted on its social media handles.

"The Embassy is closely monitoring the situation and it is in touch with the Israeli authorities and Indian community members to ensure the safety of all our nationals," it added.

It also urged Indian nationals to register with the embassy at a given link.

Hours later, the Indian embassy in Tehran said it has activated additional telephone

lines for its nationals.

"Embassy of India in Tehran has activated additional helpline numbers. For any assistance, please contact the Embassy at: +989128109115; +989128109109; +989932179359; +98-21-88755103-5; cons.tehran@mea.gov.in," the Indian Embassy at Tehran posted on its official X handle.

Earlier on Friday, April 12, the Indian Embassy in Tehran had

issued an advisory that said:

"Travel advisory for Iran and Israel: In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice." It gave a mail ID (cons.tehran@mea.gov.in) and two phone numbers (+98-21-88755103-5 and +989128109115) for any assistance. It also asked all Indians residing in Iran to register themselves and gave a URL to use for the same.

Same day, the Indian embassy in Tel Aviv too had also issued an advisory amid growing speculation of a retaliatory attack by Iran advising its nationals asking them to "avoid unnecessary travel, remain calm and follow safety guidelines issued by the local authorities."

In New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs said India was seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region.

"We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy. We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. Our Embassies in the region are in close touch with the Indian community," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement highlighted that it is vital that security and stability are maintained in the region.

World sure of Modi's win: Rajnath

Says PM getting invitations for events scheduled after polls

PNS ■ JAMUI/BANKA (BIHAR)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been receiving invitations for functions scheduled much after the Lok Sabha polls, which showed the "entire world believes his return to power is inevitable".

The former BJP president made the claim during his back-to-back rallies in Jamui and Banka Lok Sabha constituencies of Bihar, where he canvassed for allies Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and JD(U) respectively.

Addressing an election rally in Jamui district, Singh said, "Election season is known to be volatile everywhere. People view these times with a degree of consternation, but not so in the case of India. The entire world believes PM Modi will be back for a third consecutive term in office. Modi is already being invited to functions abroad which are scheduled in October this year or even next year. This is rare during elections."

"But in case of Modi, the entire world seems to believe that he will be back for a third



"Election season is known to be volatile everywhere. People view these times with a degree of consternation, but not so in the case of India. The entire world believes PM Modi will be back for a third consecutive term in office. Modi is already being invited to functions abroad which are scheduled in October this year or even next year. This is rare during elections."

consecutive term in office," Singh asserted.

The Defence Minister also said under Modi, India has transformed into a power "capable of repulsing cross-border

terrorism as was seen during the surgical strikes".

"Another example of India's rise in global stature was the release of retired navy officials, who were awarded death sentence by a court in Qatar, following a telephone call from Modi to the head of the West Asian state," said Singh.

The minister also lauded Modi's intervention which helped Indian students stranded in war-torn Ukraine, underscoring that it was yet another proof of "our rising global stature".

He also said "earlier, we were dependent on imports for our defence needs. Modi decided that this has to change. Now, missiles, bombs, mortars and shells, all are not just being manufactured on our soil, but we have started exporting these items".

"Just look at the CPI(M)'s talk of nuclear disarmament while our neighbours like Pakistan and China are piling up nukes. The opposition party wants to lay waste our nuclear power which got global recognition after the Pokhran tests during the rule of late Atal Bihari Vajpayee," he added.

'LS polls fight against Manuwadi'

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said the 2024 Lok Sabha polls was not a fight against Prime Minister Narendra Modi but against the "Manuwadi" ideology of the ruling dispensation.

Addressing a poll rally for Congress' Nagpur Lok Sabha candidate Vikas Thakre, who is pitted against Union minister and BJP heavyweight Nitin Gadkari, he said his party was fighting to save Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution that safeguards the rights of 140 crore Indians.

"Thakre is not a high profile candidate but a ground level worker. He has been selected to defeat Manuwadi ideology



(thought process based on the contents of Manusmriti). The 2024 Lok Sabha polls is not a fight against Modi or Gadkari but against Manuwadi ideology," Kharge asserted.

If the RSS-BJP wins, there will be no elections henceforth and they will finish the Constitution, Kharge claimed.

The Congress worked for

the country's freedom but now Modi asks what the party has done in the past 70 years, he said.

"The RSS did nothing during the freedom struggle but now they come asking for votes in the name of Ram Temple and Babasaheb Ambedkar. Leave alone a photo of Ambedkar, these people did not even keep the

national flag in their offices," Kharge alleged.

The youth do not know the history of these organisations and are only misled by Modi's falsehoods, he further said.

Under Modi, the GDP of the country was growing at 5-6 per cent, whereas it was 8-9 per cent during UPA rule, Kharge said.

"Modi calls the opposition corrupt but his party inducts tainted leaders. The BJP is a laundry where the corrupt are inducted by Modi, put in for washing by Amit Shah and taken out (clean chit) by Gadkari," the Congress president said.

People got the right to vote after the Constitution was drafted due to the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr Ambedkar, he said.

'Jumla patra': AAP on BJP's poll manifesto

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Sunday termed the BJP's Lok Sabha poll manifesto a "jumla patra" and claimed that the document presents a clear picture of promises "not fulfilled" by the saffron party in the last 10 years.

The 'Sankalp Patra' of the BJP released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks about making 'one nation, one election' a reality, preparing common electoral rolls, abolishing waiting list for train travel, expansion of 5G networks and organising Ramayana festivals the world over.

Addressing a press conference, senior Aam Aadmi Party

(AAP) leader Atishi said, "The Prime Minister has announced the 'Jumla Patra' (document of rhetoric) of his party for 2024 elections."

"It presents a clear picture of the unfulfilled promises of the BJP in the last 10 years... In 2014 as well, Modi's rhetoric was that his government will give two crore jobs every year. But after 10 years in their 'jumla patra' (manifesto) of 2024, they aren't ready to give any figures on jobs," she said.

The Delhi minister said the government has told the Parliament that it hasn't provided even two crore jobs in the last 10 years, leave alone 20 crore jobs.

Akhilesh: Can country where 80 crore people survive on free ration become 'Vishwaguru'?

PNS ■ MEERUT (UP)

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday mocked the BJP government's claim that the country was set to become a 'vishwaguru', asking how is it possible when 80 crore people in the nation need to be given free rations.

The Samajwadi Party (SP) leader was making a veiled reference to the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, under which 80 crore people in the country are given free rations every month.

"Can a country where 80 crore people survive on free ration become a 'vishwaguru' (global leader)," Yadav told reporters here in response to a question.

He also expressed confidence that the SP and the opposition INDIA bloc will emerge victorious in the Lok Sabha elections.

"SP will register a historic win in the elections. This time, the western wind which is blowing from the west (part of Uttar Pradesh), is in favour of INDIA (bloc), and will reach the last corner (of the state)," Yadav said.

On whether he would contest the Lok Sabha elections, the SP chief said, "Let the date come."

To another question on whether his Meerut visit was out of love for Dalits, Yadav said, "Netaji (SP patron Mulayam Singh Yadav) had himself sent (prominent Dalit leader) Kanshiram to Lok Sabha from



The Samajwadi Party (SP) leader was making a veiled reference to the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, under which 80 crore people in the country are given free rations every month.

Etawah."

"This fight is very old and big. It is one that was once fought by Chaudhary Charan Singh. He was respected by people from all sections of society," the SP chief said.

He also said that this election is one to save the Constitution and democracy.

"Does the youth not know that they have been cheated? Those who were looking to get permanent jobs are deriving satisfaction from Agniveer scheme, and the BJP is exploiting their poverty and helplessness," Yadav claimed.

PM cut off from people, their issues: Priyanka

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, claiming that he is completely cut off from the people and their issues and blamed him for inflation and unemployment in the country.

The Congress leader also claimed that Modi enjoys so much power that those around him are scared to tell him the truth. "Your biggest problem is inflation. I believe that Modiji is not able to understand that. When there is too much power, people do not tell the truth."

Officers and colleagues are scared of telling him about the reality," Gandhi told a public meeting in Rajasthan's Jalore. The rally was organised to garner support for Vaibhav Gehlot, the son of former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and the Congress candidate from Jalore in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"I really feel that Modi is now completely cut off from the people of the country," Gandhi said.

She said that a strange atmosphere prevails in the country now and all kinds of things are happening to divert people's attention.



Sometimes the prime minister shows "false bravery," sometimes he has to boast, he talks about meat and fish, sometimes he flies in the air and sometimes they go under the sea, she said.

"What do these things mean to your life?" she asked.

"What is your biggest problem? Inflation. I think something has happened to Modi ji. He is not able to understand," she said. "The farmers are under debt. But it is not talked about. On TV, media and phones, it is shown that the country is moving forward. It is progressing. Everyone is happy. Is this reality?" Gandhi asked.

The Congress general secretary added, "We also feel proud when events like the G20 Summit are held in India. But another reality is that the poor are suffering from the rising inflation and youngsters due to unemployment."

Will make west UP separate state if voted to power at Centre: Mayawati

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati on Sunday said her party will take concrete steps to make western Uttar Pradesh a separate state if voted to power at the Centre.

Addressing a rally here in support of the BSP's candidate from the Muzaffarnagar Lok Sabha seat Dara Singh Prajapati, Mayawati also said the BJP has a very slim chance of coming to

power again. "You want western Uttar Pradesh to become a separate state. For this, concrete steps will be taken if our government comes to power at the Centre," Mayawati told the gathering.

The BSP chief said if free and fair elections are held and voting machines are not tampered with, the BJP will not return to power this time.

"Most of the BJP's time was spent on making wealthy businessmen wealthier and protecting them..." The BJP and other parties run their organisations and contest elections with the support of these businesses. This was revealed by electoral bond data," she added.

The former chief minister hit out at the BJP government for not



recruiting people for vacant posts reserved for backward communities and making reservations in promotion redundant. "In the last few years, with the BJP in power at the Centre and in most states, the progress of Muslims has stopped to a great extent. Violence in the name of religion has increased here," Mayawati said, adding that poor people of the general category have also not received any benefits under the BJP's rule.

'Will to achieve goals more trustworthy than using apps'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People relying on willpower to resist temptations and achieve goals are perceived as more trustworthy compared to those resorting to "commitment strategies" such as using apps, a new research has shown.

In one experiment, participants were found to judge hypothetical users of commitment strategies as less trustworthy despite recognising that sometimes these strategies are more effective than willpower alone, researchers said.

Approaches involving commitment strategies have been shown to be successful for a var-



ried range of goals such as quitting smoking, weight loss, academic achievement and saving money, according to Ariella Kristal of the Columbia University, US, and lead author

of the study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Commitment strategies can also include having to pay a fine upon engaging in unwanted

behaviour or relying on apps that help people avoid websites like Facebook and Instagram.

However, the researchers believe that resorting to commitment strategies could possibly signal a weakness in an individual's character, or a past failure, because of which they are having to rely on external incentives, rather than overcoming self-control problems on their own. "Past failures of self control can be seen by others as moral failures. Because morality is an important component of integrity in particular, and trustworthiness more broadly, people who rely on commitment strategies may be viewed as less trustworthy

than those who simply use willpower," Kristal said.

Through online experiments, the researchers involved more than 2,800 participants in the US for their study.

The participants were asked to rate the integrity of individuals in hypothetical situations who attempted to achieve a certain goal either through willpower or through a commitment strategy.

In one such situation, the participants were asked to judge people relying on willpower to avoid eating junk food or drinking alcohol, while in another people either displayed self control or depended on an app to avoid using Facebook or Instagram.

