

'Iran & Israel told to calm down'

REDEFINING MEN THROUGH TAILORED COSMETIC PROCEDURES

'My character reflects the challenges of nepotism in LOVE GURU'

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
KCR kept the self-respect of Telangana at the feet of Modi. KCR has been saying that BRS votes should be transferred to the BJP. He said that Revanth Reddy should be toppled within 100 days. Why is KCR not saying anything about toppling Modi who has been in power for the last 10 years?
- A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

DON'T MISS...

Shallow Aquifer Project to...
With the temperatures soaring high every year, Hyderabad witnesses a water crisis. To tackle this, the Telangana government has implemented Shallow Aquifer Management (SAM) Project in Hyderabad. For this, five parks in the city were chosen and it is nearing completion. These shallow aquifers aim to conserve groundwater and address urban flooding issues also. Dr N Sunanda Rani, Additional Commissioner of the Urban Biodiversity Wing (UBD), said, "The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs..."

2 brain systems in disorder in...
Two brain systems have been found to function improperly in people experiencing psychosis, where they have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not, according to a new research led by Stanford University, US. These systems were found to be - one, a 'filter' directing attention towards what is important externally and internally, and two, a 'predictor' involved in anticipating rewards. The filtering system, or the salience network, helps us dismiss irrational thoughts so that...

'Malpractices by candidates fear...
Malpractices by candidates during online assessments is one of the biggest fears among recruiters and talent acquisition (TA) specialists, a report said on Monday. Fraudulent practices by candidates during online assessments have emerged as the biggest fear of the participants (39 per cent), followed by anxiety over finding the right candidate for a role (37 per cent), according to a report by AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro. The lack of effective tools to gauge specific skills has emerged as the...

RR brace for Narine spin treat as KKR...
Rajasthan Royals' star-studded batting will face the serious challenge of decoding Sunil Narine's mystery at Eden Gardens when they take on two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders in a top-of-the-table IPL clash here on Tuesday. Narine, who is one month shy of turning 36, had played a pivotal role in KKR's twin triumphs under former skipper Gautam Gambhir in 2012 and 2014. Ever since joining the side way back in 2012, Narine has sizzled at Eden Gardens with his crafty bowling...

Will waive agri loans up to Rs 2 lakh by Aug 15: CM

Says loan waiver delayed due to LS poll



The CM said that Congress activists did not give up the party flag even though they faced a lot of trouble. The Congress gave tickets to the poor and the BCs and enabled them to win elections.

CM promises minister post to Mudiraj community

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he will make a son of the Mudiraj community a Minister if they ensure the victory of the Congress in 15 LS seats in Telangana. The CM said that BRS Chief KCR did not give a single ticket to the Mudiraj community which has a 10 per cent population in the state. Addressing the Narayanpet Jana Jataru public meeting on Monday, the CM said that the Congress government will fight in the Supreme Court to convert the Mudiraj Community from BC-D to BC-A group. The CM said that former CM KCR did not care about this in the last 10 years even though the case is in the Supreme Court. Revanth made it clear that Madigas should be classified and justice should be given to them. He assured that he would give more posts to Madigas in future.

'KCR mortgaged BRS to Modi for Kavitha's bail'
Targeting former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that KCR mortgaged the BRS to Prime Minister Modi for getting bail to his daughter Kavitha, who is now in jail in connection with the Delhi liquor scam. "KCR kept the self-respect of Telangana at the feet of Modi. KCR has been saying that BRS votes should be transferred to the BJP in the state. KCR has been saying that Revanth Reddy should be deposed. Why is KCR not trying to topple Modi who is in power since the last 10 years," the CM said. Addressing the Narayanpet Jana Jataru public meeting on Monday, Revanth said that KCR did 100 years of destruction in the state in the last 10 years.

EXCISE 'SCAM' It's BJP custody not CBI custody'

Court sends Kavitha to judicial custody till April 23rd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
A Delhi court on Monday sent BRS MLC K. Kavitha to judicial custody till April 23, in a money laundering case connected to the Delhi excise policy scam. BRS leader K. Kavitha on Monday moved a Delhi court seeking bail in a corruption case filed by the CBI in connection with the alleged



Delhi excise scam. The application is likely to be taken up for hearing later in the day by the special judge for the CBI and ED, Kaveri Bawaja, who earlier in the day sent Kavitha to judicial custody till April 23. Kavitha while coming out of court said, "This is not CBI custody."

No relief for Delhi CM Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Monday extended till April 23 the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED), Kaveri Bawaja, extended Kejriwal's custody after he was produced before the court through video-conferencing on the expiry of his period of custody granted earlier. The ED sought extension of Kejriwal's custody by 14 days, saying the investigation was at a crucial stage. The judge extended Kejriwal's judicial custody till April 23, noting that the judicial custody of some of the co-accused persons in the case, including BRS leader K Kavitha, is ending on that date. The court had on April 1 sent Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15 in the case.

'Banks must not trouble farmers to recover loans'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao asked banks not to trouble farmers to recover loans. Tummala said that the Telangana government has been working on the procedures for Rythu Bharosa, a crop insurance and loan waiver scheme. Tummala directed officials to ready seeds and fertilizers for the



Kharif season. He made it clear to marketing officials that they must take steps to see that support price is given to paddy coming to the market yard. He directed officials to take action against businessmen who use carbide to ripen fruits and to ensure that the procurement of corn, sunflower, groundnut and jawar is done properly through MARKFED.

Kadiyam family facing rough weather: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
BRS Working President KTR made it clear that both the Congress and the BJP are going to face a backlash in the state during Parliamentary elections. He held a meeting with the key BRS leaders of Warangal and Peddapalli Parliament constituencies and said that there will be strong opposition among people regarding the cheating of the party by the Kadiyam family at the last moment in Warangal. He said that BRS has suffered no loss due to some leaders exiting the party and that the people are still with the BRS. Dr Marepalli Sudhir Kumar, who brought the BRS into the fray, is getting a good response from the people. He reminded that the selection of the candidate was done with consensus. KTR called upon BRS ranks to work together for the victory of Sudhir Kumar, who was with KCR right from 2001. Stating that the people of Warangal symbolise political awareness KTR said that he was confident that they are ready to make the BRS victorious. KTR said that a BRS victory is certain in Peddapalli too. He said that BRS LS candidate Koppula Eshwar has special recognition among the people as a leader of the Telangana movement. He said that Telangana's voice can be heard strongly in Parliament only if a person like Koppula Eshwar is elected. He said that everyone from farmers to autorickshaw drivers are angry with the Congress. KTR said that the BJP has no agenda in the state and in the country, and that is why they are trying to 'stir up' religious emotions. He said that such conspiracies which divert public attention from discussing real issues during elections should be countered at the field level. KTR called upon BRS ranks to join hands for the party's victory.



ECI seizes Rs 49 cr in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
With general elections 2024 underway, officials of the Election Commission of India have seized Rs 49 crore in cash in Telangana as of April 13. This is the second highest in the country after Tamil Nadu where Rs 53 crore was seized. Enforcement agencies have made a record seizure of over Rs 4,650 crore. This marks a sharp increase from the around Rs 3,475 crore seized during the Lok Sabha election in 2019. Significantly, 45% of the seizures are drugs and narcotics that have come under the special focus of the ECI. The seizures have been made possible by comprehensive planning, scaled-up collaboration and unified action by agencies, proactive citizen participation and the optimal engagement of technology.



Modi's guarantees are false: Mallikarjun Kharge

P5
Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed three public meetings. A BRS MLA said, "We are keeping expenses less as there is still time.

PHONE TAPPING

Praneeth withdraws bail petition from CMM court

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The lawyers of suspended DSP Praneeth Rao said that due to a few legal Sections involved in the case they are withdrawing the case from the CMM court. Section 29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, states that the Court of a Chief Judicial Magistrate may pass any sentence authorised by law except a sentence of death or imprisonment for life or imprisonment for a term exceeding seven years. Earlier, one of the other accused's bail petitions was also disposed of by the court. These bail petitions can be filed again in the sessions court on Tuesday. Accused number four in the case, the former DCP of the task force, Radha Kishan Rao, is reportedly not well in jail. He was also reportedly not well during interrogation when he was in police custody. It is learnt that the environment where he had lived so far is quite different from the one in jail. So he may request the court to give him a special room and other facilities in his room.

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Campaign fails to pick up in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
With less than a month left for the Lok Sabha elections, the campaign has not yet gained momentum. Even party chiefs are participating only selectively in public meetings. The Congress is the only party which hasn't announced its candidates in the three constituencies of Khammam, Karimnagar and Hyderabad. The BRS and the BJP have announced their candidates in all constituencies. The Congress held its manifesto meeting in Chevella on a large scale and Revanth Reddy is mainly focussing on Mahbubnagar where he held public meetings. However, on the ground, the campaign continues to be slow. The candidates are carrying out programmes which cost less money. A BJP candidate said the campaign will begin in full swing only on April 24. "Now it is mostly meetings with cadres to keep spirits high. Our national team will also be visiting from May." Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed three public meetings. A BRS MLA said, "We are keeping expenses less as there is still time. For now, we are visiting voters in parks or small meetings. Constituency coordination meetings are also being held." Revanth held several meetings in Mahbubnagar. KCR held two public meetings in Karimnagar and Chevella while the next meeting is in Medak district. KCR will focus on roadshows, corner meetings and meeting farmers and weavers.



BJP sets up wing to learn about farmers' problems

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The BJP has set up a wing at the state BJP office to learn about the problems of farmers, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said. He suggested that farmers should call the number 9904119119 in case the Congress government troubles them regarding paddy procurement. He also appealed to farmers not to commit suicide in case they face trouble. Kishan staged a Rythu Deeksha on Monday at the State BJP office demanding that the Congress government should implement its assurances given to farmers. Addressing the gathering, Kishan told farmers to ask Congress leaders why they have to vote for the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections. He asked the farmers to file a complaint with the BJP office if they fail to get seeds and fertilizers and if banks exert pressure on them regarding the loans given to farmers.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Damage control

World leaders scramble to soothe tempers after Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel for Damascus

The fragile peace equilibrium in West Asia has been hit once again, with Iran launching a direct attack on Israel and escalating tensions. Fresh apprehensions reverberated globally, prompting swift diplomatic action from President Joe Biden who, besides conveying to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US will not be part of any retaliatory action, has convened the G7 nations to address the urgent matter. The missiles-and-drones attack, which targeted strategic locations including military installations and civilian areas in Israel, has escalated the situation to a dangerous level. While casualties and damages are still being assessed, the brazenness of this assault has sent shockwaves across the region and beyond. Iran, a key player in the region, has often found itself at odds with Israel, citing ideological differences and regional power struggles. However, the direct military engagement between the countries represents a dangerous escalation that could have far-reaching consequences. Israel, known for its robust defence capabilities, has vowed to respond to Iran's aggression, raising concerns of a prolonged and devastating conflict. The events of April 1 in Damascus marked the onset of a fresh chapter in the ongoing regional strife between the countries. That assault, resulting in the loss of several high-ranking Iranian military officials, signified a shift from indirect hostilities to confrontation. Subsequently, Iran initiated its long-anticipated reprisal against Israel, deploying numerous drones and ballistic missiles. Despite indications of this impending attack during discreet negotiations between the US and Iran, most of the strikes were intercepted en route Israel.



Meanwhile, Israeli authorities, particularly Netanyahu, have endeavoured to depict their nation as the target of unwarranted Iranian aggression. President Biden has responded swiftly by convening a meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) nations. The G7, consisting of the world's leading industrialised democracies, serves as a forum for coordinating responses to global challenges, including security threats. Though the US may have fostered conditions conducive to Netanyahu's actions, Israel acted independently to trigger the latest escalation. Therefore, to be fair to Iran, its reaction has not been an unprovoked attack. Lately, Netanyahu has been drawing flak for his misadventures at home and abroad, and the US support for his military campaign is also waning. So he played the Iran card to win brownie points and, with Iran being the West's favourite punching bag, it bolstered Netanyahu's standing whereas a gullible Iran took the bait and allowed itself to be drawn into a war in which it had no role so far. An individual's obstinacy has now put the entire region at heightened risk of volatility. As G7 deliberates on the appropriate response, efforts must be focused on de-escalating tensions and facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties. Diplomatic channels should be utilised to engage Iran and Israel in constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to their grievances.

PICTALK



Devotees perform 'Arghya' ritual on the last day of 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna

Avoiding icebergs in troubled times

Amid escalating unease surrounding the credibility of Government agencies, the path to assuaging these concerns and reinstating trust lies in conducting a transparent inquiry



DEEPAK SINHA

Clearly, in these dystopian times reality has come to be stranger than fiction and social mores turned on their head. In an earlier time, actions seen as abhorrent or distasteful, when caught, would be immediately disavowed. Today they are brazenly flaunted as a badge of honour and attempted to be normalised. The blatant misuse of our Central Agencies to hound and arm-twist opposition politicians, journalists, businessmen and corporates being one such. What could be more unconscionable than a politician publicly claiming personal credit for an initiative after our Supreme Court has declared it unconstitutional? That too, because it violates the citizens fundamental right to information.

In fact, not only did he attempt to justify his action using that tired old cliché, "it was for our own good", but also added to good effect that those critical would subsequently regret it. An implied threat perhaps? The reasoning in support was that we would never have come to know the specifics of political donations if not for this initiative, which while accurate, could not be further from the truth. There can be no dispute that was certainly not the intention to begin with, otherwise why the secrecy in the first place? Moreover, it was the Government's top lawyers who made every effort to convince the court that the ordinary citizen had no right to such information. While it may have just been an attempt to brazen through in view of the elections, one cannot help but feel that the Government believes it has not erred and is thus unrepentant and likely to be pushed through again. The Belgian painter and author, Erik Peevernagie, makes a very pertinent point when he writes "politicians are but tantalising storytellers, as they mix facts with fiction, grab our emotion and tell things, they want us to believe. Their factoids are unremittingly reiterated, take a life on their own and in the end become the very truth... until the bubble bursts." Unfortunately for this Government it seems that the



bubble has been pricked, if not burst, as the Supreme Court appears to have finally awakened from its deep slumber. Its actions, though still at a very nascent stage, if followed through, may help in ensuring a level playing field during the forthcoming elections and are therefore exceedingly welcome. More importantly, it has put the bosses of our public institutions, be it public sector companies, the central investigative agencies or the Election Commission on notice. Moreover, details of alleged linkages that are emerging from the Electoral Bonds issues suggest humungous malfeasance and sordid corruption at an unimaginable scale indulged in by the richest and most powerful within the country for their own personal gain. All of this has been at the cost of the ordinary tax payer. Moreover, we have yet to learn whether foreign entities have channelled in funds through domestic players, as is a distinct possibility. Such interference, if it has occurred, should be a matter of great concern given the impact it may have on national security. In this context, the functioning of the Prime Minister's Cares Fund must also be viewed with suspicion,



IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ONLY CREDIBLE OPTION REMAINING IS FOR THE SUPREME COURT TO ORDER A JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION UNDER ITS OWN AEGIS, WHICH SHOULD BE BROADCAST LIVE TO ENSURE COMPLETE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

given its lack of transparency and the various allegations made against it. Both these initiatives were conceived and implemented by the present dispensation in power, which in all probability, will return. It is extremely unlikely therefore, that they will undertake a credible or fair investigation of allegations made. Moreover, our premier investigative agencies also find themselves under a cloud for their acts of omission and commission. For example, the Enforcement Directorate has since 2005 registered approximately 5900 cases. It has completed and filed chargesheets in only 1142 cases and disposed of just twenty-five of these, with twenty-four ending in convictions. What is worse is its biased actions in investigating politicians. As media reports show, since 2014 the Directorate has probed 121 prominent politicians of which 115, or 95 per cent, belong to the opposition. As per these same reports the Central Bureau of Investigation mirrored the pattern followed by the ED. In these circumstances, the only credible option remaining is for the Supreme Court to order a judicial investigation under its own aegis, that

should be broadcast live to ensure complete transparency and accountability. One does not need to be a soothsayer to suggest that if such a strict and non-partisan step is not initiated at the earliest, we will always remain at the mercy of leeches who will suck the life blood out of our democratic norms, right to good governance and the rule of law. Finally, from the proceedings in Supreme Court on the Electoral Bonds case one can infer that the manner in which the Chairman, State Bank of India, used the resources entrusted to him by the depositors to defy and hamper the directions of the Court render him patently unfit to hold that appointment. Just because the party in power appoints him and others to head public institutions and agencies, they cannot see themselves as mere factotums of those who appointed them and do their bidding. One expects far more of them, not least to show integrity of character and follow rules without fear or favour. (The author, a military veteran, is a visiting fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a senior founding fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICAL CHESSBOARD

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Battle lines drawn in western UP", published on April 13, this is my response. In the heartland of Uttar Pradesh, a political battlefield is shaping up unlike any seen before. With the looming Lok Sabha elections, Western Uttar Pradesh finds itself in the eye of the storm, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vigorous campaigning seeks to consolidate Hindu votes against a backdrop of shifting alliances and historical legacies. The region's intricate social fabric, woven by dominant communities like the Jats, Muslims and Dalits, carries the weight of political dynasties and ideological realignments. From the legacy of Charan Singh's Kisan politics to the emergence of new power centres like the BJP and BSP, each move on this electoral chessboard is strategic, aiming to capture seats and the narrative of Uttar Pradesh's political future.

As the BJP navigates through the complexities of caste dynamics and minority representation, the challenge lies in maintaining its Hindu vote bank while facing the formidable opposition bloc, now bolstered by the BSP's calculated manoeuvres. In this high-stakes game, the fate of Uttar Pradesh hangs in the balance, awaiting the verdict of its diverse electorate.

Abhijeet Nand | Bhopal

EXPLORING HUMAN LEARNING

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Education's cultural impact is profound", published on April 12, this is my response. The enduring belief that "man is a learning animal" has shaped civilizations, but a deeper examination reveals nuances. While youth and adulthood foster comprehensive learning, its impact wanes with age. The persistence of certain knowledge over time underscores the need for continual renewal and tailored educational approaches. In India, where knowledge, behaviour and spirituality form the essence of personality, there's a call to integrate these elements into education. To achieve this, the curriculum must evolve to address lifelong learning

Urban farming



Apropos the news article, "Cultivating sustainability through urban farming", published on April 11, this is my response. The Pioneer's succinct write-up of urban farming as a climate change solution is commendable. Climate change's urgency demands immediate action and urban farming offers a multifaceted response. It not only addresses food security but also mitigates environmental degradation and fosters community cohesion. The article rightly emphasises the need for supportive policies to scale up urban farming initiatives. Governments must incentivise and facilitate urban agriculture to make it accessible to all communities. Additionally, community engagement plays a pivotal role in its success, fostering social bonds and economic opportunities.

Urban farming's transformative potential lies in its ability to convert urban spaces into sustainable ecosystems. By repurposing vacant lots and rooftops, cities can combat the urban heat island effect and reduce carbon emissions from food transportation. In essence, urban farming represents a promising pathway towards a more resilient and sustainable future. Its integration into policy frameworks and community initiatives is crucial in tackling the imminent challenges of climate change.

Shihaab Khan | Hyderabad

A CHAMPION OF JUSTICE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A harbinger of justice and equality", published on April 13, this is my response. The legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's history, continues to inspire millions worldwide. His tireless efforts towards social justice, equality and inclusivity have

left an indelible mark on the nation's conscience. Born into poverty, Dr Ambedkar overcame numerous obstacles to become an intellectual powerhouse and a relentless advocate for the oppressed. His vision of a just society, rooted in education and empowerment, remains as relevant today as ever. Dr Ambedkar's emphasis on dialogue, non-violence and co-existence underscores the path towards societal harmony. His contributions to India's legal framework, particularly in labourrights, are foundational to the country's progress. As we commemorate his birth anniversary, let us not only honour his memory but also recommit ourselves to the ideals he espoused. Let us strive for a nation where every individual, regardless of caste or creed, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. Dr Ambedkar's teachings resonate as a beacon of hope, guiding us towards a democratic, secular and inclusive future.

Priyanka Sharma | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Screenwriters as architects of emotion

They are the true magicians. Their contributions extend far beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives

The magic of cinema is not just seen; it's heard in the echo of words that linger long after the screen goes dark. Screenwriters, the unsung architects of these moments, weave dialogues and scenes that shape our emotional landscapes, often becoming a part of our very identity.

Take the classic scene from 'Deewar', where Amitabh Bachchan, embodying the success and arrogance of his character, delivers the powerful lines, "Aaj mere paas gaadi hai, bungla hai, paisa hai... tumhare paas kya hai?" To this, Shashi Kapoor responds with the iconic, "Mere paas, maa hai." This exchange transcends its cinematic origin, showcasing the screenwriter's ability to capture the essence of human values and emotions in a few, yet profound, words. This is the essence of screenwriting—not just creating dialogues but sculpting moments that become landmarks in cinematic history. It's about crafting narratives that engage, entertain and evoke a spectrum



of emotions, from the laughter that bubbles up during the light-hearted moments in '3 Idiots' to the tears that unknowingly fall for the poignant scenes in 'Taare Zameen Par'. Screenwriters delve into the depths of the human experience, drawing upon themes of love, loss, victory and defeat to create stories that resonate across cultures and generations.

Through their words, characters come to life, embarking on journeys filled with challenges, joys, sorrows and ultimately, growth. Movies and shows like 'Mohabbatein' and 'Maharani' which challenge the values of "Parampara, Pratishta, Anushasan," not only entertain but also inspire reflections and conversations among audiences. In the realm of cin-

ema, screenwriters are the true magicians, crafting the spells of dialogue and narrative that enchant us, make us reflect and sometimes even change our perspectives. Their contributions go beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives.

As we recount memorable lines or find solace in the cinematic moments that have moved us, let's remember the architects behind these emotions—the screenwriters. Their mastery over words and their deep understanding of the human condition empower them to create stories that entertain, enlighten and endure. In celebrating their craft, we acknowledge the profound impact of their work, not just on cinema, but on culture and society at large. For in the hands of a skilled screenwriter, words become the bridge between the world of the film and the heart of the viewer, making the cinematic experience truly unforgettable.