Generally, the researchers found that individuals described as depending on commitment strategies to achieve goals were judged to be less trustworthy than those relying on willpower alone.

In another experiment, the participants were found to be less likely to resort to a commitment strategy, if they had a hint that others might find out.

"People appear particularly hesitant to adopt commitment strategies when their use will be made public and, while not as high, people's resistance continues to remain elevated even when the use of strategies will be kept private," Kristal said.

Promises to keep

The BJP unveils its Lok Sabha poll manifesto with emphasis on ‘GYAN’ and development

The ruling BJP has unveiled its long-awaited manifesto, ‘Sankalp Patra’, for the Lok Sabha elections, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasising the party’s commitment to the welfare of ‘GYAN’ — Garib, Yuva, Annadaata and Naari Shakti (the poor, youth, farmers and women). Accompanied by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP chief JP Nadda, the Prime Minister presented the manifesto at the party headquarters in New Delhi. Modi outlined that the paper’s thrust areas were centred around the concept of ‘Viksit Bharat’ — empowering the youth, women, farmers and the economically disadvantaged. He stressed the importance of enhancing both the dignity and quality of life for all citizens, promising initiatives such as providing piped gas to every household and supplying free electricity through solar power. The manifesto pledges to extend the Centre’s free ration scheme and prioritise self-reliance in essential food items like pulses, edible oils and vegetables to stabilise



prices and ensure food security. Additionally, it vows to expand flagship schemes like Ayushman Bharat and the PM Awas Yojana while ensuring access to clean drinking water in every home. In agriculture, the BJP promises to continue providing annual financial assistance of Rs 6,000 to farmers, enhance crop insurance through technology and implement periodic increases in the Minimum Support Prices. It also addresses the party’s commitment to implementing a uniform civil code, One Nation One Poll initiative, expansion of 5G networks, bolstering national security and abolishing waiting lists for train travel.

The main rival Congress’ manifesto, on the other hand, focuses on social welfare, economic reforms and addressing inequality through targeted interventions such as healthcare expansion, agricultural support and a caste census. In contrast, the BJP emphasises national security, infrastructure development and cultural issues, with a lesser emphasis on caste-based policies and regional grievances. Nadda reiterated the commitment to fulfil all promises encapsulated in ‘Modi Ki Guarantee’, the BJP’s slogan for the elections. Responding to the BJP’s manifesto, the Congress has criticised it over alleged shortcomings. Party spokesperson Pawan Khera labelled it a ‘maafinama’ or apology, highlighting unfulfilled promises from previous elections. Supriya Shrinete accused the BJP of misleading the public and ignoring critical issues such as ethnic violence in Manipur and protests in Ladakh. As the mudslinging match between the arch-rivals continues, it is for the people to judge who kept promises and who did not. Manifestos are no commitment and, therefore, not legally binding. Nonetheless, these do spell out a party’s ideology and the direction it wants to take the country in. As the campaign gains momentum, the debate over competing policy agendas is likely to intensify, shaping the discourse leading up to the polls. An informed voter would better not judge a party by its manifesto but by its track record.

PICTALK



A woman applies vermilion to another woman on the occasion of the Satuni festival, in Patna

PTI

Constitutional morality: The pillar of India’s democracy

Central to India’s dynamic democracy is the principle of constitutional morality, serving as a compass guiding the nation’s advancement and growth

Every Quadrennial year, the election season in India sets a stage for new hope, a new batch of electorates and especially a power in each electorate to exercise their right of adult universal suffrage. News channels are brimming with discourses and the candidates are doing their best to secure a seat in the political engine of society. The vibrancy of the largest democracy was foreseen by the members of the constituent assembly who wanted the ruling ideals to rise from the Constitution itself to guide the coming of a new independent nation. The father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar defined Constitutional morality as a paramount reverence for all the forms of the Constitution, enforcing obedience to authority and acting within these forms in addition to the habit of open speech and action subject only to definite legal control. He believed that constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment rather it needs to be cultivated consciously. In contemporary times, it has become a principal tool of activism in the



hands of the judicial wing of our country. Unlike other ideals of brotherhood, equality, fairness, non-arbitrariness, etc. which sprung from the need for pre-independent India, constitutional morality had to be injected into the bloodstream of the country. The Judiciary has brought back the discourse on constitutional morality through a slew of judgments in contemporary times. Thereby reinstating the nature of the Indian Constitution, an organic and living document, pulsating life into a more than half-century-old Manga Carta of India. The CJJ of India, D.Y. Chandrachud speaking in the same vein said that judges go by the values derived from the Constitution that the courts are intended to espouse such as human dignity, personal liberty, equality, fairness, etc. He also added that the

Supreme Court is final not because they (judges) are right, but they are right because they are final. Transformational jurisprudence on constitutional morality is a pre-constitutional concept. For Instance, practice, which was within the bounds of the then — prevailing social morality, was abolished and this act was a part of constitutional morality, even though the constitution was drawn up years later. Post Independence may not have found an explicit place in the text but it is embedded in the essence of constitutionalism. It demands morality to be objective based on the prevailing dynamics of society. The conscience-keepers are duty-bound to draw a balance between individual/class liberty and societal acceptance of change in the socio-legal and politico scenario. From LGBTQ+ rights recognition in Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India to the striking down of section 497 of IPC, 1960, dealing with the law of adultery in Joseph Shine vs. Union of India, the Judiciary has advocated its mandate to include constitu-

tional morality over majoritarian or popular morality. Constitutional morality is derived from public morality, however, slightly divorced from it and sifted through constitutional idealism. The intersectionality of social and religious belief systems entangles it further, for instance, in the Sabarimala judgment, the debate circled between the popular socio-religious belief and the fundamental right of freedom of religion of a class of women (menstruating women) under Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, is a worthy example in this regard. Constitutional morality may also at times be at a crossroads with Jus naturale. Euthanasia as a practice or the Right to Abortion, both were initially entrenched in belief systems to be against societal morality. It was not until the Supreme Court of India balanced the interests of the right seekers and the opposers, allowing both the above practices in a judicially permissible manner, that it found its acceptance. (The writer is a research scholar; their views are personal)



ABHAYA DUBEY

Unravelling the Roy family’s legacy



PRAFULL GORADIA

The recent mudslinging between the TMC and BJP has highlighted a historical narrative concerning the role of the Roy family in the downfall of Bengal’s Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula

With the campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections heating, mudslinging isn’t left behind, although one wishes this weren’t so. The Trinamool Congress has abused Smt. Amrita Roy, the BJP’s Krishnanagar Lok Sabha candidate, for belonging to the family of Krishna Chandra Roy, who had sided with the East India Company to take down Bengal’s Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula in 1757. The current Rajmata of Krishna Nagar has justified her family’s act, saying had they not done so, Sanatana Dharma and Bengali culture under the tyrannical Siraj would have ceased to exist. Moreover, Raja Krishna Chandra Roy, Amrita’s forefather wasn’t alone; Jagat Seth, Raja Naba Krishna Deb and above all Mir Jafar and many others wanted to see the end of Siraj-ud-Daula. Such was the ill-will he had generated.

What would have been Bengal’s fate had these merchant princes not contrived to overthrow Siraj? More than likely, Nadia district and today’s West Bengal might have gone to Pakistan and subsequently Bangladesh. Pakistan’s first President Iskander Mirza was a direct descendant of Siraj-ud-Daula. The family lived in Murshidabad, but on the morrow of Partition, promptly migrated to Karachi, then Pakistan’s capital. Iskander first became defence secretary and then Pakistan’s president in March 1956. To go back to Murshidabad, Siraj-ud-Daula came to the throne in 1756. He soon showed his colours by dismissing his chief minister Rai Durlabh, picked by his grandfather Nawab Alivardi Khan. The young Nawab humiliated the wealthy state banker Jagat Seth by publicly slapping him in the durbar and threatening him with sunnat, i.e., circumcision (see Plassey to Pakistan by Humayun Mirza, son of Iskander Mirza). The merchant princes were resentful of the rule by people of Central Asian stock and wanted more say in governance for the local people. However, they lacked the military organisation to effect an overthrow. Come 1757, upon the orders of the East India



Company’s Court of Directors arrived from Madras, along with some sailors and soldiers, to teach Siraj-ud-Daula a lasting lesson for humiliating the British at Fort William in Calcutta the previous year. This is where the Black Hole tragedy was perpetrated on the nawab’s orders. The nawabate’s merchant princes saw this as a rare opportunity to do away with this odious regime. British arms and Bengali money as well as contacts would ensure victory. Clive had only about 3,000 men, whereas Siraj-ud-Daula had an army of a lakh, plus a cavalry and elephants. This large army had to be truncated in numbers. Mir Jafar, who commanded half the army of the Nawab, was promised that if he helped to overthrow Siraj-ud-Daula, he would be made the Nawab. Consequently, over half of Siraj’s army did not fight. The Battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757, ended the saga of Siraj-ud-Daula and his life. At the time we are talking about, there were two cultures in Bengal, namely Bengali and Islamic. Since the 12th century, the region had been slipping out of Bengali influence and had become two-thirds Arabized. The Battle of Plassey

“MIR JAFAR, WHO COMMANDED HALF THE ARMY OF THE NAWAB, WAS PROMISED THAT IF HE HELPED TO OVERTHROW SIRAJ-UD-DULA, HE WOULD BE MADE THE NAWAB. CONSEQUENTLY, OVER HALF OF SIRAJ’S ARMY DID NOT FIGHT

in 1757 was the first decisive setback. After Siraj was defeated and killed and his nawabate erased, Hindus for the first time in many years could celebrate puja openly. A grand Durga Puja was held at the palace of Raja Naba Krishna Deb, where the chief guest was Robert Clive. Imagine if Bengal had remained on the Islamic track, there would have been no historic renaissance for which Bengal is justly renowned and respected. There would have been no Raja Rammohan Roy, no Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, no Rabindranath Tagore, no Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, no Yogi Aurobindo, no Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and certainly no Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. One can only imagine what this region might have become. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, more than a hundred years ago, had famously said “What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow”. But if the likes of Siraj-ud-Daula had continued on the throne, there would not have been a Bengal today. Gandhi did awaken Indians to the value of freedom, politics, soul and economics, but the find winner was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army (INA). This

was admitted and affirmed by none other than Clement Atlee, Prime Minister of Britain from 1946 to 1951 the British leader who signed the Indian Independence Act of 1947 heralding India’s independence. After relinquishing office, Atlee came to India and was a guest of the then West Bengal Governor Justice P.B. Chakraborty. During a dinner conversation, Chakraborty asked his guest why the British quit India in a hurry in 1947, when there was no immediate cause, with the Quit India movement of 1942 having failed. The former British Prime Minister in reply quoted several reasons, principal among them being the erosion of loyalty to the British Crown among the Indian army, navy and air force, as a result of the action of Subhas Chandra Bose. Atlee’s reply to Chakraborty’s question on how much the non-violent satyagraha of Gandhi had influenced the British to free India, was “m-i-n-i-m-a-l”, with emphasis on each letter and a contemptuous smile. Had there been no Bengal, there wouldn’t have been a Netaji in the first place. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP’S SOUTHERN STRATEGY

Madam — Apropos the editorial, “Southern Comfort”, published on April 12, this is my response. I fully agree that “Modi’s forays into the southern parts of the country may bear some fruits but it would be naive to think that the results will be immediately delivered; it will happen perhaps only sometime in future. Indeed, the BJP has managed to break ice in the northeast and southern India but that has taken considerable time and effort. Of course, efforts done now in the south would not go in vain and will pave the way for success in future elections”. He talks to the people about the failures of the incumbent DMK Government. In Kerala, the BJP is crazy to open its account. It is to be seen on 4th June. In Telangana, it fared well in the Assembly elections in 2023 improving its tally. It is quite encouraging for the party. In AP, the BJP party needs to do a lot of groundwork. Along with Naidu, it may get a few seats. In Karnataka, the BJP is equally poised with the Congress. Modi’s guarantees that the corrupt will be jailed in his third term may fetch the party some votes for in the south almost all the incumbent state Governments are mostly corrupt. So, the BJP is to open its gateway to the south in this scenario. More cannot be expected. It has to wait for a little more time to make its dent in the south as it did in the northeast.

N R Ramachandran | Chennai

THE UAE’S SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE

Madam — Apropos the news story, “Swaminarayan Temple: The UAE’s Monument of Harmony”, published on April 13, this is my response. The tale of the Swaminarayan Temple in Abu Dhabi encapsulates more than just an architectural marvel; it speaks volumes about the convergence of faith, diplomacy and perseverance. The journey from prophecy to reality, spanning nearly three decades, mirrors the shared commitment of India and the UAE towards fostering cultural understanding



Apropos news article, “Drunken driving leaves six school children dead”, published on April 12, this is my response. Six children were killed and 20 injured after a school bus carrying them overturned in Mahendragarh. Shockingly the driver was allegedly drunk and the bus did not have the fitness certificate. This is atrocious, after the accident they are finding fault. Many schools don’t follow Government rules. Hundreds of school buses are in the same condition. But who

and global harmony. Prime Minister Modi’s pivotal role, alongside the visionary leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, underscores the significance of diplomatic collaborations in shaping monumental endeavours. Beyond its aesthetic allure, the temple stands as a symbol of inclusivity, with its design echoing the ethos of unity amidst diversity. The meticulous craftsmanship and innovative solutions employed in its construction exemplify human ingenuity overcoming geographical and climatic challenges. In essence, the Swaminarayan Temple in Abu Dhabi is not merely a place of worship; it’s a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, bridging nations and cultures in a shared pursuit of peace and progress.

Ishana Arya | Thane

REFLECTIONS ON JALLIANWALA BAGH

Madam — Apropos the news article, “Honouring the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh”, published on April 12, this is my response. The tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh continues to echo through history, with its

Fix accountability

bothers? Administration wakes up from the slumber only when poor kids lose their lives. Dismiss the district administration for not following inspection beforehand remove them from the job and do criminal proceedings against them why shouldn’t the city Traffic Police, Police Department & Transportation Department be made a party in the case for their negligence (since 2017 when the bus was operating without paying Road Tax, even the bus unfit to run. What are the RTO officials doing since 2017?), but this will never happen. People want to know, were the local traffic police sleeping till this mishap happened? Now they are saying the gross violation but no one checked & impounded the bus for these violations before the mishap? It’s a pity that their timely action would have saved precious lives. RIP the departed soul may the lord give their parents the desired strength to overcome the loss.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

105th anniversary drawing sombre reflections on the atrocity committed on April 13, 1919. The massacre, orchestrated by Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, stands as a stark reminder of the brutality of British rule in India. The unjust firing upon unarmed civilians, amidst peaceful protests against the Rowlatt Act, left hundreds dead and wounded and condemnation both nationally and internationally. The reactions of prominent figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru underscore the magnitude of the tragedy and its profound impact. Their calls for peaceful resistance and condemnation of British colonialism reflect the resilience of the Indian spirit in the face of oppression. As we remember the lives lost at Jallianwala Bagh, it serves as a solemn reminder of the sacrifices made in the pursuit of freedom and justice, urging us to never forget the lessons of history.

Bahadur Shah | Dhanbad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Limiting procreation is perhaps the most significant step towards sustainability



ACHARYA PRASHANT

Today the world that we live in, people are trying to do small, small good things, so that we can conveniently escape away from the fact that there is something humongously evil that we are doing. Most people are habituated towards consumption, it is not consumption per se that is the problem; it is the mad and blind consumption of stuff that is anyway not going to do you any good. That's the problem. So, wisdom or spiritual wisdom is not about the renunciation of consumption altogether. There are signs which clearly show the impact of various activities on climate change. For example: going car-free, avoiding transatlantic flight; choosing green energy; switching from an electric car to car-free; choosing a vegan diet; replacing a typical car with a hybrid; washing clothes in cold water rather than hot water; recycling; hanging dry clothes; upgrading to energy-efficient light bulbs. And the title of the graphic is 'Tonnes of CO2 equivalent saved per year for one person undertaking each action' (Wynes & Nicholas, 2017; Environmental Research Letters, Volume 12, Number 7). But these are 10 activities that are popular where all the do-gooders are busy doing all these ten activities and they walk around with great missionary zeal and even greater missionary pride.

And then there is this huge bar that corresponds to around sixty tonnes of CO2 which comes from doing a single action — which is, having one child. We don't talk about the largest contributor to climate change because this is where our ego lives, this is where the physical and bodily tendencies live. You must be wondering why I am speaking about this thing regarding procreation, regarding having kids. It's because this is the single most important issue facing you and me and the planet




and the millions of species today. This is the one thing that man immediately needs to address at this moment. There is no greater challenge in front of mankind — not the Third World War, not nuclear proliferation, nothing at all. This is the biggest challenge. Can you please either stop or limit having babies? This is the one challenge that nobody wants to talk about. If you can address this, then everything will be addressed. For every urge for development, you will see linkages between body identification, consumption, procreation and followed by devastation. When the global temperatures rise by three degrees or four degrees, all these baby flowers will wilt. Anyway, not too many species of flowers are going to remain to be planted. How much is climate change to blame? It affects at least 10,967 species on the IUCN Red List and projections suggest that if global temperatures increase by 2°C by 2100, about 18 per cent of all species on land will face a high risk of going extinct. And this cannot be addressed merely by way of litigation. You require a spiritual movement; you require a deeply spiritual consciousness to understand what I am saying and act on what I am pointing to. You cannot limit the number of kids without first putting an end to this body-identification. As long as your material body is there, you will continue to consume, you will have to consume. We do not see the linkage between body-identification, consumption, procreation and devastation; we look at them as different things. This urge for development — what do you think, it has nothing to do with the devastation of this planet? What is exactly the definition of development? That which brings pleasure to you; that which brings comfort and convenience to you, right? That's how you define development. In the history of mankind, the time has come when without addressing that root problem, you cannot address any of the problems. And if you do not address the root problem now, there is going to be no tomorrow.

(The author is a Vedanta teacher, author and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation; views are personal)

Indian political discourse plummets: Standards in free fall

Elections serve as a litmus test for the health of a nation's democracy, revealing the true character of leaders

The narrative that happens during the time of the General Election is an indicator of the quality of democracy practiced in a country. Leaders, especially the star campaigners, should set a standard for the public discourse through their speeches and interviews with the media persons. They should bear in mind that every word they utter is being recorded digitally with cameras and audio instruments. Whatever they speak is under public scrutiny and any aberrations would lead to major mishaps. The campaign speeches in India took a new low during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister (1984-1989). Rajiv, who took over the post of Prime Minister following



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

the assassination of his mother Indira Gandhi, was a refreshing change from the image of conventional Congress leaders spotting the ear-to-ear smile and perverted smile. But that did not last long as the Government he headed was enmeshed in corruption charges ranging from Bofors Gun to HDW submarine deals. It was futile to expect the truncated Opposition to sit idle while the

whole world was discussing the gun contract. Rajiv Gandhi, who was upset with the charges, went to the extent of describing the opposition as political limpets. This is a term coined by a speech writer of Rajiv who always flouted his Indian Foreign Service background to play one-upmanship against old-time Congress leaders. On seeing that Rajiv Gandhi was upset with the allegations of corruption, Ram Jethmalani, the doyen among the country's lawyers launched a fusillade of questions at the Prime Minister. "I'll ask you ten questions each day about the Bofors deal and if you claim that there is no corruption involved in it, please answer my questions," said Jethmalani. This made Rajiv furious and

he shot back saying that he would not answer barking dogs. Ram Jethmalani was a highly respected lawyer and social activist and the general public did not take the comments of the then Prime Minister lightly. Ram Nath Goenka, the founder of Indian Express, who had said in a signed front-page editorial in his newspaper that he could die peacefully with Rajiv Gandhi occupying the Prime Minister's chair had to make a retreat and wrote that the earlier Rajiv Gandhi goes the better for the country. The Congress alone was responsible for the falling standard in the national narrative during the election. When the Congress made use of public discourses with unparliamentary and uncivilized words, it was futile to expect the opposition to sit back and suffer silently. Barring leaders like A B Vajpayee, L K Advani, Murali Manohar Joshi, George Fernandes and S Chandrasekhar, the opposition too had an array of leaders capable of spitting venom and fire at the rivals. Though many seasoned statesmen like Nani Palkhivala and J R D Tata cautioned the nation about the falling standards in the quality of debates and discussions, it did not make any impact as politicians continued their harangues with the sole purpose of scoring brownie points. The result was that the political campaigns that should have served as a source of knowledge and information got degraded into

speeches full of chosen abuses. The present-day Congress leaders are no different. Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister said in a media meeting on 4 January 2014 that it would be disastrous for the country to have Narendra Modi as Prime Minister. Now it is for the people of India to decide whether Narendra Modi's decade-long regime was disastrous or not. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge is no different from M M Mani, the Marxist leader of Kerala when it comes to "showering" rivals with the choicest of abuses. Being the president of the GOP, Kharge has the major responsibility to ensure the dignity of the narratives. But the kind of words he has used and is using do not augur well for the position he holds. Politics is a profession that requires dignity, decency and decorum. One could not speak or behave in a manner that would put hooligans to shame. A politician should be able to control the language and mannerisms while he interacts with the people. The behaviour of former union minister Dayanidhi Maran (grand nephew of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin) who is in politics only because of his family connections, is reprehensible as well as condemnable. When he was asked about K Annamalai, the state chief of Tamil Nadu BJP, Maran went to the extent of describing him as a joker and said he does not know any Annamalai. This is

the zenith of arrogance as Annamalai is the most talked about person in South India as of date. His rise in BJP was not because of his family background while his educational and professional qualifications are sufficient to make one say My Mr.. Maran and his ilk need sensibility to cherish the beauty of Annamalai's qualifications. In his decade-long service as an IPS officer, Annamalai earned encomium from all his seniors while Maran was dropped from the Manmohan Singh-led Government within three years of being sworn in following corruption charges against him. This much for dynasty politics.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

Income inequalities hamper sustainable growth



UTTAM GUPTA

While the nation's GDP is poised to surge by 7.6 per cent in the current financial year, concerns loom large over the sluggish pace of private consumption



During the current financial year, the Indian economy is expected to register a growth of 7.6 per cent in real gross domestic product or GDP. Coming on top of growth of 9.1 per cent during 2021-22 and 7.2 per cent during 2022-23, India's performance is spectacular. Emboldened by this trend and Modi's commitment to pursue economic reforms with greater vigour during its third term, analysts are hoping for growth of above 7 per cent on a sustainable basis. But, there is a catch. Private consumption which accounts for as much as 55 per cent of the Indian economy has acted as a major drag. For instance, during FY 2023-24, it is expected to grow by a meagre 3 per cent (even lower than 4.4 per cent as given in the first advance estimate). This is the slowest growth in private consumption since FY 2002-03 when growth was 2.9 per cent. It is impossible to sustain an overall GDP growth of 7-8 per cent in the years to come if the most important component (read: private consumption) is growing at less than half this rate.