(The writer is Co-Chair, Media Sub Committee, SWA; views are personal)



PAWAN SONY





FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING WELLBEING IN WORK AND LIFE

In the intricate dance of work and life, boundaries save individual sanctuaries



SAKSHI SETHI

Boundaries serve as the invisible fences that portrays an individual's personal as well as professional spaces, safeguard the individual wellbeing and preserve harmony in their interactions. Be it in the workplace or in life, setting and maintaining boundaries is paramount for fostering healthy relationships, achieving balance and nurturing self-respect. In today's world, where the pace of life is often hectic and boundaries can easily be overlooked or disregarded, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for promoting individual well-being, healthy relationships and a more compassionate and equitable society. Moreover, boundary setting is an indispensable aspect of both the workplace and life at large.

When talked about the workplace, setting boundaries are essential for maintaining professionalism, productivity and helps the employees reduce misunderstandings, conflicts and instead maintain a healthy work-life balance, prevent burnout and improve job satisfaction. It also promotes efficiency, prevents distractions, safeguard individuals from exploitation, harassment and undue stress.



In a competitive and demanding work environment, it becomes crucial to set limits on workload, deadlines and expectations to prevent overcommitment and exhaustion. Numerous studies have also highlighted the importance of setting boundaries to maintain a healthy work-life balance. By defining clear limits on workload, working hours and availability, employees can better manage their work-related stress and maintain a positive attitude towards their jobs. In doing so, they can protect themselves from intrusive inquiries or demands that encroach upon their emotional well-being. Furthermore, boundary setting cultivates respect and professionalism in workplace dynamics and encourages others to treat self with similar respect. By clearly communicating the expectations and limits, the individual establishes a culture of mutual respect and accountability in the workplace. When individuals assert their boundaries assertively yet respectfully, it communicates self-confidence and self-worth, fostering a culture of mutual respect and dignity. Respect for boundaries encourages open communication, empathy and understanding, strengthening interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Beyond the workplace, boundary setting is equally indispensable in personal relationships and daily life too. In interpersonal relationships, boundaries define acceptable behaviours, emotional intimacy and personal space. Healthy boundaries empower individuals to prioritise their needs, values and aspirations, fostering relationships based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Whether it's setting limits on time spent with certain individuals or communicating preferences regarding personal space, boundaries nurture healthier and more fulfilling connections. Remember, setting boundaries is not about being selfish or uncooperative rather it's about taking care of individual self and ensuring that one can perform their best while maintaining the individual well-being. When done thoughtfully and respectfully, setting boundaries can strengthen the individual's professional relationships and enhance their effectiveness at work. Remember, boundaries are never about telling other people what they can and cannot do. It is about telling people what they will and will not do. Setting boundaries is an act of self-love and self-respect which is essential for individual wellbeing. Setting boundaries around leisure time, self-care routines and social engagements will allow an individual to recharge, replenish their energy and cultivate resilience in the face of challenges. By honouring their boundaries, individuals assert their agency and reclaim control over their time, energy and emotions.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Challenges galore for NATO@75



K S TOMAR

The alliance confronts formidable challenges amidst mounting criticism from European nations and the surge of right-wing nationalist movements



One of the biggest challenges being faced by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on its 75th anniversary pertains to combating and addressing the severe criticism from some European countries and the spread of right-wing nationalist movements. Hence, it needs to adopt a cautious and balanced approach to stay relevant in the 21st century. **Challenges ahead to stay relevant:** NATO, with 32 member states and five aligned nations including Japan, New Zealand, Israel, Australia and South Korea, must enhance defence capabilities and security arrangements to ensure mutual trust and better cooperation. NATO also called Washington Treaty, was created on April 4, 1949 to counterweight to Soviet military forces stationed in Central and Eastern Europe after world war 2nd, has traversed a hazardous journey and sustained faith of security and protection from aggressors hinges on its commitment to stay united and germane. Secondly, NATO's military potential is being perceived as a tool and weapon of the United States to ensure its hegemony over nations that do not pose military threats. There is a calamitous need to dispel such impressions of supremacy, evident from its 200 military interventions worldwide in 75 years, including 20 major ones like the questionable outcome of combating terrorism in Afghanistan, unlawful interference in Syria, invasion of Iraq, bombing of Yugoslavia, destabilisation of Libya and the creation of ISIS. Thirdly, as a parting gift, NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg has proposed a \$100 billion package of military aid to Ukraine for five years, aimed at avoiding a potential halt in aid if Trump wins the 2024 American presidential elections. Former President Trump has made it



NATO MUST ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY THAT WILL BE PRODUCTIVE AND FRUITFUL ONLY IF IT INTEGRATES ITSELF WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, BESIDES STRENGTHENING ITS MILITARY CAPABILITIES

clear to keep his country away from such conflicts and he is seen as pro-Putin, which might upset NATO. Experts feel that NATO members should get this proposal approved at the upcoming meeting in Washington and counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine. **NATO Needs Reforms:** Foreign policy experts argue that NATO needs to focus on non-traditional threats such as terror attacks, disinformation campaigns, cyber assaults and risks to disrupt supply chains to preserve its allies. Otherwise, it will lose its credentials and effectiveness. Secondly, NATO must adopt a comprehensive strategy that will be productive and fruitful only if it integrates itself with international organisations besides strengthening its military capabilities. Thirdly, it should put in place an effective mechanism to foster a shared sense of purpose and make relentless efforts to ensure cohesiveness and unity among the member states. Consensus-building should be the primary motto of the alliance, guided by essential elements like discussion, dialogue, unified planning and political alignments. Fourthly, transparency is obligatory to create mutual trust and internal synergy, as well as to improve coordination among the five main policy formation committees, including the executive working group, political committee, policy formalisation group, military group and senior resource board. Why did India reject the US offer to be part of NATO? From the Indian perspec-

ive, experts say that India has already rejected the US offer to be part of an alliance to safeguard against Chinese aggression. India is capable of independently countering such threats and, therefore, does not need the assistance of a military grouping like NATO. If India joins NATO, it will pave the way for the US to establish military bases, which is unacceptable to Delhi. US allies like Australia, Israel, Japan and South Korea have permitted military bases, but India cannot allow the infringement of its sovereignty and degradation of its positioning in the world arena. While maintaining strategic autonomy, India will never jeopardise its age-old trust-worthy ties with Russia, which is at odds with America and its allies after the Ukraine conflict. A United States Congressional committee had recommended that the US should strengthen NATO Plus to safeguard borders from China and enhance its capabilities to counter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region hence it warrants India's inclusion in the organisation. The successes and failures of the organisation go hand in hand, but conflicts' contamination is spreading among major powers and frozen encounters may always heat up in the future, attributed to growing state brittleness and spill-over threats, thereby disturbing the world order. The recent Global Risk Report has come out with curious findings pertaining to the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) which is the culmination of the analysis of fifteen hundred global experts who have investigated the global

risks through three time frames to support decision-makers responsible for balancing current crises and long-term policies and priorities. One major failure of NATO relates to the lack of allocation of 2 per cent of funds by defence ministers of state members of their GDP agreed upon in 2006 towards security — related expenditures, especially when the United States accounts for two-thirds of the alliance's spending, which needs to be shared by other nations in the organisation. NATO had focused on restricting communism, discouraging militant nationalism and controlling the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but now the situation has become volatile in post-Cold War era as Russia has indulged in annexing neighbours, posing a threat to other smaller nations as well. Analysts feel that as NATO celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, it stands at a vintage point of passing through a litmus test of its core mission of safeguarding the security and freedom of its members, based on a principle-oriented international order and mandate. Trump's potential return to the White House may jeopardise the existence of NATO as it may encourage aggressors like Putin and give a boost to China's over-ambitious expansion policy to annex Taiwan in the future. Trump may encourage Putin to continue his onslaught on Ukraine, putting Europe's security at risk. *(The writer is a political analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)*

A call to vote responsibly beyond party lines

With focus on accountability and progress, it's imperative to scrutinise governmental performance across key sectors

India is undeniably a youthful nation, with a significant portion of our population comprising the younger generation. Every year, countless young individuals come of age, reaching 18 years and gaining eligibility to vote. This message is directed not only to those who have recently attained this milestone but also to those who did so in the past few years. With the power to vote comes a profound responsibility—the responsibility to elect leaders who possess the competence and integrity to effectively govern our nation. As citizens, it is imperative that we transcend party lines and critically evaluate the progress of our nation. Are we moving in the right direction? Are there tangible improvements



RAVI KOCHHAR

in various sectors? Are we receiving value for the taxes we pay? These are fundamental questions we must ask ourselves as we assess the state of our nation. While political parties often prioritise winning elections, it is our duty as responsible citizens to vote for candidates who prioritise the welfare of the people and deliver on their promises. Over the past 75 years, India has made remarkable strides, earning recognition as a responsible global player. Whether it's our nuclear capabilities or our humanitarian efforts during crises, we have demonstrated our commitment to progress and compassion. The electoral process grants us the opportunity, every five years, to hold our leaders



accountable for their actions. We must evaluate their performance across various sectors, including:-
1. Infrastructure Development: Assess the improvement in infrastructure, particularly in terms of connectivity by rail, road and

waterways, which directly impacts ease of doing business and facilitates movement across the country.
2. Industrial Growth and Policies: Evaluate the government's plans and policies for industrial growth and decision-making processes, ensur-

ing there is no policy paralysis hindering progress.
3. Impact on Poor and Middle Class: Examine how Government policies impact the poor and middle class, with a focus on initiatives aimed at upliftment and improvement.
4. Healthcare Sector Performance: Evaluate the government's performance in the healthcare sector and assess the affordability and accessibility of healthcare for all citizens.
5. Education and Skill Development: Analyse initiatives in education and skill development, focusing on improving literacy rates, bridging urban-rural gaps and empowering the youth.
6. Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity: Assess improvements in digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly

in urban-rural sectors and how they benefit citizens.
7. Agriculture and Rural Sector: Review Government initiatives in agriculture and rural development and their impact on rural communities.
8. Transparency and Accountability: Ensure transparency and accountability in public administration, with efforts to curb corruption and promote good governance.
9. Foreign Policy and International Relations: Evaluate the government's performance in foreign policy and international relations, considering India's standing on the global stage. Remember, our national identity, symbolised by our flag, transcends religious and caste divisions, uniting us as one nation. As we exercise our

right to vote, let us remember the significance of our national flag and the unity it represents. Your vote holds immense power. History has witnessed elections being decided by a single vote. Therefore, before casting your vote, consider crucial factors such as the government's performance and policies, rising above religious and caste affiliations for the greater good of the nation. While this list is not exhaustive, it underscores the importance of informed decision-making and prioritising the wellbeing of our nation. Let us unite in our commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous India. *(The writer is group VC Amity University; views are personal)*

MONEY MATTERS

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) opens new delivery centre in Brazil

Major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday announced a new delivery centre in Londrina, Brazil, to help Brazilian organisations in their technology transformation with a focus on digital transformation, artificial intelligence and cognitive business operations. The new centre will create more than 1,600 new job opportunities over the next five years, contribute to the local economy and strengthen TCS' presence in the region, a company statement said. "The delivery centre will specialise in key areas, such as business transformation, artificial intelligence, and cognitive business operations, offering a comprehensive suite of IT services to clients in Brazil and around the world," it said. TCS Brazil Country Head Bruno Rocha said the company is aiming to double the number of associates in key areas like cybersecurity, cloud, cognitive business operations, information technology infrastructure services, artificial intelligence and automation.