What is private consumption? Apart from essential consumption items such as food, shelter, clothing, education, health etc, it includes spending by people on a host of discretionary items such as consumer durables viz. ACs, refrigerators, washing machines, TVs, automobiles, mobiles and so on. The demand for these goods depends on the 'purchasing power' of the people at large which requires that at least all working-age persons (18 years to 60 years) have adequate incomes. This brings us to another stark reality namely the distribution of income and wealth.

Where does India stand? According to a report 'Time to Care' by Oxfam that came ahead of the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in January 2020 'India's richest one per cent hold more than four times the wealth held by 953 million people who make up for the bottom 70 per cent of the population'. It also showed that there were a total of 63 Indian billionaires (billionaire is a term used to describe a person having wealth over US\$ one billion) and their combined total wealth was higher than



PRIVATE CONSUMPTION, WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR AS MUCH AS 55 PER CENT OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY, HAS ACTED AS A MAJOR DRAG. FOR INSTANCE, DURING FY 2023-24, IT IS EXPECTED TO GROW BY A MEAGRE 3 PER CENT

India's Union Budget for the FY 2018-19. Another Oxfam report, "Inequality Kills", released ahead of the WEF meeting held in early 2022, mentioned that the number of Indian billionaires grew to 102 by March 2020 and further to 142 in November 2021. During this period, their wealth increased from Rs 2300,000 crore to Rs 5300,000 crore. At the same time, the income of 84 per cent of households declined and the share of the bottom half of the population in national wealth was a mere six per cent. Meanwhile, a report titled 'Survival of the Richest' released by Oxfam International at the 2023 annual meeting of the WEF in Davos, Switzerland, says that 'the wealthiest one per cent of individuals in India possess over 40 per cent of the nation's total wealth'. Juxtapose this with the bottom half of the population getting a mere six per cent of the nation's wealth, we end up with glaring inequalities.

How does it impact demand? Let us look at India's population of around 140 crore and nominal GDP of about Rs 300,00,000 crore. Apply Oxfam percentages to these numbers. The wealthiest one per cent or 1.4 crore individuals have 40 per cent of GDP or Rs 120,00,000 crore whereas a vast 50 per cent of the population or 70 crore individuals have a mere 6 per cent of GDP or Rs 18,00,000 crore. On per person basis, those in the wealthiest category have annual purchasing power (PP) of Rs 85 lakh each whereas others in the bottom 50 per cent have a PP of a mere Rs 25,000 each. Such an income distribution pattern is far from conducive to boosting demand on a sustainable basis. There are inherent limits to how much a wealthy person can buy. On the other hand, if a good portion of the money with him is

distributed among those who are not so blessed (read: the bottom 50 per cent), this would give a big boost to private consumption. We hear loud voices from various quarters including from industries and businesses asking the Government to formulate policies, reduce taxes even give direct income support. But, there isn't even a whisper of 'why inequalities in income arise in the first place. An analysis of the financials of India's largest companies—those comprising the BSE 500 index—gives us some clues. The profits of corporations included in this index went up from Rs 480,000 crore during FY 2017-18 to more than Rs 1000,000 crore during FY 2021-22—an increase of over 100 per cent, whereas their revenue growth was only 47 per cent during this period. This means that payments to factors of production other than the owners of capital (read: shareholders) such as to employees/workers, purchase of inputs, interest payments, etc., have been kept under a tight leash, resulting in a disproportionate boost to profits. The aggregate dividend paid by these firms increased from Rs 176,000 crore during FY 2017-18 to Rs 302,000 crore during FY 2021-22, which is an increase of 72 per cent. In each of the last five years, they paid at least 30 per cent of aggregate net profit as dividends. Cumulatively, the companies distributed 34 per cent of profits as dividends. This is an unusually high payout ratio—even higher than 30 per cent paid by the world's largest companies included in America's S&P 500. Thus, the companies have done little to reinvest the profits for growth. Whether profits, albeit extraordinary, to the company or high dividends to shareholders, they have been paid for or come at the cost of others. For instance, the Rs

1000,000 crore profits of firms in the BSE 500 index during FY 2021-22 came at the cost of undermining the purchasing power of millions of consumers. If even 50 per cent of this amount or Rs 500,000 crore had remained with the latter, aggregate demand would have gone up manifolds. Likewise, look at the Rs 302,000 crore dividend paid to shareholders during FY 2021-22. An overwhelming share of this went to the promoters and other minority shareholders. If, instead of filling their coffers—the money that merely adds to their cash balances or is spent on a few discretionary/luxury items—more of it were to be distributed in higher salaries to their employees, particularly at the lower rung, imagine what it would do to demand. Several businesses enjoy pricing power. For instance, those operating in metals such as copper and zinc, or in hydrocarbons like oil and gas, enjoy a natural monopoly. Leveraging this, they charge high prices, resulting in windfall gains for themselves. Enterprises in the chemical, petrochemicals, pharmaceutical and agrochemical sectors have hugely benefited from a protective policy environment. Over 60 million small and medium enterprises (SMEs) also ape large enterprises when it comes to distributing the wealth generated. Their owners spend the least on payments to workers. To conclude, all businesses are structured to result in the concentration of income in the hands of their owners or those who wield power and influence. Instead of deflecting the ball to the Government, they need to bring about a fundamental change in the way they operate. They need to shed over zealotry for profits, charge less from consumers, distribute more to workers and pay more taxes.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Godrej Locks eyes 50 per cent market share

Locks and security solutions company Godrej Locks has said it aims to increase market share from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in three years, riding on a new range of affordable products and reduced prices of existing ones. Shyam Motwani, business head for Godrej Locks and architectural and systems, said the company's newly-launched products are over 50 per cent affordable than the existing locks, while efforts have been undertaken to make the existing locks cheaper by 7-8 per cent. The company will rely on new affordable range and price cuts in the existing locks to achieve the objective of having the dominant market share in around three years, Motwani said. The target is to grab 50 per cent market in the segment from the current 30 per cent, Motwani said, adding that the company sees a massive opportunity for its products in the tier-2,3, 4 cities and towns.



Digi Yatra: Stakeholders working to address tailgating issue

Stakeholders, including the Digi Yatra Foundation, are working on ways to address tailgating at airports through the Digi Yatra gates, an issue that has been flagged by Aviation security watchdog BCAS, according to officials. Digi Yatra, which uses Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), provides contactless and seamless entry into airports through e-gates. Broadly, tailgating refers to an additional person getting through a gate whereas the credentials for access have been used for only one person. As part of the routine review of various security aspects, an official in the know said the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has flagged tailgating at Digi Yatra gates and that discussions are going on to address the issue. In a recent interview, Digi Yatra Foundation CEO Suresh Khadakhavi told PTI that stakeholders are discussing the best way forward to address the issue of tailgating.



Glenmark recalls 6,528 bottles of blood pressure drug in US

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals is recalling 6,528 bottles of a medication used to treat high blood pressure in the American market due to failed dissolution specifications, the US health regulator said. The US-based arm of the Mumbai-headquartered drug firm is recalling the affected lot of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules, the US Food and Drug Administration said in its latest Enforcement Report. The affected lot has been produced in India and is being recalled by New Jersey-based Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc for "failed dissolution specifications", the USFDA said. "Out of Specification (OOS) was reported in a test of dissolution at the 12th month time point in long-term stability study," it noted. Glenmark initiated Class II recall of the drug across the US on March 26 this year.



'Efforts on to develop cross-border insolvency framework'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Efforts are going on to develop a cross-border insolvency framework with a cautious approach and such a framework should respect the laws of other countries without superseding Indian law, according to experts.

Former NCLAT (National Company Law Appellate Tribunal) Chairperson S J Mukhopadhyaya emphasised the importance of having a robust cross-border insolvency framework in the country.

"We will have to respect the law of other countries, but it does not mean superseding our law. The dominance should be of our law in our jurisdiction," he was quoted as saying in a



"We will have to respect the law of other countries, but it does not mean superseding our law. The dominance should be of our law in our jurisdiction," he was quoted as saying in a release.

He was speaking at the conference on 'Cross-Border and Group Insolvency in India: Challenges and Opportunities' in the national capital on

Saturday. The conference was organised by the Indian Institute of Insolvency Professionals of ICAI (IIPI) jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth &

Development Office-United Kingdom (UKFCDO), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). IBBI Whole-Time Member Sudhaker Shukla said efforts are on to develop a cross-border insolvency framework with a cautious approach as well as working on the group insolvency framework.

According to the release, National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Member (Judicial) Ashok Kumar Bhardwaj said there is an increasing emphasis on a hybrid model of cross border insolvency framework where in different jurisdictions have their laws and also have space for common interest.



Firm to connect tech pros with global job opportunities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Technology startup SkillsCapital has launched a programme to connect technology and SAP professionals, mainly from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, with global job opportunities, a statement said on Sunday.

The NCR-based startup has introduced AI-powered Talent Cloud, which allows companies across the world to access technology talent for their projects remotely, Skills Capital said.

Finmin for enhanced KYC, due diligence to check fraud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to check incidence of BoB World app scam and other such financial frauds, the finance ministry makes a case for an enhanced KYC procedure and extensive due diligence by banks and financial institutions for onboarding merchants to safeguard customers against cyber risks, sources said.

Appropriate due diligence of merchants and Business Correspondents (BCs) who offer banking services in rural and remote areas is necessary not only to check frauds but also to fortify the financial ecosystem, sources said.

According to sources, there is a need to strengthen data security and data protection at the level of merchants and BCs as chances of compromise are higher at that level.



Therefore, sources said, RBI may advise banks and financial institutions to review the concentration of BCs in cyber fraud hotspots and their onboarding, blocking of micro ATMs found to be involved in frauds.

This was one of the suggestions made at an inter-ministerial meeting held recently with the objective of furthering cyber security and checking financial fraud, sources said.

During 2023, as many as 11,28,265 cases of financial

cyber fraud worth Rs 7,488.63 crore were reported, as per the data compiled by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

To strengthen the mechanism to deal with cyber crimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, the central government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs, has set up the 'Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre' (I4C) to deal with all types of cyber crime in the country.

As part of its efforts to curb growing cyber fraud, the Reserve Bank is considering setting up a Digital India Trust Agency (DIGITA) to stop the mushrooming of illegal lending apps.

The proposed agency will enable verification of digital lending apps and maintain a public register of verified apps, sources said.

Markets to track geopolitical events, earnings & macro data

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Geopolitical events, macro-economic data and quarterly earnings of corporates would guide the stock market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Stock markets will remain closed on Wednesday for Ram Navami.

"This week promises to be crucial for the market as fresh worries about a potential conflict between Iran and Israel emerge. Any significant escalation in tensions could trigger panic selling and volatility in global equity markets. The market will also be closely monitoring the movement of crude oil prices, which are often impacted by geopolitical events," said Santosh Meena,

Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Investors will be watching for earnings reports from Infosys, Bajaj Auto, and Wipro later in the week, he said.



On the macroeconomic front, China's GDP data, US retail sales figures, and movements in the US bond yields

and the dollar index will be important factors influencing market sentiment, Meena added.

Shares of TCS will remain in focus on Monday. The company reported its January-March quarterly earnings on Friday.

The IT services major logged a 9 per cent growth in net profit at Rs 12,434 crore in the fourth quarter of FY24 due to strong domestic business even as the company struggled in its key markets overseas.

In the entire fiscal year, the Tata Group company's net profit surged 9 per cent to Rs 45,908 crore, while the revenue went up to Rs 2,40,893 crore from Rs 2,25,458 crore a year ago.

INVESTMENTS IN ADANI STOCKS

LIC sees 59% jump in value

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

LIC, the state-owned insurance behemoth, has seen a 59 per cent rise in value of its investments in Adani group

companies in 2023-24 fiscal year after the conglomerate made a smart recovery since being hampered by a d a m n i n g short seller report.

The value of LIC's investment in seven Adani group companies has soared from Rs 38,471 crore as on March 31, 2023 to Rs 61,210 crore on March 31, 2024, registering an increase of Rs 22,378 crore, according to stock exchange data. Last year, the insurance giant faced intense scrutiny over its decision to

invest in the Adani group amidst a political sluffest after allegations of stock manipulation fuelled by Hindenburg report. Adani group denied any wrong doing.



A d a n i Group's stocks, which at lowest point took a beating of about USD 150 billion, have staged a remarkable comeback, fuelled by robust profit growth across its diverse businesses.

Facing political pressure, LIC strategically reduced its exposure to two of the group's flagship companies -- Adani Ports & SEZ and Adani Enterprises -- only to witness their shares surge by an impressive 83% and 68.4%, respectively.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have infused over Rs 13,300 crore in Indian equities in the first two weeks of the month owing to a resilient domestic economy with promising growth prospects.

Going ahead, concerns over changes in India-Mauritius tax treaty will weigh on Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) inflows in the near-term till clarity emerges on details of the new treaty, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Another major concern is the surcharged geopolitical situation in the Middle East with heightened tensions between Iran and Israel. These will keep the markets on tenterhooks in the near-term, he added. Since domestic institutional investors (DIIs) are sitting on huge liquidity and the retail and HNIs in India are highly optimistic about the Indian market,

FPI selling will be largely absorbed by domestic money.

According to the data with the depositories, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 13,347 crore in Indian equities this month (till April 12).

Although, Friday witnessed FPI selling to the tune of Rs 8,027 crore on fears of changes in India-Mauritius tax treaty.



Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said that several factors might have helped in the huge inflow including Fitch's downgrade of

China's sovereign credit rating outlook from stable to negative due to growth concerns.

In addition, anticipation of a normal monsoon season this year that could alleviate inflationary pressures, and a resilient domestic economy with promising growth prospects too helped in massive inflows, he added.

Share of affordable homes, priced up to Rs 45 lakh

Shrinks to 22% in Jan-Mar: PropTiger

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Share of affordable homes -- priced up to Rs 45 lakh each -- in total housing sales more than halved to 22 per cent during January-March across top eight cities amid strong demand for luxury flats, according to PropTiger.



Share of affordable homes in total housing sales stood at 48 per cent in the January-March period of 2023 calendar year. Housing brokerage firm PropTiger.com data showed

that housing sales grew by 41 per cent to 1,20,640 units during January-March 2024 across top eight cities from 85,840 units in the corresponding period of the previous year.

In the total sales of 1,20,640 units during January-March, the share of affordable homes, priced less than Rs 25 lakh each, was 5 per cent.

In the same period last year, the share of this low-cost housing category in total sales was 15 per cent.

SATCOM SPECTRUM ALLOCATION, LICENSING PROCESS

Telecom department to seek Trai's view

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is expected to approach Trai this month to seek the regulator's views on method and pricing for allocation of spectrum and scope of licences to be issued for satcom services, according to sources.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had floated a consultation paper on "Assignment of Spectrum for Space-based Communication Services" on April 6, 2023 but returned the reference back to DoT after announcement of new Telecommunication Act.

"DoT will seek views of Trai on pricing and methodology to allocate spectrum for space



based communication services. It may also look to fine-tune existing licences to bring in full clarity on the kind of services that satcom companies with administratively allocated spectrum can provide," a source, who did not wish to be named, told PTI.

Satcom or satellite communication technology enables

service providers to ensure internet connectivity in remote areas or difficult terrain.

Bharti Group-backed OneWeb and Reliance Group Jio Satcom have been issued GMPCS (satellite telephony) and VSAT licence for the services. Elon Musk-owned Starlink has also applied for the permit to start satcom services in India. With constellation of 4,000 low earth orbit (LEO) satellites, Starlink dominates satcom space.

OneWeb has over 600 LEO satellites.

According to the source, VSAT licence has norms that are not in sync with the provisions of new Telecommunication Act and therefore need to be fine-

tuned.

Under the Telecommunications Act 2023, satellite communication companies can get spectrum without auction for point-to-point communications.

However, there are provisions that allow a VSAT service operator to provide internet services to multiple independent subscribers, which may be interpreted differently than envisioned in the Telecommunication Act 2023.

"Hence, there is a need felt to fine-tune licences for satcom services. A decision will be taken based on Trai's recommendation on the permits that should be issued to satcom service providers," the source said.

Market valuation of 7 firms climb Rs 59,404 cr

Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank lead gainers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of seven of the ten most valued firms climbed Rs 59,404.85 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers.

Stock markets were closed on Thursday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr. Last week, Sensex dipped marginally by 3.32 points

after a record-breaking rally. The BSE benchmark had settled at an all-time high of 75,038.15 on Wednesday. It scaled the lifetime peak of 75,124.28 on Tuesday.

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 19,029.37 crore to Rs 6,92,861.27 crore.

ICICI Bank added Rs 15,363.23 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 7,75,447.63 crore.



India adds record 18 GW renewable energy capacity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has added a record renewable energy capacity of 18.48 GW in 2023-24, which is over 21 per cent higher than 15.27 GW a year ago, according to the latest data of the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy.

However, industry experts said there is a need to add at least 50 GW of renewable energy capacity annually for



the next six years to meet the ambitious target of 500 GW of renewables by 2030.

According to the data, India's installed renewable

energy capacity is 143.64 GW as of March 31, 2024, excluding 47 GW of large hydropower capacity (each plant is more than 25 GW or above).

They pointed out that renewable energy capacity stood at around 190 GW, including large hydro projects, and therefore, India needs to add 310 GW in the next six years or at an average of 50 GW per annum.

Demand for private jets, choppers jumps up to 40%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With politicians and political party representatives crisscrossing the country for the Lok Sabha polls, the demand for chartered planes and helicopters has jumped up to 40 per cent, and the operators are expected to net 15-20 per cent more earnings, according to industry experts.

The hourly rates for chartered services have also spiked. The charge is about Rs 4.5-5.25 lakh for an aircraft and around Rs 1.5- 1.7 lakh for a twin

engine helicopter, they said.

While the demand has surged compared to the normal times and previous election years, there is lesser number of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters available. Some of the operators are looking to take planes and helicopters on wet lease.

"There is an increase in demand for helicopters and it is up to 25 per cent more in the



election period compared to the normal period. The supply is less compared to the demand," Rotary Wing Society of India (RWSI) President

(Western Region) Captain Uday Gelli said.

Generally, political parties use helicopters for their candidates and leaders to reach places in a shorter time, especially remote areas.

Gelli said the use of helicopters is being seen more in bigger states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Business Aircraft Operators

Association (BAOA) Managing Director Captain R K Bali told PTI that the demand for chartered planes is 30-40 per cent higher compared to the previous general polls.

The bookings for chartered planes are done in advance and operators will be looking for maximum utilisation of aircraft.

"There is always a gap between supply and demand. Some entities are looking to wet lease planes and helicopters to meet the demand," Bali said.

Pastry chef Anna Polyviou, who was recently in the city in association with Conosh for a masterclass, *The Pioneer* connects with the punk princess of pastry for an exclusive chat, as she discusses her unique desserts, being the Masterchef Australia, and more.

‘There’s tangible excitement when people in India identify me as MasterChef Australia’

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Pastry chef Anna Polyviou works her culinary magic in the kitchen, turning everyday treats into imaginative works of art. Diners were mesmerised by her dishes, which resembled a symphony of flavours with each note harmonising with the next, when in Hyderabad in association with Conosh for a masterclass.

Anna started her career as a chef at The Sofitel Hotel in Melbourne. There, she won the Les Toques Blanc competition for “Best Apprentice in Victoria” and was given a scholarship that allowed her to work anywhere in the world.

For her, the dessert dances on the brink of anarchy, beckoning one to accept life’s delicious disarray. “I consider things that people know and then I recreate,” she explains. Imagine a dessert that rebels against the norm! The quickest approach to making ‘Anna’s mess’ is to combine cream, raspberry, and meringue kisses to produce a delightful collision of flavours and textures.

According to her, “The way to create it is to create a mess; the dessert that everyone is familiar with is about you picking it up and throwing it!” Desserts like ‘Firecracker’ require attentiveness. It’s all about taste, she explains, leading up to that last burst of joy. And as soon as you take that first bite, you’re sent to a place where desserts are gravity-defying and the possibilities are endless. She discov-

ered her calling in creating desserts, drawn to the degree of playfulness it permits along the way.

In order for competitors to qualify for the Top 24 of *MasterChef Australia* season 9, Anna purchased a pressure cooker in 2021. “*MasterChef Australia* represents the apex of my career, an accomplishment I am incredibly proud of,” she states. “Every time someone asks me about it, I feel quite honoured. The encounter is always enjoyable and stimulating. Individuals of various ages, from young children to senior citizens, under-

worldwide importance. There’s tangible excitement when people in India identify me as MasterChef Australia. I continue to be modest in my attitude and am very particular about the dishes I use. It’s really amazing.”

She then discusses the difficulties she encountered while performing on the show. “To create a work of art never seen before, concentrate on unusual flavours and allur-

ing textures. The visual display needs to be captivating and thrilling. Even with limited time, keep the audience’s attention by highlighting methods and components. Encourage competitors to replicate something genuinely original as a teacher. I enjoy inspiring them to recreate and teaching them something new. But these were some of the difficulties.”

While she encourages her followers to duplicate the desserts, she also makes sure that her recipes are doable, striking a balance between inventiveness and usability. She tells, “On my

Instagram, I encourage creating dishes using pantry and fridge ingredients. I’m all about accessibility and simplicity, so no three-hour kitchen marathons here! Instead, in a matter of minutes, let’s prepare something delicious. The key is to maximise the resources you already have at home. Try it out. I was thrilled when people began tagging me in their dishes that they made utilising the three items that you have on hand. I love to get my cookbook dirty with splattering ingredients and wiping off the dust.” “I also make content with my mother, and she is the star of the show. She always wanted people to recreate what she had created, so she wrote cookbooks, one of which, *Street Sweet*, sold out within a few weeks of its release. Thankfully, my cookbooks are selling like crazy, and I hope that my next book will be a fantastic cookbook. I want readers to be motivated to cook, and I think it’s important for anyone to try their hand at cooking—they don’t have to be the best chef—because for me, food is my passion.”

She also says, “I am learning and exploring food in Hyderabad, and next time I come here, I want to write a cookbook on it, which would include an Indian twist to desserts with spices and to educate myself about different flavours as I am having a great time exploring Indian cuisine.” Making a cookbook featuring desserts with an Indian influence is a fun way to honour the blending of flavours!