Byju's India Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Arjun Mohan quits; rejig announced

Arjun Mohan, CEO of India operations of Think and Learn, which owns Byju's brand, has resigned from the beleaguered firm, which on Monday also announced a business rejig consolidating its operations into three verticals. Mohan had joined Byju's in July last year as the CEO for international business after quitting rival UpGrad in February as CEO. Later, he was given charge of India operations in September after Byju's then CEO Mrinal Mohit resigned. After taking over the charge, Mohan undertook restructuring of the organisation which led to layoffs of around 4,000 employees at Byju's. Byju's Founder Byju Raveendran will now handle the firm's day-to-day operations following the resignation of Mohan, the statement said. The company has also announced a major rejig of its business, consolidating it into three focused divisions - The Learning App, Online classes and Tuition centres, and Test-prep.



Vedanta secures 11-year Rs 3,900 cr loan from PFC; to expedite projects

Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd has secured an 11-year term loan of Rs 3,918 crore from Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), sources said. The financial closure will enable Vedanta to expedite completion of its power projects. The group plans to increase the operating capacity of its power business in India to 4.8 GW by FY27, sources with knowledge of the matter said. The latest financing follows Vedanta group's takeover of Meenakshi Energy Ltd on December 28 in an NCLT-driven insolvency process. Meenakshi Energy has a coal-based power plant at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, which Vedanta will use to supply power to merchants. Vedanta has acquired two plants -- Meenakshi Energy Ltd in Andhra Pradesh with a capacity of 1 GW, and Athena Power in Chhattisgarh with a capacity of 1.2 GW. It will primarily use the funds for these two of its key power plants, they said.



India top choice for digital pursuit: nasscom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India remains the top choice for enterprises looking to expand digital services portfolio and companies are expected to increase spending on AI, data analytics and cybersecurity, industry body nasscom said in a report on Monday. The report 'Digital Enterprise Maturity 5.0: Digital Readiness in the Era of AI' is based on a survey of 550 enterprises across 11 major sectors and seven major geographical regions. The survey found that 71 per cent of enterprises in India spent over 20 per cent of their tech spends on digital in 2023. "Nearly 90 per cent of companies have signalled plans to boost investments in key digital technology areas in 2024, including artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning (AI/ML), big data analytics, cloud computing, cybersecurity, and intelligent automation,"



The report further said the focus is expected to lean more towards cybersecurity by the first half of 2025, as a response to increased adoption of generative AI (gen AI), which has emerged as a prominent technology in 2023.

The report further said the focus is expected to lean more towards cybersecurity by the first half of 2025, as a response to increased adoption of generative AI (gen AI), which has emerged as a prominent technology in 2023. The advancements in gen AI propelled an increased emphasis on digital talent, nasscom said, with 83 per cent of enterprises reporting that over 6 per

cent of their total workforce was dedicated to digital roles. The report noted that sectors like BFSI (banking, financial services, and insurance), high-tech, discrete manufacturing, telecom, media and entertainment, as well as energy, utilities, and alternatives are expanding their digital services contracts. It said India continues to be the preferred outsourcing destination for businesses aiming to build and expand their digital services portfolio, with over 50 per cent of companies in the travel and transportation, telecom, media and entertainment, and construction and engineering sectors choosing it for their outsourcing needs. At least 47-49 per cent of firms in sectors like telecom, media and entertainment, discrete manufacturing, and energy and utilities outsourced digital services work to their own capability centres in India, it said.

Wholesale inflation hits 3 month high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale inflation in the country rose marginally to three-month high of 0.53 per cent in March compared to 0.20 per cent in the preceding month due to increase in prices of vegetables, potato, onion and crude oil. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent. The inflation in March 2023 was 1.41 per cent. "The annual rate of inflation based on all-India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 0.53 per cent (provisional) for the month of March, 2024 (over March, 2023)," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement on Monday. Food inflation moved up marginally to 6.88 per cent in March from 5.42 per cent in the same month a year ago, data showed. Inflation in vegetables was 19.52 per cent, up from (- 2.39) per cent in the same month a year ago.

DESPITE GEO-POLITICAL TENSIONS

India's engineering exports edge up to US\$ 109 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's engineering exports edged up to USD 109 billion in 2023-24 despite a slowdown in some of the major global markets amid geo-political tensions, EEPC said on Monday. India's engineering exports are competitive globally and expected to gain further market share in the coming years, with the country entering into more FTAs, it added. The apex body of engineering goods exporters expects the value of shipments from the sector to rise to USD 300 billion by 2030 and generate a significant number of jobs and foreign exchange earnings in the process. Notably, the engineering sector is the largest contributor to India's overall exports, with a share of 24 per cent, and also contributes approximately 40 per cent of the country's total manufacturing exports. "The engineering goods



exports in FY24 surpassed the previous year's numbers despite a slowdown in some of the key global markets, geopolitical tensions, Red Sea crisis and high freight rates," said EEPC India Chairman Arun Kumar Garodia. Engineering exports in FY24 rose to USD 109.31 billion from USD 107.04 billion in the previous financial year, thus registering a growth of 2.13 per cent, the Commerce Ministry data released on Monday showed. According to EEPC, FY24 exports on a strong note, with engineering exports rising 10.66 per cent year-on-year to USD 11.28 billion in March against USD 10.19 billion in the same month last year. "The monthly, as well as cumulative numbers, clearly show that the Indian engineering sector is quite competitive globally and consistently achieving success in penetrating new markets. The quick response from the government to counter various external challenges," Garodia said.

Delhi airport among world's top 10 busiest airports: ACI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 15 (PTI) Delhi airport has been named among the world's top 10 busiest airports for 2023 in a list topped by Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The Indra Gandhi International Airport in the national capital is ranked tenth while Dubai and Dallas airports are at the second and third positions, respectively, according to the Airports Council International (ACI) World. Releasing the list on Monday, the ACI also said the global total passenger forecast for 2023 stands close to 8.5 billion (850 crore), reflecting a remarkable recovery of 93.8



per cent from pre-pandemic levels and 27.2 per cent higher than 2022. "Notably, international traffic recovery drew nearer to that of domestic traffic, emphasising its essential role in propelling the industry's resurgence and expansion," it said. Among the top 10 busiest airports, five are in the US. At the tenth place, Delhi airport handled more than 7.22 crore passengers in 2023. In 2022, the airport was at the ninth position. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is on top and it handled over 10.46 crore passengers last year.

Gold rises Rs 300; silver jumps Rs 500

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 15 (PTI) Gold price rose Rs 300 to Rs 73,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with firm trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also jumped Rs 500 to Rs 85,700 per kilogram. In the previous trade, it had ended at Rs 85,200 per kilogram. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,050 per 10 grams, up Rs 300, taking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi,



Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international market, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,355 per ounce, up US\$ 12 from the previous close. Gold resumed trading on a positive note, mainly lifted by safe haven buying after the escalation in the conflict

between Iran and Israel over the weekend. Iran's attack on Israel reduced investor appetite for risky assets, and increased demand for safe haven assets like bullion, Gandhi said. Additionally, silver prices were trading higher at US\$ 28.25 per ounce. In the previous session, it had finished at US\$ 27.84 per ounce. According to market analysts, recent US inflation data diminished the possibility of an interest rate cut in June by the US Federal Reserve. However, it will be critical to monitor the geopolitical landscape and whether other nations choose to intervene, so as to intensify the crisis.

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 5.18 Lcr as markets crash on Iran-Israel conflict worries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A sharp plunge in the stock market wiped out Rs 5.18 lakh crore from investors' wealth on Monday as an escalating conflict in the Middle East hit the market sentiment. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 845.12 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 73,399.78. During the day, it plunged 929.74 points or 1.25 per cent to 73,315.16. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by Rs 5,18,953.97 crore to Rs 3,94,48,097.94 crore (USD 4.73 trillion). "The worsening situation in the Middle-East with con-



fluct between Iran and Israel flaring up had engulfed Dalal Street. Investors worldwide, including in India, have turned cautious and resorted to profit-taking. Geopolitical tensions and uncertainty over interest rate cuts could have a bearing on the markets," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

Quantum MF objects to delisting ICICI Securities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Quantum Mutual Fund has objected to the scheme of merger of ICICI Securities with parent firm ICICI Bank, saying it is "flawed and bridled with irregularities" and will adversely affect minority shareholders of the broking firm. Last month, ICICI Securities announced that about 72 per cent of its shareholders voted in favour of delisting and subsequent merger with ICICI Bank, even

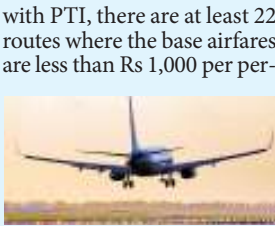


as the majority of retail investors opposed the scheme. "The scheme of merger is flawed and bridled with irregularities," Quantum Mutual Fund MD and CEO Jimmy Patel said in his letter written last week to ICICI Bank and forwarded it to market regulator Sebi and the stock exchanges.

With just Rs 150 base airfare, take a 50-minute flight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shell out just Rs 150 as base airfare and take a 50-minute flight from Lilabari to Tezpur. Not just this route, there are many more flights where the base ticket price is less than Rs 1,000. All of them are operated under the regional air connectivity scheme that provides various incentives for the airline operators. According to an analysis shared by travel portal ixigo



with PTI, there are at least 22 routes where the base airfares are less than Rs 1,000 per person, with the lowest being Rs 150 for flights connecting Lilabari and Tezpur in Assam. The cheapest one way base fare is Rs 150 for a flight to

and from Lilabari to Tezpur (Assam). The flights are operated by Alliance Air. While booking a ticket, there will be addition of convenience charge to the base fare. Broadly, the duration of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) flights on these routes are around 50 minutes. Majority of the routes where the base airfares range between Rs 150 and Rs 199 per person are in the North East.

India's merchandise exports dip marginally, shipments at US\$ 437 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports declined marginally in March to US\$ 41.68 billion, while for the entire 2023-24 it dipped 3.11 per cent to US\$ 437.06 billion, as geopolitical issues continued to hamper global shipments. Imports, too, declined 5.98 per cent to US\$ 57.28 billion in March, taking the trade deficit to 15.6 billion during the month. According to commerce ministry data released on Monday,



the imports during 2023-24 stood at 677.24 billion, down 5.41 per cent from US\$ 715.97 billion in the preceding year. The trade deficit or gap between imports and exports worked to be US\$ 240.17 billion. Replying to a query on esca-

lation of the crisis in the Middle east, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal, who was briefing about the trade data, said the ministry was monitoring the situation and will take "appropriate action". However, he did not elaborate due to the Model Code of Conduct in the wake of the ongoing Lok Sabha election. The overall exports (merchandise + services) are estimated to surpass last year's highest record, the Secretary said.

ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

'Malpractices by candidates fear recruiters'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Malpractices by candidates during online assessments is one of the biggest fears among recruiters and talent acquisition (TA) specialists, a report said on Monday. Fraudulent practices by candidates during online assessments have emerged as the biggest fear of the participants (39 per cent), followed by anxiety over finding the right can-

didate for a role (37 per cent), according to a report by AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro. The lack of effective tools to gauge specific skills has emerged as the next significant worry among 26 per cent of recruiters, it added. The report by HirePro is based on a survey among 837 recruiters, talent acquisition specialists, and HR professionals during October 2023 to March 2024. It further revealed that in the recruitment planning phase, the anxiety of finding



the right candidate for a role (37 per cent) is the biggest concern for recruiters and talent acquisition specialists, followed by the uncertainty of meeting hiring targets (32 per cent), in case it concerns planning for high-volume hiring and hiring for specific skill sets. In the candidate engagement phase, the report found that the inability to ascertain whether candidates are explor-

ing multiple job offers (29 per cent) and the anxiety surrounding offer rejections or candidate no-shows (28 per cent) are among the top fears. This is followed by the stress of losing candidates due to budget constraints (25 per cent), it added. During the interviewing phase, the management of candidates' and hiring managers' availability is a concurring challenge, the report noted.

Sebi to auction 30 properties of 7 companies next month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday said it will auction 30 properties of seven companies, including Mangalam Agro Products and Purusattam Infotech Industries, on May 15 to recover money illegally collected from investors. The properties will be auctioned for a reserve price of nearly Rs 25.64 crore. The other companies, whose properties will also be auctioned, are Bishal Group of Companies, NVD Solar Ltd, Sun Plant Business, Sumangal Industries Ltd and Jivan Sathi Dream Projects.

Properties that will go under the hammer include land parcels, land with building structures and flats in West Bengal and Odisha. It will be auctioned at a reserve price of Rs 25.64 crore, according to a notice issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). Sebi invited bids for the sale of properties in the recovery proceedings against Mangalam Agro Products, Purusattam Infotech Industries, Jivan Sathi Dream Projects, Sun Plant Business, Bishal group, Sumangal Industries and NVD Solar, along with their promoters/ directors, it said.

Melodies of serenity through his 'Sitar for mental health' tour

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

The well-known proverb that states "music has the power to heal wounds that medicine cannot" emphasises how healing music can be. Virtuoso sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma recently started his *Sitar for Mental Health* tour with a similar goal in mind in Hyderabad!

He has played in a number of Indian cities during the last two months, but it was time to travel to Hyderabad! The rich, powerful tones of ancient Indian instruments like the 'tabla' and 'pakhawaj' added to the concert's sensory thrill. It transcended the boundaries of a performance by using complex melodies and a blend of traditional and modern beats to create music that evokes feelings, takes the listener to a different place, and uses music as a healing therapy for mental health.

The virtuoso begins, "I was struggling with mental health issues, which led to a lack of appetite and a hiatus from playing the sitar," in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*. "I did, however, pick up the sitar again after I made the decision to face my health issues and get better. This not only helped me feel better, but it also opened my eyes to the therapeutic value of music. I was driven to tell everyone about this discovery and to inspire others to talk about their personal experiences with mental health. I think that music in general and the 'sitar' in particular may be effective tools for managing mental health and dispelling the stigma attached to it. The human spirit is touched and healed by

music, which exists beyond the sphere of sound."

At the age of ten, Rishab Rikhiram Sharma, a fourth-generation sitar player from the illustrious Rikhiram family of luthiers, made his stage debut in 2011 alongside his father, master luthier Sanjay Sharma.

He became the youngest disciple of Sitar Maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar after the latter's passing! He was trained by Pandit Parimal Sadaphal after Shankar's passing and also studied with Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Ustad Rais Khan, among other renowned maestros. Notably, Rishab is the only sitarist of his generation to have participated in popular TV series and networks like *Entertainment Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega*, *Hindustan Ke Hunarbaaz*, and *Doordarshan*. He has also performed live for audiences of 60,000-400 million people.

"As a young teenager growing up, I found myself immersed in a world of musical instruments," he says, "immersed in the symphony of traditional Indian music. 'Sitar', 'Tanpura', and 'Santoor' are surrounding me. My parents were also passionate musicians, with their fingers skipping over the veena's strings. However, within this rich tapestry of conventional sounds, an electronic pulse beckoned as a new beat. I cherished hip-hop tunes and synthesised beats seamlessly blended into my life, uniting contemporary and traditional. My mentor, Pandit Ravi Shankar, continued to have a strong influence throughout everything and served as a beacon of light for me on my musical path."

There is another fascinating story of Rishab, who was also the first Indian musician to deliver a mesmerising 'sitar' performance at the White House on Diwali. This was a deliberate and concentrated performance, as opposed to the usual background music that goes with dinners or get-togethers.

"I complied

with my esteemed guruji's instructions and patiently answered their questions concerning our music and instruments. But I continued to act in a conventional manner, recalling our annual Saraswati Pooja festival. We made a deal after I performed because I had to make things right. My family and I were the only ones who got to meet the President and First Lady, who were thrilled with the performance. The president noted in a letter that he had never heard the sound of a 'sitar' echoing through the White House before the performance. Seeing that letter delighted me," he exclaimed. "The diyas, rangoli, lighting, and decorations were all done beautifully."

In the realm of music and performance, building a relationship with the crowd is just as crucial as the actual performance. "Connecting with over 60,000 people at NGR Stadium in Houston, Texas, might seem daunting, but during my concerts, we engaged in interactive sessions where questions flowed freely," says a musician who genuinely lives this idea. "This fosters a feeling of cohesion and common experience. The audience has a strong sense of kinship, feeling as though we're all a part of something greater. Everyone feels inspired and united both before and after the event because of the incredible atmosphere and energy. This enchanted interaction is what makes giving a performance in front of a big crowd so exceptional."

A mentor's role is frequently crucial in the process of self-discovery and progress. Written by someone who has personally experienced the transformative impact of mentorship and who also shares this universal truth with the younger generation of musicians, this is a testimonial to that fact. "I had the good fortune to have wonderful mentors, and I would advise others to look for outstanding teachers as well. Learning from a mentor you don't respect can be difficult." Thus, the Sitarist concludes, "Find a guru who inspires you, someone you aspire to emulate, and let your potential shine through."

SITAR VIRTUOSO RISHAB RIKHIRAM SHARMA, WHO RECENTLY BEGAN HIS SITAR FOR MENTAL HEALTH TOUR, SPEAKS TO THE PIONEER OVER AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT, SHARING HIS INSPIRATION BEHIND THE TOUR AND ALSO TAKING US ALONG A JOURNEY THROUGH HIS MUSIC.

Silence 2 speaks volumes!

TANISHA SAXENA

Hum sabke andar ek moral compass hota hain. Usko cross karke grey ke andar ghusna (We all have a moral compass within us. Crossing it and entering the grey) is your choice, and you have to pay for that choice eventually," asserts ACP Avinash Verma, portrayed by Manoj Bajpayee, in the concluding scenes of the second season of *Silence*, a gripping whodunit series.

In a typical thriller like this, officers often exude a sense of brooding intensity, accompanied by dramatic music and dimly lit interrogation rooms. Forensic reports and DNA analyses are the bread and butter of investigation, while a cluttered office adorned with a bulletin board filled with suspect photos sets the scene for the hunt.

However, *Silence* flips the script with its unconventional approach. ACP Avinash Verma brings a refreshing energy reminiscent of a seasoned cop, but with a quirky charm that sets him apart. Instead of relying solely on forensics, the film delves into the psychology of its characters, unravelling their hidden motives and intricate connections. And while there may be a board with suspect names, it's not just a static backdrop; it evolves with each revelation, reflecting the dynamic nature of the investigation. *Silence* proves that it's not just about following the typical tropes but about reinventing them in unexpected ways.

Following the harrowing shootout at the Night Owl Bar, which claimed the lives of eight to ten individuals, the unexpected demise of Minister Pradeep Joshi's esteemed PA, Saryu Seth, initially served as the focal point of the investigation. However, this proves to be merely a deliberate misdirection, as the true depth of the case begins to unfold. Subtle hints pepper the narrative, suggesting a more profound revelation awaiting discovery. As the Special Crime Unit investigators delve deeper into the heart of the matter, the intricate pieces of the puzzle gradually align, uncovering not only the usual suspects but also shedding light on sensitive societal issues such as human trafficking, rape, and the alarming trend of young



Director and Writer: Aban Bharucha Deohans
Producer: Kiran Deohans
Cast: Manoj Bajpayee, Sahil Vaid, Prachi Desai, Vaquar Shaikh, Parul Gulati
Streaming on: Zee5
Rating: 3

girls being trafficked into bachelorette parties. It is this nuanced exploration of societal ills that elevates the show beyond its initial premise; what started as a routine murder inquiry evolves into a multi-layered exposé of pervasive social injustices.

Sahil Vaid as Amit Chauhan, Prachi Desai as Inspector Sanjana Bhatia, and Vaquar Shaikh as Inspector Raj Gupta form a formidable team under the leadership of ACP Avinash. While Bajpayee undoubtedly serves as the backbone of both the team and the show, the ensemble cast adds an extra layer of depth to the already compelling narrative. Each member of the team is not merely a supporting player but rather a vital ingredient, enhancing the overall flavor of the series. With well-crafted dialogues and distinct roles, every character brings their own charisma to the table, contributing to the dynamic chemistry and seamless storytelling of the show.

While *Silence 2* undoubtedly boasts compelling storytelling and a talented ensemble cast, it is not without its flaws. One notable weakness lies in its cinematography, which fails to effectively capture the essence of the various locations depicted in the show. Despite featuring Mumbai, Jaipur, and even glimpses of Madhya Pradesh, the lack of

emphasis on these locales leaves viewers feeling disconnected from the environment and geographical setting of the narrative. With only fleeting glimpses of iconic landmarks like Jaipur's Hawa Mahal, the film misses an opportunity to fully immerse its audience in the rich tapestry of its surroundings, creating a noticeable void in the viewing experience.

Despite its shortcomings, the exceptional performances of the cast elevate *Silence 2* to a commendable standard. From Bajpayee's masterful portrayal, blending strength with nuanced emotion and sharp dialogue delivery, to Prachi Desai's portrayal of beauty with brains, the ensemble cast delivers stellar performances. Shruti Bapna's contribution adds another layer of depth to the show, while Sahil Vaid and Vaquar Shaikh captivate with their compelling portrayals. Unlike other whodunit narratives, *Silence 2* deliberately eschews delving into the personal lives of its characters, instead focusing on the intricacies of the whodunit mechanism. The disciplined narrative unfolds with precision over its two-and-a-half-hour runtime, maintaining a structured pattern throughout. A special mention must be made of Parul Gulati's captivating portrayal of Aarti, a troubled character who leaves a lasting impression despite her limited screen time, leaving viewers yearning for more. In essence, *Silence 2* is worth watching.