Anna offers some guidance for aspiring young pastry cooks too. “Acknowledge the kitchen, be receptive to new ideas, and absorb information like a well-seasoned sponge, just like a modest cook. Seek advice from seasoned chefs and people who support your culinary education, rather than relying only on TV broadcasts or social media snippets to prove your expertise in cooking. I’ve been cooking for seven years, and now I find myself in the colourful kitchen of Hyderabad, known for its diverse cuisine. Discover a wide variety of foods, appreciate each spice, and let your palate move to the beat of local specialties! Additionally, educate yourself by reading cookbooks, enrolling in classes, and following Instagram profiles. And get comfortable using scales to measure components.” Upon her return to Australia, Anna spearheaded the patisserie revolution in hotels throughout the nation while serving as the Creative Director of Pastry at Shangri-La Hotel.



What causes body tremors, how to know if it’s Parkinson’s?

DR. GAJENDRA SINGH SANDHU
CONSULTANT - NEUROSURGERY
MANIPAL HOSPITAL

Tremor refers to an uncontrollable rhythmic movement affecting body parts like legs, hands or fingers. This is a common symptom which is often linked to neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, stroke, and Parkinson’s disease. Tremors are classified into two categories: **resting tremors** and **action tremors**. The former occurs when your body is at rest whereas the latter occurs when you are doing something. However, tremor is one of the very first symptom of Parkinson’s disease, it can also be a symptom of other conditions as well. For the unversed, Parkinson’s disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that particularly affects the body movement and balance. It is believed that people with Parkinson’s don’t have enough dopamine (a body chemical responsible for controlling movement and mood). This happens because the brain cells that produce dopamine gets damaged resulting in unintentional body movements. Few symptoms of this disease include tremors, stiffness, postural instability and more.

Linkage between body tremors and Parkinson’s disease

One of the first motor symptoms of Parkinson’s disease are tremors. These occur because the level of

dopamine decreases which causes involuntary movement like shaking. However, in a Parkinson’s patient, tremor may start with hands or fingers, it may affect the chin, lips, face, or legs. Tremors is a progressive condition, meaning it initially occurs on one side of the body, but it may start affecting the other side with the passage of time. In most of the cases, Parkinson’s disease goes unnoticed until later stages. Therefore, tremors along with stiffness, balance issue, sleep problems, anxiety and increased falls are considered as signs of Parkinson’s disease.

Treatment options

Although there is no particular cure for tremors, but there are certain ways to manage them. The treatment options are different for every person depending upon their condition. In early stages, it may be treated with the help of few medications whereas in the advance stages, surgical procedure like deep brain stimulation may be required.

Medication :

Few drugs like levodopa can help manage the tremors. These drugs increase the level of dopamine or act as a substitute resulting in controlling the body movements and balance.

Exercise:

Most of the times, exercise and other physical activities can help improve your brain health and overall well-being.

Deep brain stimulation:

This is a surgical procedure that involves implanting small electrodes inside the brain which can help in controlling the tremors. This treatment is only offered when the regular medications have stopped responding.

Actress Preeti saddles up her refreshing horse-riding love to records

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The India Book of Records has recognised Preeti Verma, a renowned Bollywood actress from *Love Aaj Kal 2*, for her remarkable accomplishment of riding a faithful horse, Basanti, 350 kilometers across the Thar Desert. Verma’s inclusion in the prestigious India Book of Records confirms her status as one of the country’s most accomplished female riders and a pioneer in the desert safari industry!

“My passion for horses has merely inspired me to go to new places and take on new challenges in order to spend more and more time with them. I’ve been involved in horse shows and contests since 2006, when I first started riding horses. Despite obstacles brought on by employment obligations, I’ve always made it a priority.”

As the first actor/theatre performer from Bollywood to complete one of the hardest and longest desert safaris in India, Preeti Verma’s bravery and fearlessness are unparalleled. “Col. Sarpartap Singh and Thakur Raghuvendra Singh Dundlod extended an invitation to me for this journey in 2021, the year I became the brand ambassador for IHSI. Even though I had recovered from dengue and was dealing with health issues, I had a strong need for change and a sense of healing since nothing makes me feel as refreshed as riding horses,” recalled the equestrian in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*.

She continues to explore varied roles in movies, web series, and music videos, demonstrating her dedication to pushing boundaries outside of the equestrian realm. Her roles in notable movies include *Love Aaj Kal 2*, *Jaane Khuda*, and numerous music videos with Kailash Kher and Band Euphoria by Dr. Palash Sen. She has also been involved in other projects, such as the coming music video featuring Jaya Kishori and Sonu Nigam! “My passion for horses and adventure, along with the stunning and difficult terrain of the Thar Desert, motivated me to take on the 350-kilometer trek atop Basanti. I’m not sure why, but I’ve always found Rajasthan to be fascinating. Taken as a whole, it was worthwhile, created lifelong memories. As actors, we constantly study and experiment in order to learn and develop. So—riding for the entire day, camping, seeing nature, people’s simplicity, culture—everything was so lovely. I always feel closer to myself and have the chance to reflect on my life when I’m riding a horse. At that point, I decided to continue evolving,” said Preeti. Preeti started riding horses in 2006, and in the eighteen years since then, she has gained a great deal of expertise with a variety of horse breeds. Her distinguished career has been marked by

multiple wins and awards in horse events approved by the Equestrian Federation of India, which has cemented her respected status in the equestrian world. “When my horse and I rode through a difficult sand dunes course at dusk, I experienced a strong sense of connection with my horse as the golden tones of the twilight sun illuminated the surroundings. We needed trust and understanding to cross the challenging terrain. The exhilaration of the ride mixed with the peace of the desert to produce an absolutely unique experience that made me appreciate the beauty of nature as well as the relationship between a horse and its rider. The feeling of being valuable occurs when you evolve and begin to surrender yourself to your horse. I consider myself lucky and grateful to have seen Rajasthan’s splendour in a completely new way because of Basanti,” she explained.

Preeti Verma’s legacy as a trailblazer in the entertainment business and the realm of equestrian sports is further cemented by her induction into the India Book of Records. Growing up with an intense love for the arts and animals, Verma embodies the ideal combination of skill and inventiveness. Her story is an encouragement to budding actors and horseback riders alike, showing that everything is achievable with bravery and determination. “Like the spirit in a body, there is a deep connection between my passions for equestrian sports and entertainment. You never stop being yourself. You are aware of the worth of things. As an actor, I aim to connect with the soul of a character, and as an equestrian and horse lover, I connect with my horse. I draw on similar abilities and characteristics like attention, communication, dedication, and adaptability,” she explained with an emotion shaking in her voice.

Her time spent in the saddle fuelled her love of equestrian sports and improved her acting authenticity! She hopes to advocate for the welfare of horses and spread awareness of the value and beauty of equestrian sports through her position in the entertainment industry. In the end, her passion for both disciplines enhances her life and drives her ambition to have a positive influence on both. “I’ve always thought that sharing is important since I get inspiration from other people, horses, and environments. You develop differently depending on the circumstances and experiences you have. I claim to be a lifelong student who dreams big and follows her heart. Whether it’s the entertainment business or equestrian sports, I think anyone can succeed in any sector with enthusiasm and determination. Through dream-chasing and self-authenticity, young women can surmount challenges and forge their own routes to achievement. These days, skill transcends gender, and no one is inferior to another,” Preeti Verma added.

She hopes that the next generation will be inspired by their passions to follow their dreams boldly, value their individuality, and aim high, believing that anything is achievable with perseverance and hard work! “Regarding activities and adventures involving horses, the younger generation, in my opinion, has to be prepared with the knowledge and abilities necessary to look after the welfare and well-being of their horses. Whether I’m riding, competing, or going on an expedition, my horse always comes first.”

Although it takes careful time management and prioritising to balance her entertainment job and horseback riding, these two hobbies enhance each other and provide balance to her life. “I make it a point to ride horses at Mahalaxmi Racecourse’s Amateur Riders Club at least two or three times a week. Mumbai seems to be the ideal location for spending time with and riding horses. I like to ride in the mornings so that I can use the rest of the day for business. This balance gives me a sense of fulfillment and a variety of experiences that not only keep me grounded and focused but also improve my life. It is quite difficult, I must admit, to provide riding facilities everywhere or for everyone! I make every effort to work more and more in order to keep riding horses,” she explained quite well. She views every horse as a priceless gift from God, and we agree. She has an exceptionally strong affinity for horses, and she treasures every one of them. “Every horse I’ve ever owned, from my first mount, Dabbu, to the ones I learned to jump, like Boomerang and Teepu, and the mare I started competing with, Taqila, has imparted invaluable knowledge on friendship, cooperation, and companionship. My older brother and Raju Sir were crucial to my riding experience from the start. I took note of their lessons and realised how disciplined one must be when around horses. It’s your behaviour around horses that counts.”

She can still clearly remember only one horse: Alamgir, the first Marwari stallion she ever rode. She was so happy and comfortable to spend five months with Alamgir throughout the difficult moments of the pandemic. People recognised and valued their deep bond, calling her the “queen of stallions” on social media with fondness.

“Both the Bollywood journey and the saddle offer valuable life lessons that help you become a better version of yourself. A deep sense of self-acceptance and realism are provided by horses. I’ve studied the art of acting in Bollywood, which teaches me how to interpret nonverbal cues and establish a rapport with horses while in the saddle. In a similar vein, the commitment and discipline needed in both areas have helped me understand the need for tenacity and never-ending education,”

Actress Preeti Verma, who was recently recognised by The India Book of Records, for riding her Basanti 350 km across the Thar Desert, speaks exclusively with *The Pioneer* about her passion for horses, contesting in horse shows, and more.



Preeti wanted to share.

Oh, by the way, success in both desert excursions and equestrian competitions depends on a combination of abilities and mindset. Technical riding skills are necessary for successfully negotiating obstacles and terrain, such as balance, coordination, and knowledge of horse behaviour. Additionally, overcoming obstacles and developing trust with the horse require a positive outlook marked by perseverance, adaptability, and resilience. Moreover, a strong

regard for the horse’s wellbeing and a dedication to its welfare guarantee a peaceful collaboration and improve the experience for both rider and horse. “The welfare of horses is my top priority. It is impossible to ignore,” Preeti asserted.

At last, she believes she is too little to make a lasting impact. The people who have left a legacy for future generations inspire her. If she gives it some thought, there is definitely more work to be done!



One such establishment that warms the soul is the Babai Hotel in Madhapur, Hyderabad, which Kiran Abbavaram and Babai Hotel Management KV Dinesh Reddy & Sreshtha Reddy opened as a new location of the well-known restaurant franchise.

● Vyshnavi

● Dinesh Reddy

● Srinvi

● Srestha

The House of Rare, a Bengaluru-based fashion retailer, has launched its third store in Hyderabad under the women's fashion label Rareism. Renowned actress Sreeleela graced the launch ceremony, lending glitz and beauty to the event.





On Saturday, the Health is Wealth program was held in Hyderabad under the sponsorship of HCAS. Vice President Murali Gonugunta, Secretary Aravinda Garikapati, and HCAS President Lakshmi Nallamilli were present at the function. In the USA, Europe, and India, pain management is a super specialty.

PARTY



Indian Institution of Interior Designers Hyderabad Regional Chapter celebrated its IID-HRC Foundation Day, Jalsa-2024. All the designers had presented a ramp show on the theme, The Waves of Telangana, which was graced by Dr Ram Chander Naik, MLA, Dornakal, and architect Jignesh Modi, President, Elect and Treasurer of Indian Institute of Interior Designers.