Redefining men through tailored cosmetic procedures

In recent years, a notable shift has occurred in the realm of cosmetic procedures, challenging traditional stereotypes that once deemed such practices exclusively feminine. Men are increasingly embracing the idea that self-care goes beyond skincare routines, hitting the surgeon's chair with confidence. This surge in male interest prompts a closer look at tailored cosmetic treatments designed to address their unique aesthetic concerns.

One significant factor contributing to this trend is the evolving perception of masculinity. Modern men are breaking free from outdated norms that stigmatised grooming and aesthetic enhancements. In response, the cosmetic industry is witnessing a surge in demand for treatments that cater specifically to men, acknowledging and addressing their distinct features and concerns.

Facial rejuvenation, for instance, has become a popular avenue for men seeking to maintain a youthful appearance. Botox and dermal fillers are now customised to preserve masculine facial structures, enhancing features without compromising the rugged charm often associated with male beauty.

Something customised for men called "the corporate look," seems like another new concept which gives them less angry, less tired, and more youthful skin. This tailored approach ensures a subtle and natural result, avoiding the overdone look that can be a concern for many men.

Hair restoration is another domain witnessing a surge

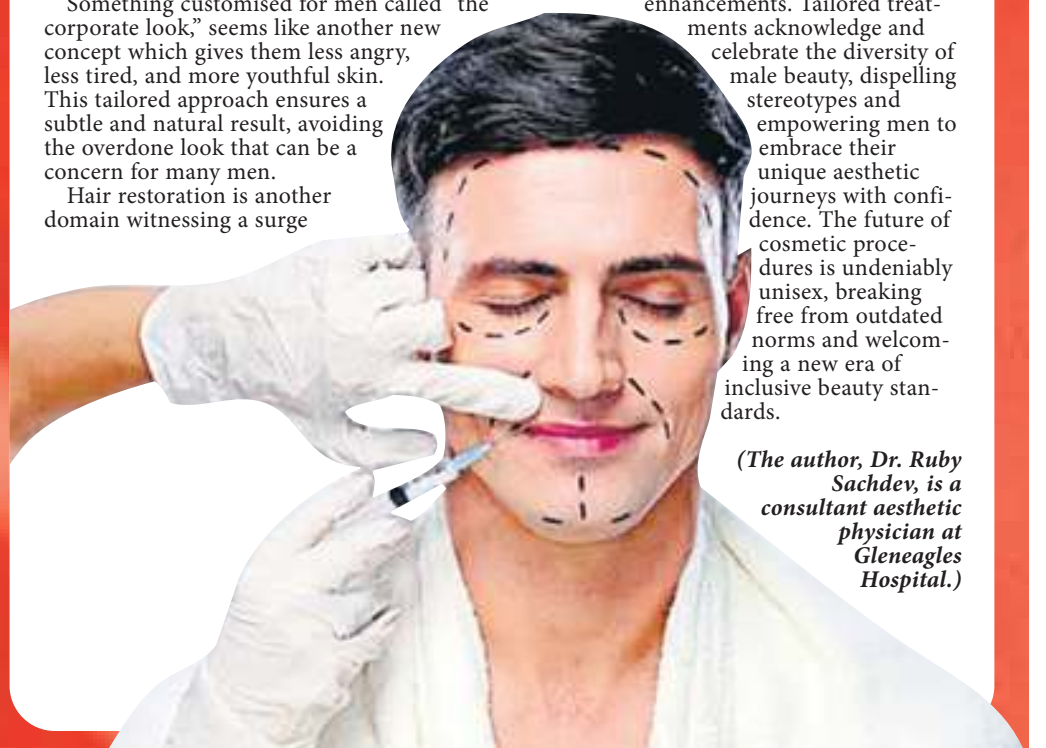
in male interest. With advancements in technology, personalised hair transplant procedures are gaining popularity. These procedures not only address male pattern baldness but also consider factors like facial structure and hairline preferences, providing men with a bespoke solution that aligns with their unique sense of identity.

Body contouring, a realm once dominated by female clientele, is now attracting a growing number of men. Procedures like liposuction and non-invasive fat reduction are tailored to accentuate masculine contours, fostering a more sculpted physique. This shift reflects a broader acknowledgment that body image concerns are not exclusive to any gender.

As the demand for male-centric cosmetic procedures rises, it's crucial to recognise the importance of a holistic approach. Understanding that men have unique aesthetic goals allows practitioners to refine and tailor treatments to meet those specific needs, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and diverse beauty standard.

The rise of cosmetic procedures among men signals a progressive shift in societal attitudes toward self-care and aesthetic enhancements. Tailored treatments acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of male beauty, dispelling stereotypes and empowering men to embrace their unique aesthetic journeys with confidence. The future of cosmetic procedures is undeniably unisex, breaking free from outdated norms and welcoming a new era of inclusive beauty standards.

(The author, Dr. Ruby Sachdev, is a consultant aesthetic physician at Gleneagles Hospital.)



what's brewing?



● Prathima ● Dr Nawab Shaikh Ibrahim ● Kabeer Khan ● Shanoor sana



● Sudha jain ● Gareth Wynn Owen ● Ateeq Siddiqui and S a Huda ● Abdur Rahman ● Dr.sudha vani ● Khaleeq ur Rahman and Samad Mirza ● Ramya

The grand Jashan-e-Eid Milap was graced by the presence of Dr. Nawab Shaikh Ibrahim, NSI Global Council Chairman and Trade Commissioner of India Tunisia Trade Council, along with Kabeer Khan, a Member of NSI Global Council. The event was attended by a massive crowd of politicians, bureaucrats, consulate generals, and Bollywood actresses, among the dignitaries. The aura was filled with formal tones and a sense of prestige as these esteemed individuals came together to celebrate this special occasion with delicious food, including Dum ki Biryani, Apollo fish Sheer Qorma, and a variety of dishes for guests.



On the occasion of its first-year anniversary, Prakruthi Village Online Mart relaunched by Tollywood Actress Himaja along with Jabardasth Comedians, and Ceo Ramprasad at SR Nagar Hyderabad



● Himaja

PARTY

Hearzap celebrated a remarkable achievement—the grand inauguration of its 100th store at Jubilee Hills. The 100th flagship store was unveiled by S.K. Sharma, former CEO of Siemens Hearing Instruments Inc., alongside Hearzap's founder and Managing Director, Raja S.



Photos by- SV Chary



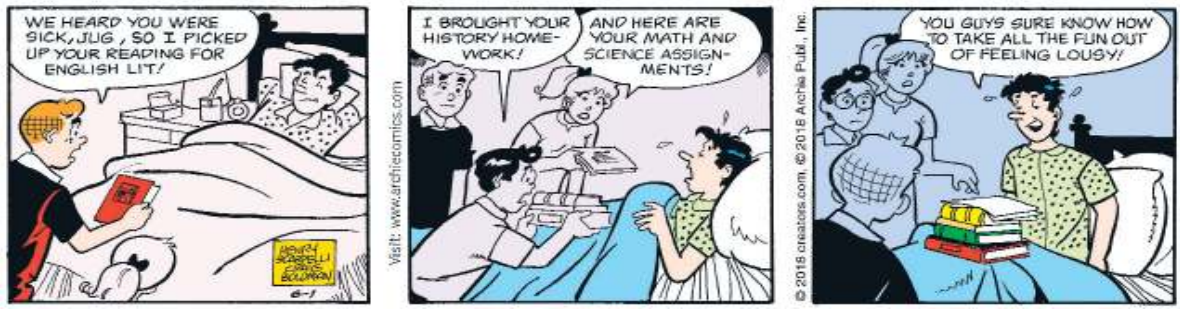
A remarkable moment unfolded at the Radisson Blu, Banjara Hills, as the dynamic duo sisters, Roopali Kiron Yadugiri and Deepshika Yadugiri, celebrated the culmination of their literary dreams with the simultaneous launch of their debut books, Athiti Devo Bhava and Youngblood Athena. The prestigious event saw esteemed guests, including Padma Shri Dr. BVR Mohan Reddy, founder chairman and board member of CYIENT Group, grace the occasion.



Actress Zareen Khan, known for her elegance and style, recently walked the ramp at Pune Fashion Week. The actress turned into designer Archana Kochhar's muse for her collection! The collection featured a blend of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary aesthetics in pastel hues, reflecting Kochhar's signature style that seamlessly merges heritage with modernity.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



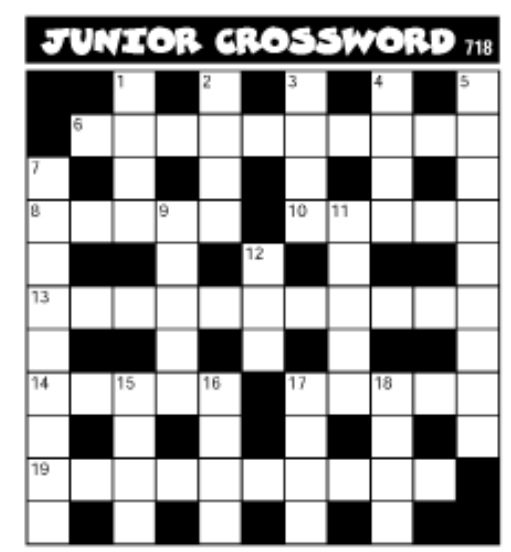
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution
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 8 3 4 5 6 2 9 7 1
 1 5 9 8 7 3 2 4 6
 4 7 5 3 2 1 6 9 8
 9 1 2 6 5 8 4 3 7
 3 6 8 4 9 7 1 5 2
 7 8 3 9 1 6 5 2 4
 5 9 1 2 8 4 7 6 3
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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.

ACROSS
 6 A traffic circle where roads cross
 8 A pointy thing that indicates direction
 10 Snapshot
 13 A greeting (4,7)
 14 Salty water from the eyes
 17 Rubber covers on wheels
 19 Getting better after illness

DOWN
 1 Bitter-tasting
 2 Cold winter crystals
 3 Moist
 4 A song for one singer
 5 The most powerful
 7 Female children

9 A command
 11 Bees make this
 12 A fishing pole
 15 A curved support under a bridge
 16 Rescue
 17 Grow weary
 18 Wear this on a finger

SOLUTION 717
 A L M O S T G R I N
 I G O D U E
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 I S E C O N D S
 G F M M T A
 S L E E P Y S T E W
 A H I T O A
 W I N E Y E A R L Y

GINGER MEGGS



'My character reflects the challenges of nepotism in *Love Guru*'

Actress Minalini Ravi, who is currently seen in the film *Love Guru*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing interesting insights about the character, her preps for the same, and more.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Minalini Ravi is a rising south actress known for her work in Tamil and Telugu cinema. With a background in engineering and a stint in IT sector, Minalini's transition to acting was propelled by her viral TikTok and Dubsmash videos, marking her as a versatile talent in the industry. Making her debut with the acclaimed film *Super Deluxe* in 2019, she has since then garnered attention for her roles in movies like *Gaddalakonda Ganesh*, *Enemy*, and *Cobra*.