● Amita Raj

● Ramesh Patel and Maya Patel

● Pallavi




● Nanda kumar,Ravi Anchuri and Jignesh Modi

● Aparna




● Aman Raj

Photos by- SV Chary




ARCHIE






GARFIELD






NANCY





GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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Rules

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

CROSSWORD

JUNIOR CROSSWORD 717

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ACROSS

- Nearly
- Wide smile
- Tame animals
- This colour plus red makes orange
- One hundred years
- Parts of a minute
- Tired and drowsy
- Meat and vegetables boiled slowly
- Drink made from grapes
- Happening every twelve months

DOWN

- Mountains
- A parent
- A law
- The one bought most recently
- Sleep in this room
- Try
- A puzzle with many pieces
- A newspaper boss
- A plant with fronds that grows in shady places
- Absent

SOLUTION 716

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Shiva Turlapati

‘Geethanjali Malli Vachindi has another twist, which will be explored in Part 3’

PNS | HYDERABAD

Actress Anjali's landmark 50th film *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi* hit theatres on April 11. Directed by Shiva Turlapati and produced by Kona Venkat in association with MVV Cinemas, this big-budget horror comedy film is receiving a fairly good response from the audience.

The director of the film, in an interaction with the media, revealed some more interesting details about the film, its next part, and more.

Clearing the air about the third part of the film, he shared, "I read many reviews in which some people wrote that many things were left unanswered in the movie. However, if all those logics are answered, it will be three hours long, like *Animal*. That's not what I want. It is an out-and-out family movie. We didn't think of doing a *Conjuring*-type horror film. We made it an entertaining film. All doubts will be clarified in the third part. I have discussed all these matters with Kona, as a good idea for Part 3 came at the last moment of making Part 2. So, we had a discussion about it, and we will soon reveal those details."

He continued,

"In Part 2, we gave a lead to Part 3. Rao Ramesh captures the soul in the form of a girl. There is another twist in this, which will be explored in Part 3."

The director had a small cameo to play in the film, and he shared that it all happened suddenly as they were shooting in Ooty and they couldn't find a suitable guy. "We couldn't afford retakes at that point in time because of the shooting schedule, so I decided I would only do it as we were not finding the right person. I was recognised in the movie, and I am happy about it."

So far, the director feels he learned a lot from this film, and he is assured to do better in the next film. Shiva, who always dreamt of directing, shared, "Being in the industry for over 20 years, I always dreamt of directing. That's why I told Kona some scripts. He is busy with back-to-back movies, and I couldn't interrupt his work then. However, I did not expect that my debut as a director would happen with this film. They felt this movie was the right one for my launch as a director."

For those unaware of Shiva, he has been a choreographer in the South film industry and has choreographed some good songs in the industry, which not many are aware of. He did *Brahmastra* and *Shankarabharanam*, among many others, and he is a choreographer who likes to tell a story in every song, which is what I liked a lot about him. From learning dance by watching Chiranjeevi's movies to becoming a choreographer, his journey was not all that rosy. However, he took the rough path

and became successful, and that's what matters. He even went to America, but his passion brought him back to his home place, and he now also runs a dance school in Hyderabad, which has about 500-600 students learning dance.

Furthermore, Shiva shared that he has

many stories and is looking to make a sentimental and emotional genre film, as he feels any movie without emotion will not work.

Lastly, "People who have watched *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi* are sending me messages. Because of the weekend, everyone in the US is now watching the movie, and I am getting a good response from there. Sunil and Satya's comedy explodes in the second half. Climax is appreciated by some as extraordinary," he shared in conclusion.

Director Shiva Turlapati, who has been currently receiving good responses for the recently released *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*, in interaction with the media revealed some interesting deets about the film, next part, and more.

Vijay Antony's Love Guru team offers family trip to audience

Vijay Antony's *Love Guru* is not only achieving good box office collections but also offering an exciting opportunity to the audience. The movie's team announced a special offer where lucky winners from the audience will be treated to a summer holiday tour with their families. The first prize winner will enjoy a trip to Malaysia, the second prize winner to Kashmir, and the third prize winner to Ooty. This offer is now available, and audience members who watch *Love Guru* can participate by submitting their name, phone number, and ticket details in boxes placed near the theaters. Those who purchased tickets online can also participate by sending a photo of their ticket via WhatsApp to 9963466334. The *Love Guru* team will select three lucky winners and send them on a summer holiday vacation. *Love Guru* was released on April 11 and distributed in Telugu by Mythri Movie Distributors. Starring Mrinalini Ravi as the heroine, the film was produced by Vijay Antony Film Corporation and Meera Vijay Antony. Directed by Vinayak Vaidyanathan, the movie continues its successful theatrical run.

Baak releasing on April 26

Aranmanai 4, the fourth film from the highly successful horror comedy series *Aranmanai*, is coming in Telugu as *BAAK*. Directed by Sundar C who also played one of the lead roles, the movie has Tamannaah Bhatia and Raashi Khanna playing female leads. The makers recently started promotional activities by unveiling the first-look posters of all the lead characters. The makers released the promo song called *Panchuko* on Sunday. Hip-hop Tamizha scored a foot-tapping number that has some lively beats. While Sahithi penned funny lyrics, Raghuvi's husky voice brings extra enchantment. But it's Tamannaah and Raashi Khanna's glamour that prettified the song. Their graceful moves, particularly hip movements, are a treat to watch. Both heroines wore trendy outfits and oozed enough oomph in the song. The promo song also showed some creepy scenes from the movie. Vennila Kishore, Srinivasulu, Delhi Ganesh, and Kovai Sarala will be seen in crucial roles in the movie produced by Khushbu Sundar and ACS Arun Kumar under Avni Cinemax P Ltd. Asian Suresh Entertainment LLP will be releasing the movie in Telugu states. They have also announced that the film will be released on April 26. On the technical front, the cinematography is handled by E. Krishnamurthy, while editing is overseen by Fenny Oliver. Gururaj managed the art direction.

Gautam Krishna's birthday gala

Bigg Boss 7 fame Gautam Krishna is making his debut as a lead actor with the film *Solo Boy*. Produced by Seven Hills Satish Kumar and directed by P Naveen Kumar, the first look poster for this movie was released recently, and it got a good response from the audience.

As the actor celebrated his birthday on Sunday, the makers of the film organised a grand birthday gala where the entire movie cast and crew, along with their families and others, were present.

Speaking at the celebrations, Gautam Krishna said, "I am very happy that the movie team is doing this event on my birthday. Our producer approved the story in a single sitting. All this team also worked on the film with love. Even in terms of budget, we are bringing good content without compromising anywhere."

The actor also thanked Anita Chaudhary and Posani Krishna Murali for accepting to act in this movie, "I would like to express my special thanks to all those who have supported me since my first film and *Bigg Boss* journey until now. Very soon we will come to you with a teaser, trailer, and songs," he added.



Indian 2 shooting wrapped up

Universal Star Kamal Haasan is celebrated for his multifaceted and impactful performances, while esteemed director Shankar is renowned for his grandiose and visually stunning commercial spectacles infused with profound societal messages. Together, they form a formidable duo known for delivering compelling entertainment, and their much-anticipated collaboration, *Bharateeyudu 2 (Indian 2)*, has sent excitement levels soaring.

This film is a sequel to the blockbuster *Bharateeyudu*, where Haasan's Senapathy waged a lone battle against corruption, *Bharateeyudu 2* promises to further captivate audiences with its gripping narrative.

It was made official on Sunday that Shankar has wrapped up principal photography, with the focus now shifting to the intensive post-production phase. The film's team aims to unveil a power-packed trailer by the end of May, setting the stage for a breathtaking global release in June.

Kamal Haasan's Senapathy persona has sparked imaginations, while the tagline "Zero Tolerance" only amplifies anticipation for what's in store. Joining the ensemble cast are the talented actresses Kajal Agarwal, Rakul Preet Singh, and Priya Bhavani Shankar, each adding depth to the narrative. The film also features a stellar lineup of supporting actors, including SJ Suryah, Siddharth, and Gulshan Grover, among others, all contributing to the film's ensemble brilliance.

With Anirudh Ravichander's musical prowess, Ravi Varman's captivating cinematography, and Sreekar Prasad's deft editing, *Indian 2* promises a cinematic experience like no other. Shankar's collaboration with esteemed writers such as B. Jayamohan, Kabilan Vairamuthu, and Lakshmi Saravana Kumar ensures a screenplay that resonates with both heart and intellect.

Indian 2, the original Tamil version, is releasing as *Bharateeyudu 2* in Telugu and *Hindustani 2* in Hindi across the world.

Shruti Haasan likely to play key role in Thalaivar 171

Rajinikanth starrer *Thalaivar 171* is one of the most eagerly-awaited films of the actor. Rajinikanth, the legendary actor known as Thalaivar, is set to embark on his 171st cinematic journey, sending waves of excitement throughout the nation. The anticipation reached its peak when whispers emerged about the inclusion of the talented actress Shruti Haasan in this monumental project.

Director Lokesh, renowned for his visionary storytelling, is helming this film. The chemistry between him and Shruti Haasan had already been witnessed in the mesmerising song *Inimel*. Their collaboration was set to transcend boundaries as they delved into the depths of cinematic brilliance alongside the legendary Thalaivar.

If sources are to be believed, Shruti Haasan has been roped in to play a key role in this movie alongside Rajinikanth in this epic tale.

Moreover, sources also say that the title and promo of *Thalaivar 171* will be unveiled on April 22.







STAND ALONE

In the heart of Hyderabad, amidst the hustle and bustle of the Tollywood film industry, there was a sense of excitement in the air. The Telugu Film Directors Association (TFDA) was gearing up for a momentous occasion—the "Telugu Film Directors Day" event scheduled to take place at the iconic LB Stadium on May 4.

As preparations for the grand event were underway, members of TFDA decided to pay a special visit to none other than the Padma Vibhushan Magister himself, Chiranjeevi, on the sets of his latest venture, *Viswanathara*.

Amidst the bustling film set, adorned with elaborate sets and bustling crew members, the TFDA members had the privilege of meeting the legendary actor. Chiranjeevi greeted them with warmth and humility, his aura radiating with the charm and charisma that had endeared him to millions over the decades.

The TFDA members extended a heartfelt invitation to Chiranjeevi to grace the "Telugu Film Directors Day" event as the guest of honour, and the actor graciously accepted their invitation, promising to attend the event and extend his support to the esteemed directors of Tollywood.



WE NEED EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE TO BEAT RCB, SAYS SRH COACH

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori did not read too much into the travails of Royal Challengers Bengaluru and said it will require an “exceptional” effort from them to beat the hosts on Monday.

“The Royal Challengers are currently 10th on the IPL table with two points after winning just one out of six matches.

“I don’t think anyone in any team underestimates the quality of RCB. They’re a very good team. So, it’s going to take an exceptional performance from us to try and beat them. Every (IPL) game is hard and particularly when you’re playing away from home,” said Vettori during his pre-match press conference here on Sunday.

“Vettori said RCB might have learned lessons from their past defeats in this IPL and the home side could put SRH under pressure.

“RCB will obviously keep learning from what’s happened in the previous games and they’re going to



come out pretty aggressive. We’re going to be under a lot of pressure as a bowling unit for how aggressive they are going to be.

“So, we need to find ways to counter that and then keep up with our batting form which has been really good,” said Vettori.

“The former New Zealand captain said it would be naive to take a big score at the Chinnaswamy stadium for granted.

“I think most teams come here thinking that it’s going to be a high-scoring fixture. I’ve probably seen a couple of surfaces this year that have

been slightly slower,” he said.

“The former left-arm spinner, who also had a long association with RCB as a player and coach, said teams prefer to chase at Chinnaswamy because of the ease to control the backend of the innings.

“We understand the ball

travels here and the boundary sizes are small. So, I think you have to keep challenging yourself to try and take wickets because any team can score that 60-70 at the backend.