Now, the actress, who is seen alongside Vijay Anthony in *Love Guru*, delves into her character, as she shares, "In the movie, I portray the character of Leela, whose journey closely mirrors my own experiences. She embodies the struggles of today's generation, facing opposition from her traditional-minded parents as she pursues her passion for acting. Despite their disapproval, Leela perseveres, working in the IT sector while tirelessly striving to establish herself in the film industry. Her

story reflects the challenges of nepotism, as she navigates through small roles in Chennai and Hyderabad, determined to realise her dream. Each day, she wakes up with unwavering determination to break through barriers and make her mark as an actress."

She further states that unlike conventional movie narratives, where the hero faces obstacles and the heroine provides support, her character takes centre stage, with the hero offering his support and love as she pursues her aspirations. Through Leela's journey, she reveals, "The film sheds light on the resilience and strength of individuals pursuing their dreams against all odds. I had every reason to say yes to this script—it's undoubtedly the finest piece of work I've encountered throughout my entire career."

She reflects on the rigorous training required on set to embody the character of Leela, detailing the challenges encountered in portraying her on-screen. "For a month, I underwent intense training under Kalyani Ma'am, focusing intensely on expressions and eye movements. This character demands subtlety; she speaks little, revealing her emotions through her silent anguish and weariness from constant rejection in the industry. Despite the pain, she harbours a glimmer of hope, persistently chasing her dreams. We honed the art of maintaining a blank face, ensuring that the agony resonated through my eyes."

Throughout the movie, I portray a rigid, aloof, and occasionally abrasive demeanour, a challenge that required nuanced variations to prevent monotony while conveying her persistent frustration and bitterness."

She further shares, "It's crucial not to risk losing the audience's interest while ensuring that my character remains relatable. Despite her struggles, she mustn't disregard the support from her husband, Aravind or alienate viewers from empathising with her journey. Although the hero's unwavering love poses a challenge, the aim is for viewers to feel a sense of sympathy and root for her, rather than resent her for her aloofness this was the chal-

lenging part of the role. So, to justify the character of Leela was a difficult task."

In reflecting on her experience working with her co-stars, the actress expresses genuine joy, particularly highlighting Vijay Anthony's remarkable support and flexibility in allowing her to flourish on screen. She expresses, "Vijay Anthony sir, in particular, was incredibly supportive and allowed me the space to shine in the movie. His willingness to take on the role of Aravind, which required him to display vulnerability and self-deprecation, was commendable, especially in a film centred around women's issues and aspirations. His involvement as both actor and producer further exemplified his commitment to the project. Together, we formed a close-knit family on set, and everyone's dedication to their roles made the experience truly unforgettable."

On the working front, she has a web series titled *Pre Love*, which delves into the tumultuous journey of a teenage girl transitioning into her early twenties. With the entire series centred around her character, it's an exhilarating yet intense role that she is very much thrilled to undertake. "We've already completed shooting for 20 days, with another 60 days ahead of us. Unlike *Romeo*, which explores old-school love in a refreshing manner, *Pre Love* tackles a hard-hitting and controversial subject, offering a completely new genre for audiences. Embracing such challenging roles has become a personal addiction for me; I'm drawn to characters where I can truly showcase my acting prowess and evoke a sense of pride."

The love and respect garnered from portraying such roles hold a different significance, driving me to pursue projects that offer depth and substance over glamorous or peripheral roles. I'm not inclined towards being part of big-budget films where I play secondary characters; instead, I prioritise roles that allow me to make a meaningful impact and push the boundaries of my craft," she signs off saying.



Director Shankar's daughter, Aishwarya marries Tarun Karthikeyan

The oldest daughter of renowned filmmaker Shankar Shanmugam got married to Tarun Karthikeyan in February 2024. The pair is currently in the news once more after being married in front of their loved ones!

The private wedding photos have been making the rounds on social media, and as of right now, the place and time of

the ceremony are unknown. Celebrities like CM Stalin, Kamal Haasan, Chiyaan Vikram, Atlee, Suriya, Karthi, Vignesh Shivan, Nayanthara, Maniratnam, Suhasingi, and others did, however, attend the event. These images are currently becoming viral on social media. Regarding his career, Shankar has two upcoming films that are slated for wide release in theaters: *Indian 2* and *Game Changer*.

Raghava Lawrence aiming for two films

In the minds of the Telugu audience, Raghava Lawrence has always been associated with horror-comedies, but he is soon to explore other genres. His effort at a chick flick action drama about a mobster with a social message proved well in Tamil last year, but not in Telugu. *Jigarthanda DoubleX* is the topic of discussion. He's aiming for two projects this year. The first is *Hunter*, which is written and directed by co-director AR Murugadoss Venkat Mohan. Devi Sri Prasad will write the soundtrack for it. Its tagline is *The Battle For the Sou*. It's said that this one is an action adventure. *Benz*, created under Lokesh Kanagaraj's G Squad banner, is the second. Director of *Roemo* and *Sulthan*, Bakkiyaraj Kannan, is behind the thriller. According to the announcement poster, "A warrior with a cause is the most dangerous soldier."



MAJOR UPDATES ON TEJA'S NEXT WILL BE UNVEILED ON APRIL 18

Following *Hanu-Mani*'s phenomenal box office success, many speculated that Teja Sajja, a young actor, would feature in the film *Jai Hanuman* as the following actor. However, he has a film with acclaimed filmmaker Karthik Ghattamaneni, who helmed Ravi Teja's *Eagle*, before he heads to the sequel's sets. People Media Factory has stated today that the first look poster and title of the action-packed film (*PMF 36*) would be unveiled on April 18, 2024. The movie is called *Mirai*, which translates to "The Future," according to the sources. In an effort to build anticipation for the movie, the actor's pre-look poster was removed. Manchu Manoj portrays the antagonist in the film, while Ritika Singh plays the key female character. However, Dulquer Salmaan does not have a major part in this TG Vishwa Prasad-produced film.



Aa Okkati Adakku in cinemas on May 3

The renowned Telugu actor Allari Naresh, under the direction of Malli Ankan, is about to debut his next romantic comedy, *Aa Okkati Adakku*. The main characters and an amusing plot were introduced in the film's teaser, which was released on March 12. Now, the makers have released the release date of the film, which is on May 3!

In *Aa Okkati Adakku*, Naresh portrays Gana, a man who discovers via a priest's prophecy that he must be married within the next twenty-five days to prevent living a life of singledom. While his family frantically searches for him to match with someone suitable, Gana finds himself falling in love with a vibrant woman, played by Faria Abdullah. However, she is reluctant to get married, which puts Gana in a difficult situation.

The picture appears to provide a beautiful fusion of humour and romance, maintaining viewers' interest throughout. Along with comedian Jamie Lever, who is making her Telugu debut, the ensemble cast includes Faria Abdullah as the female lead. Prominent performers such as Ariyana Glory, Viva Harsha, and Vennela Kishore are also featured in important parts in the movie.



Rama Ayodhya to premiere on Sri Ram Navami

A documentary film titled *Rama Ayodhya* shot in Ayodhya on the 16 virtues of Lord Rama is going to be released in Telugu OTT Aha on this Sri Rama Navami. National Film Award winner - Satyakashi Bhargava has written the story for this film and directed by Krishna. On this occasion, the author Satyakashi Bhargava said that in *Rama Ayodhya*, he was telling the important qualities of Lord Ram, showing many important places in Ayodhya and telling their special features. "I hope all Telugu people will like it." Director Krishna said that Ayodhya is



not only Ram Mandir, but there are many holy places and shrines. They have shown them all very well in our film. Moreover, he said that how they can practice the qualities of Lord Ram in the present time, they have made it simple so that everyone can understand it.

Vishal's Raththam trailer out now

Vishal collaborated with filmmaker Hari on the movie *Raththam*, which will be his next big-screen appearance. With *Raththam* Vishal and Hari reunite for the third time following their phenomenal hits, *Thamirabarani* and *Poojai*. With less than two weeks until the movie's premiere, the makers of the movie have finally released the trailer. The film is scheduled to hit theaters on April 26. The movie's theatrical trailer was unveiled by the producers, who are getting closer to the release date. A Hari movie would be expected to include a lot of action, and the trailer has plenty of it. Even though the plot hasn't been fully disclosed, it's obvious that the main focus of the movie is keeping the female lead, Priya, safe from the antagonist and his group. Important parts are played by Samuthirakani, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Vijay Kumar, Jaya Prakash, Yogi Babu, and others. Devi Sri Prasad composed the soundtrack for *Raththam*, which was produced by Kaarthikayan Santhanam and Zee Studios under the auspices of Stonebench Films and Zee Studios.



TEPPA SAMUDRAM PRE-RELEASE EVENT HELD

Bigg Boss fame Arjun Ambati as the hero, Kishori Dattak as the heroine Ravi Shankar, and Chaitanya Rao in the lead roles of the film *Teppa Samudram*. The film is directed by Satish Rapolu, produced by Neerukanti Manjula Raghavendra Goud under the banner of Srimani Entertainments, and presented by Baby Vaishnavi. For this film, P.R. is the music director. The film is going to hit screens on April 19 after completing its shooting. As part of the promotion of the film, the trailer launch and pre-release event were organised by the film unit.



RR BRACE FOR NARINE SPIN TREAT AS KKR EYE TOP SPOT

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Rajasthan Royals' star-studded batting will face the serious challenge of decoding Sunil Narine's mystery at Eden Gardens when they take on two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders in a top-of-the-table IPL clash here on Tuesday.

Narine, who is one month shy of turning 36, had played a pivotal role in KKR's twin triumphs under former skipper Gautam Gambhir in 2012 and 2014.

Ever since joining the side way back in 2012, Narine has sizzled at Eden Gardens with his crafty bowling, proving to be a big threat to opposition batters.

Now after reuniting with Gambhir, who returned to the team as their mentor, Narine dished out an allround show, reigniting their title hopes again and a win against RR will hand them the pole position in the 10-team standings ahead of the halfway stage of the season.

His 1/19 against the Sunrisers Hyderabad or 1/17 against Lucknow Super Giants may have

failed to grab attention but those eight overs where he did not concede a single boundary made all the difference in the end for KKR.

Phil Salt may have walked away with the player-of-the-match award in their solid eight-wicket win over LSG here on Sunday, but it was Narine, who choked LSG in the middle overs to limit them to a below-par 161 for 7.

Come Tuesday, the likes of Sanju Samson, Riyan Parag and Shimron Hetmyer -- who all have struck at the rate of more than 155 this season -- will be up against the Narine challenge.

It remains to be seen if Jos Buttler is fit to be included in the playing XI after missing their last fixture against Punjab Kings.

With his ability to express himself at the top, Narine, who has a strike-rate of 183.51 and averages 33-plus this season, has a Rashid Khan-like aura at KKR.

Their IPL record buy Mitchell Starc has also shut all the noise to return to his elements, claiming two wickets in the last over for his



3/28 against LSG.

In such a scenario, the top-of-the-table contest may well boil down to KKR's bowling versus RR's batting.

KKR's only weaklink could be their skipper Shreyas Iyer's poor form with the bat.

Even though he remained unbeaten on a run-a-ball 38 in their 162-run chase against LSG, Shreyas looked tentative both against the pacers and spinners and KKR's batting may well get exposed if RR manage to give early breakthroughs.

KKR's batting has largely depended this season on Salt-Narine's fireworks at the top and Andre Russell's blitz at the death, as their Indian batters have not been tested much.

Rituraj Gaikwad had batted so well along with Shivam Dube. I do believe that they should have been restricted to 185-190," Gavaskar said.

"Probably the worst kind of bowling that I've seen for a long, long time," Gavaskar said on Star Sports during the innings break after CSK posted 206 for 4.

"It almost looks like I've had this embrace with my hero. I've got the kind of deliveries that he's gonna hit for sixes. One six is fine. The next one is a length ball when you know this batter is hunting for a length ball that he wants to hit.

RR have a formidable bowling lineup in Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Yuzvendra Chahal and Keshav

Maharaj, while it remains to be seen if Ravichandran Ashwin is fit for the match.

TEAMS (FROM):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain and Mujeeb Ur Rahman.

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj.



CSK have a man behind stumps telling them what is working: Pandya pats Dhoni

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya could not hide his appreciation for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's tactical acumen following his team's 20-run loss to Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium here on Sunday.

While Dhoni's barrage of three sixes and a hurriedly-completed two runs off the fourth and last delivery was something that gave CSK the winning cushion, it was the former India skipper's reading of the game from behind the stumps that Pandya felt made the difference on a belter of a track.

"They (CSK) were smart with their plans and used the longer boundary well. They got the hang of it and they have a man behind the stumps telling them what's working," said Pandya after his side failed to chase 206 despite Rohit Sharma smashing his second IPL

century and batting from start to finish.

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad gave Dhoni a huge compliment, saying his power-hitting with just four balls remaining made the difference between victory and defeat.

Dhoni, 42, scored 20 off four deliveries, which in the end made the difference to the match's outcome.

"Our young wicketkeeper (MSD) scoring three sixes down the order helped a lot and I think that was the difference. To start off, on this kind of ground, you need 10-15 extra runs. We were looking at 215-220, but Bumrah bowled well," said Gaikwad, who took over the captaincy duties from Dhoni this season.

"Bowling-wise, we were spot-on with our execution. Even in powerplay, I would have taken six overs for 60. These kinds of venues demand both skills: batting and bowling. Our (Lasith) Malinga (Matheesha Pathirana)

bowled exceptionally well and nailed those yorkers," he said.

On why he did not open the innings and instead sent Ajinkya Rahane with Rachin Ravindra, Gaikwad said, "Nothing, Jinks (Rahane) was carrying a bit of a niggle. Thought it was better for him to open and get away quick runs. I'm fine batting anywhere."

Player of the Match, Pathirana, who grabbed his best IPL figures of 4/28, said he was a bit nervous as he was coming back into the side after recovering from a niggle.

"When we bowled in powerplay, I was nervous. I don't think about results and I just think about execution. First of all, I was having a niggle before two weeks and all support staff and players helped me.

"That's the main thing to have my form," said the Sri Lankan, who has modelled his action on the lines of the legendary Malinga.

Absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy: Gavaskar slams Hardik

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya faced scathing criticism from prominent former players after Mumbai Indians' fourth loss in the ongoing IPL with the great Sunil Gavaskar slamming him for his "absolutely ordinary bowling and ordinary captaincy" so far.

Booed and heckled by fans ever since he took over MI's captaincy, Pandya found himself in the line of fire of the legendary Gavaskar and former England captain Kevin Pietersen after his team slumped to yet another defeat, this time to Chennai Super Kings, here on Sunday night.

It was the 26 runs that Pandya conceded in the final over as Mahendra Singh Dhoni going hammer and tongs,

which proved to be decisive as Chennai Super Kings notched up a 20-run win over MI.

"Oh, absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy. They should have been restricted despite the fact that Ruturaj Gaikwad had batted so well along with Shivam Dube. I do believe that they should have been restricted to 185-190," Gavaskar said.

"Probably the worst kind of bowling that I've seen for a long, long time," Gavaskar said on Star Sports during the innings break after CSK posted 206 for 4.

"It almost looks like I've had this embrace with my hero. I've got the kind of deliveries that he's gonna hit for sixes. One six is fine. The next one is a length ball when you know this batter is hunting for a length ball that he wants to hit.



"Third ball is again a full toss on the legs when you know he (Dhoni) is looking for a six," Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his four overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture of the game as MI ended at 186 for six despite a fine 63-ball 105 by

former skipper Rohit Sharma. Pandya has faced fans' ire right from the first match and even at the Wankhede Stadium, boos have followed him, forcing Rohit (against Rajasthan Royals) and Virat Kohli (in MI's game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru) to ask the crowd to calm down a bit.

Pietersen feels the outside noise is taking a toll on the flamboyant all-rounder.

"I actually think, with Hardik Pandya, everything away from the game is affecting him so much. He's smiling too much when he does the toss. He's trying to act like he is so happy. He is not happy. I have been there. I have been in the firing line. And I can tell you now, it affects you.

"The boos we have been hearing just now and I know they are happy to see former CSK captain (Dhoni), the lion, smacking him (Hardik) all over the park, it hurts you. Because he has emotions. And he is an Indian player and he doesn't want to be treated like this. So when this is happening, it's affecting him, it's affecting his cricket and something needs to happen."

Pollard defends Pandya, says sick & fed up of people pinpointing individuals for team losses

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard is "sick and fed up" of people pinpointing particular individuals for the team's losses as he urged fans not to "nitpick" struggling captain Hardik Pandya after MI lost to Chennai Super Kings by 20 runs in their Indian Premier League match here.

CSK legend MS Dhoni took 26 runs off Pandya's final over with the help of three consecutive sixes as the MI skipper struggled for right line and length while also bowling two wides at a crucial time.

Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his three overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture of the game.

"You're going to have those days. I'm sick and fed up of just looking to pinpoint at individuals. Cricket is a team sport at the end of the day," Pollard said at the post-match press conference Sunday night.

"He (Pandya) is a confident guy. He has been great around the group. In cricket, you have good days and you have bad days. I'm seeing an individual who's working bloody hard to continue his skill and to ply his trade."

Pollard reminded fans about the possibility of Pandya being picked for India's T20 World Cup campaign, saying if that happens everyone would be singing his praises.

"This is an individual that's going to represent the country in less than six weeks' time. We're all going to be cheering for him and want him to do well," said



the West Indian who himself is a MI legend. "It's about high time that we try to encourage and try to stop nitpick. See if we can get the best out of one of the great all-rounders India could ever produce.

"He can bat, he can bowl, he can field. He has an X factor about him. I hope very well deep

down within my heart that when he comes out on top, I'll sit back and I'll watch everyone sing his praises."

The match witnessed intermittent booing of Pandya who struggled with both bat and ball and also received criticism from former England captain Kevin Pietersen who claimed that the

MI skipper has been 'smiling too much'. Pollard said he is seeing Pandya evolving and backed him to turn things around.

"As an individual, you have to evolve as well. When you're young and there's that youthful exuberance, you go out and you do things in a certain manner. But the older that you get, at times, responsibility sort of kicks in, accountability to teams sort of kicks in," he said.

"What I'm seeing is a guy that is evolving. Obviously, we as individuals, we want to see certain things, but sometimes the game does not demand certain things," Pollard said while Mumbai Indians would revisit their plans on Dhoni but added that anyone could have been at the receiving end of the former CSK skipper's onslaught, like Pandya experienced Sunday night.

Cricket brings happiness for Afghan public but cannot help if Australia refuses to play us: Rashid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"You can't do anything about it," Rashid Khan conceded as he tried to make sense of Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with Afghanistan men's team, which he believes, achieves nothing beyond denying happiness to his people.

Cricket Australia cancelled an ODI series Down Under in 2023 and as recent as last month, refused to play a T20 series scheduled in the UAE later this year due to its government's concerns over "marked deterioration" of treatment of women in the Taliban-ruled state.

But Afghan players, including Rashid, continue to be welcome in the Big Bash League.

"I want, all the players want, to play cricket because that is the only source of happiness for people back home in Afghanistan and if you take that away, there is nothing that people could celebrate or enjoy," Rashid told PTI during an exclusive interview on Monday.

In 2023, Rashid had threatened to pull out of the Big Bash League over Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with them. The 25-year-old

has many Australian friends but he hasn't actually spoken to any of them about the issue.

"Well, I have never discussed it with anybody (Australian cricketers) as I haven't had that opportunity to discuss all those things with them, something which is not in your hands or you have no control over, you can't do anything about it.

"It's not a cricketering reason or matter that you think about it, it is about two governments and as a player you can't do anything about it. What we can do is whenever we get an opportunity to play cricket, we go with full pride while representing our country."

Having played over 400 T20 games and being the most sought after freelancer in the T20 universe, Rashid feels privileged about being the face of Afghanistan cricket.

"Before 2017, we never thought about playing the IPL. It was hard (far-fetched) thought for us to even think of playing in the biggest T20 league in the world.

"The hardest part is to get into the system and when I (first) got the opportunity, I knew okay, I got that opportunity now I have to do the



best where it helps me promote my cricket and also help my country where youngsters can get inspired to get into cricket more and more," the eloquent Pathan said.

Apart from Rashid, Noor Ahmed and Azmatullah Omrzi are playing for Gujarat Titans in the ongoing IPL. Mohammed Nabi is representing Mumbai Indians and

Rahmanullah Gurbaz is part of the KKR squad.

"Back in 2017, it was only me and (Mohd) Nabi, who were there and now we have 7-8 players who are

with different franchises, and it is so good to see them not just being a part of the team but also performing," he said.

"At the end of the day, it is helping Afghanistan cricket and youngsters back home. So I am quite happy, and blessed to be one of those who brought about this change in mindset of people about cricket in Afghanistan."

DIFFICULT TO HIT RHYTHM IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY: Rashid had undergone a major back surgery last year, which didn't allow him to play the India series in January. It was a hard time but now he feels he is back in rhythm.

"For me, those three to four months were hard but I tried to make sure that I am relaxed and when I get back on field, I am fully ready and prepared for it," the champion spinner said.

"The main focus for first four months was on getting back on track, it is hard when you are not playing but these are things which are attached to your career, and it is important as a player that you take (accept) that process, you make sure that you look after your-

self.

"I made sure that I spent time with my family and looked after my body."

MISSING SHAMI BUT HAPPY WITH GT BOWLING UNIT: Gujarat Titans have had a bumpy ride with three wins and an equal number of defeats in the season thus far. While the absence of a game-changer like Mohammed Shami is being felt massively, Rashid stood by the bowling unit.

"Shami played a main role for us in last two seasons, both with new ball and old ball, and the way he has delivered for the team actually made mine and others job easier, especially in the middle overs," he had no hesitation in admitting.

"We have started the season with a positive mindset and everyone is taking responsibility and delivering best for team but sometimes result doesn't go your way but we are quite happy with bowling unit.

"T20 is all about making right decisions at the right time. Spencer Johnson, Darshan Nalkande, Azmat, Umesh have all delivered and most importantly, Mohit (Sharma) bhai as well."