“I know no score is safe (here) and I always feel like you’re in the game, particularly when you are chasing. Most teams will come here and try to chase because they feel that it’s easier to navigate the endings,” he explained.

“Vettori had a word of praise for SRH middle-order batter Heinrich Klaasen, who has been in fine fettle in this IPL. The South African batter has made 186 runs from five matches at a frenetic strike-rate of 193.

“He’s been exceptional for a long period of time and he’s in that category of the likes of (Andre) Russell where teams really fear him in that backend and they set up their bowling plans to try and negate him. “But he’s been so good for such a long period of time that he has allowed us to either win the games or always be in the game,” he added.

RCB eye step up from under fire bowlers

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru’s IPL campaign that began in cheerfulness has melted into chaos, and their bowlers require a drastic transformation in mindset against Sunrisers Hyderabad for them to register an elusive win here on Monday.

“The Royal Challengers have players of repute and elite coaches with lofty pedigree but none of their plans have worked so far, evidenced by the team’s 10th place in the standings with a solitary win from six matches.

“The RCB’s trundling run in this IPL is directly linked to their bowlers’ ineffectiveness.

“They showed a distinct lack of willingness to adapt and upskill on conditions that needed a different thinking.

“In this IPL, the bowlers have often relied on variations like knuckle balls, slow bouncers and pace-off deliveries to counter a set of ultra-aggressive batsmen.

“However, the Bengaluru bowlers have been largely unidimensional in their approach allowing batters to tackle them with ease and the match against Mumbai Indians offers a case study.

“For once, the RCB batters fired collectively to take them to 196, but MI hunted down the target in just 15.3 overs at the Wankhede Stadium as the visiting bowlers were quite magnanimous in offering freebies.

“Dew, short boundaries etc cannot be counted as excuses when a team leaks above 13 runs per over. In fact, the RCB bowlers did not have the urge or imagination to blunt a batting unit full of intent.

“That’s an ominous sign against the Sunrisers, whose batting line-up is as intimidating as that of the MI.

“Two Hyderabad batters - Heinrich Klaasen (186) and Abhishek Sharma (177) - are inside the top-10 run-makers and Travis Head (133) too has been consistent.

“But more than the quantity of runs, how they made it make them more dangerous as Klaasen (193), Abhishek (208) and Head (177) have torn apart the bowling unit in the Power Play and in the middle-late overs.



“That uniform power allocation through batting ranks makes SRH a tall proposition for the opposition bowlers.

“This is not to say that SRH, currently fifth on the table with six points from five matches, do not have a weak point.

“Similar to RCB, bowling has been Hyderabad’s soft underbelly in this tournament with spinners Shahabaz Ahmed and Mayank Markande giving away more than 11 runs in an over with minimal returns.

“But the Hyderabad outfit has found a saviour in skipper Pat Cummins, their highest wicket-taker with six scalps and he has also conceded just over seven runs an over, a very respectable economy rate in this format.

“Additionally, Cummins has also shown the flexibility to operate at various junctures of a match - with the new ball in the Power Play or bowling as second-change in the middle and death overs.

“The inclusion of left-arm pacer T Natarajan (5 wickets, economy: 8.6) has given their bowling a new dimension and a bit more control in the last three matches.

“Having played on a shirtfront in Hyderabad, the SRH bowlers might not feel out of home at the Chinnaswamy, which has a pitch with similar characteristics.

“But can RCB exploit that above-mentioned minor chink in Sunrisers’ attack? “Star batter Virat Kohli is the

current holder of Orange Cap and fifties by skipper Faf du Plessis, Rajat Patidar and Dinesh Karthik against MI will certainly boost RCB’s confidence. “But the form of Glenn Maxwell (32 runs, average: 5.3) remains a massive concern.

Teams (from)
ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU
Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, “Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan.

“SUNRISERS HYDERABAD
Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Uppendra Singh Yadav, Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

Dhawan out for at least seven to 10 days: Bangar

PTI ■ MULLANPUR

Punjab Kings skipper Shikhar Dhawan could be out for at least seven to 10 days due to a shoulder injury, the team’s head of cricket development Sanjay Bangar indicated after the narrow loss to Rajasthan Royals.

“Dhawan missed the game against Royals on Saturday night. Sam Curran led the side in his absence.

“He’s having a shoulder injury, so he is likely to be out for at least a couple of days, I would say. Having an experienced opener, somebody like Shikhar, who has experience of playing on such wickets, becomes extremely crucial (for the team).

“We have to wait and see how he responds to the treatment. At the moment, it seems that he could be out of action for at least seven-ten days,” said Bangar in the post match press conference.

“Jitesh Sharma was team’s representative at the captains’ meet at the start of the season as Dhawan, who was down with fever, stayed back in Mullanpur.

“Considering that, Curran walking out for the toss was surprising but Bangar clarified that they were always clear about the Englishman’s role in the side.

“No, no, he (Jitesh) wasn’t the designated vice-captain. The impression could have been because he attended the captains’ seminar at the start



of the IPL. “But the thought was always that ... Because Sam has led the team in the previous year as well; he was late to arrive from UK and he wanted to have a few (training) sessions, that’s the

reason we couldn’t send him to Chennai. Hence Jitesh was sent, because the directive was that a player has to attend.

“It wasn’t the case that Jitesh was the stand-in captain. We were very clear in our mind that if at all there had to be an opening, Sam Curran will be taking over and do the job as the captain,” said the former India batting coach.

“Both Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow have not been able to provide flying starts to the team which has contributed to its inconsistent run in the tournament.

“Dhawan’s replacement at the top for the Saturday’s game, Atharva Taide, too could not do much against Royals.

“Bangar agreed it was a

concern.

“Certainly is a cause for concern that the top order is not making enough runs for us. They are trying hard - I am not saying that they are not applying themselves - but it’s just not coming.

“Low-scoring games, especially at Mullanpur, the way the wicket is... that also is a factor. Because if you see, some of the scores have been pretty low.

“All the three games that we have played here, in the first six overs, with the new ball, the wicket tends to just jag a little bit, and uneven bounce as well. So maybe that is also a contributing factor because, not only us, the visiting teams and their top order are facing issues.”

OTHER SPORTS

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Anju, Harshita reach final

PTI ■ BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN)

Railways wrestler Anju, who had outclassed Vinesh Phogat in the recent selection trials, and Harshita put up a dominant show to reach the gold medal bouts in their respective categories at the Asian Championships, but Sarita Mor was eliminated after a shock defeat in her opening round here Sunday.

“Competing in a highly competitive 53kg weight class category, Anju logged



back-to-back wins by technical superiority against Philippines’ Aliah Rose Gavalez and Sri Lanka’s Nethmi Ahinsa Fernando.

“She faced some resistance from China’s Chun Lei before prevailing 9-6 in the semifinal.

“In the final, Anju will face Korea’s Ji Hyang Kim.

“Harshita conceded just three points en route the final, outclassing Uzbekistan’s Ozoda Zaripboeva by technical superiority (13-3) and beating Kazakhstan’s Anastassiya Panassovich 5-0.

“She will fight it out with China’s Qian Jiang in the final.

“However, a big shock was in store for the Indian squad as 2021 World Championship medallist Sarita lost her quarterfinal bout 4-8 to Mongolia’s Gantuya Enkhbat.

“The 28-year-old was a firm medal favourite in this category. Later Enkhbat lost her semifinal, closing the repechage route for the Indian.

“Manisha Bhanwala (62kg) and Antim Kundu (65kg) will contest for bronze medals.

Akshay slips at end of Round three but Scheffler moves into sole lead

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Gukesh beats Vidit Gujrathi to regain joint lead

PTI ■ TORONTO

India’s D Gukesh bounced back with a finely crafted game to outwit compatriot Vidit Gujrathi and regain his joint lead with Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia after the eighth round of the Candidates chess tournament here.

“On a day when R Pragnanandhaa played out a draw with Firoouza Alireza of France, Hikaru Nakamura sealed his supremacy in the all-American duel against Fabiano Caruana to come back in to reckoning for top honours.

“Overnight sole leader Nepomniachtchi faltered in the early stages to allow tail ender Nijat Abasov to get away with an easy draw in the other game of the eight-player double round-robin event.

“With six rounds still to come, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi have 5 points apiece and they are followed by Nakamura and

Pragnanandhaa on 4.5 points each.

“Caruana is now sole fifth on four points. Gujrathi on 3.5 comes in next ahead of Alireza on three points, while Abasov is still at the rear of the tables on 2.5 points.

“Gukesh had his task cut out and went for a rare variation wherein he surprised Gujrathi as early as on move four. Gujrathi sank into a long thought and ended up losing around twenty minutes on the clock.

“In the next few moves Gukesh equalized without much ado even as Gujrathi tried to make some headways on both flanks.

“In the middle game, Gukesh seized control of the only open file and used his queen and rook for an absolute domination to penetrate. Vidit tried hard to resist but the pressure was quite unforgiving especially when he had less time. “The die was cast when Gukesh entered the eighth



rank and it was a picturesque finish as white’s king was taken for a walk before the checkmate became inevitable. The game lasted 38 moves.

“These kind of clean games are rare at this level, in the opening he did some

inaaccuracies and his position was unpleasant, I was in control, it was a nice game,” Gukesh said when asked if he was surprised how he won as black without much counterplay.

“Pragnanadhaa could not

achieve much with his white pieces. Alireza employed the Sicilian Taimanov and the Indian went for another variation that has not been tested very regularly at the top level. “However, for once, Alireza found the going easy

and equalized without many problems, thanks to some timely breakthroughs on the queen side.

“The players reached an equal endgame soon after the Queens got traded on the 30th move the result was never in doubt. The draw was agreed to ten move later.

“Hikaru Nakamura stole the thunder and has clearly been a nemesis for world number two Caruana in the key encounters especially when the former had white pieces.

“It had started in Norway chess tournament when Nakamura defeated Caruana in the last round to win and the trend had continued in the FIDE’s Grand Swiss where he again won in the final round as white.

“In the eighth round game, Nakamura, one point away from leaderboard, took his chances in the closed Ruy Lopez and was duly rewarded as Caruana went for some unwarranted complications

after getting a level position in the middle game.

“Caruana also ran short of time and missed out on a tactic in a difficult position. It was all over in just 35 moves.

“Abasov has not been at his best but in this round the Azerbaijani secured his first half point with the black pieces.

Nepomniachtchi transposed to an exchange French defense and the resulting position was just equal till the longest game of the day ended after 63 moves.

“In the Women’s section, Koneru Humpy scored a victory over compatriot R Vaishali out of a Queen pawn game to jump to 3.5 points.

“The course of the event changed a bit in this section as Tingjie Lei of China accounted for her Chinese team-mate Zhongyi Tan to through the event open.

Zhongyi’s domination was halted as Aleksandra Goryachkina of

Russia and Lei joined her in the lead on five points out of a possible eight.

“Russian Kateryna Lagno is within striking distance of the three leaders on 4.5 points with Humpy and Nurgyl Salimova sharing the fifth spot on 3.5 points each.

“Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine stands seventh on three points, while Vaishali is on the last spot remaining on 2.5 points.

“Vaishali might have drawn but needed high level of accuracy in an exchange down endgame against Humpy.

Known for her technical prowess, Humpy cashed-in on her chances and her pair of rooks eventually proved superior to Vaishali’s Bishop and Rook.

“The ninth round will see an all important clash from the Indian perspective as Gukesh meets Pragnanandhaa in the men’s section, while Gujrathi has to face the in-form Nakamura.

