

What relation does PM Modi have with EVMs? Why is the BJP afraid of using ballot papers for the elections? Elections around the world are being conducted through ballot papers; only India is using EVMs. We and the people have lost faith in EVMs, only the BJP has faith in them and that is not enough."



- A Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

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'Modi govt will eliminate Naxals in very short time'

BEING A 'MARHAM' FOR THOSE IN NEED

Samyuktha launches ADISHAKTI

DON'T MISS...

Minister Surekha throws light...

Minister of Forest, Environment and Endowments Konda Surekha on Wednesday said that the history of Mahojwala, which flourished as an Asmaka State even before Christ belongs to the Telangana region. On the occasion of 'World Heritage Day' organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) with the theme of 'Discover and Experience Diversity', the Minister commemorated the glory of Telangana State with famous historical...

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Study links being online to...

Spending too much time online to the point of giving up necessary activities, such as eating, sleeping and exercising, is linked to heightening the risk of school absence among teens, new research conducted in Finland has found. Girls are more vulnerable to using excessive internet than boys, possibly because they tend to use social media more than boys, researchers said. However, more boys were found to report truancy or absence from...

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Women participation...

Women's participation in technology roles in non-tech businesses is expected to grow by nearly a quarter by 2027 across all levels, including freshers, junior, mid-senior, leadership, and C-Suite levels, a report said on Wednesday. The tech women's participation rate in non-tech industries stood at 19.4 lakh workforce in 2023, which is expected to grow by 24.3 per cent to 24.1 lakh employees by 2027, TeamLease Digital's report - Women...

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Punjab Kings, Mumbai...

Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians will be desperate to resurrect their faltering campaigns in the Indian Premier League when the two bottom-rung teams face-off here on Thursday. Only a few decimal points separate the two teams after six matches each with Punjab's marginally better Net Run Rate of -0.218 keeping them at the seventh spot in the IPL points table, one above Mumbai Indians (-0.234). Both Punjab and Mumbai have lost four matches each and...

-SPORTS

Heatwave to continue in TG

Highest mercury recorded at 44.7°C

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Meteorological Department-Hyderabad (IMD-H) on Wednesday predicted that the heat wave in Telangana is likely to continue till April 20. Among districts, Bhadrachalam recorded the highest temperature of 44.7 degrees Celsius. As per the IMD-H report, on April 17 parts of Telangana experienced light to moderate rains, on April 18 a heatwave is likely to prevail in districts including parts of Mancherial, Peddapalli, Jayashankar/Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Bhadrachalam and...

Continued on Page 2

GRAND CELEBRATION OF CELESTIAL WEDDING



Priests displaying the mangal sutram used to perform the celestial wedding of Lord Rama and Sita at Bhadrachalam on Wednesday

Notification for LS polls in Telangana today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The gazette notification for election to the 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana would be issued on April 18, setting the stage for a keen electoral battle among the ruling Congress, BJP and BRS.

Nominations will be accepted from April 18 to 25. The papers would be scrutinized on April 26 and the last date for the withdrawal of nominations is April

29, as per the schedule announced by the Election Commission. Polling for the 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in Telangana would be held in single phase on May 13. Congress, fresh from its win in the 2023 Assembly polls, is keen to repeat the good show, while BRS that ruled the state for 10 years and now suffering defections, is striving hard to reverse its fortunes.

Rahul will be PM for 20 years: CM

- Revanth says Modi comes to south India only for votes
- Asserts that people have lost faith in EVMs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has asserted that AICC leader Rahul Gandhi is going to be the Prime Minister of the country for 20 years. He said, "For the last 10 years, the Prime Minister has been from Varanasi and for the coming 20 years, the Prime Minister will be from Wayanad. Wayanad is not voting for MP, but for PM".

Revanth said, "Rahul Gandhi has done 4,000-km Padayatra from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and from Manipur to Mumbai he did bus yatra. Whenever people were in difficulties, he was always there to help during the past 20 years. Who else will be Prime Minister? Rahul Gandhi is going to be the Prime Minister." Referring to concerns over the use of electronic voting machines which could reportedly be hacked or otherwise misused for polls, Revanth Reddy said, "Everyone has the same doubt, even when the BJP leaders meet us in Central Hall, they say 'To date, PM Modi and EVMs are there; you (Congress) won't be coming to power'. What relation does PM Modi have with EVMs? Why is the BJP afraid of using ballot papers for the election? Elections around the world are being conducted through ballot papers; only India is using EVMs."



Revanth focuses on North-South divide

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has been raising questions concerning the perceived North-South divide, while highlighting the bias towards south India. Throughout his campaign of late, the TPCC chief's refrain has been that there is hardly any representation for south Indians in the Cabinet. "From Prime Minister to portfolios like Defence Minister and Home Minister, all have been occupied by people from North including Vice-President, Lok Sabha Speaker, and Rajya Sabha

deputy chairperson. Are we in the south not part of this nation?" He recently asked during a debate. He asked on Wednesday in Kerala: "Can't south Indians be Home Ministers?". In terms of the Lok Sabha seats, the south's tally is 132 out of a total of 543. Tamil Nadu leads the roost with 39 seats, followed by Karnataka with 28, Andhra Pradesh with 25, Kerala with 20, and Telangana with 17. Evidently, whoever wins the North will rule India.

BJP will not cross 150 seats: Rahul



MEDIGADDA BARRAGE

Contractor offers to build cofferdam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The contracting agency of Medigadda barrage, where three pillars had collapsed, has come forward to build a cofferdam at the spot at its own cost.

L&T Company is reportedly going to construct the cofferdam on the site of the three pillars near the 7th block of the Medigadda barrage. The construction company has reportedly come forward to bear the entire repair costs.

Currently, it is known that L&T Company will construct the cofferdam near pillars 19, 20 and 21 of the 7th block.

Earlier, L&T had said that the gov-



ernment should bear the cost of renovation of the Medigadda barrage and construction of the cofferdam. The company had maintained that the barrage was built according to the design 'given by the government'. However, it is known that the then govern-

ment made it clear that the construction company should undertake the restoration work of the Medigadda barrage.

Apparently, L&T Company has climbed down from its position to take up the restoration work. The government had stopped the pending bills of L&T earlier.

The cofferdam, which will be built mainly with sand, would help the engineers to complete repairs to the damaged pillars and also help store and pump the water that otherwise goes into the sea.

L&T Company is reportedly going to construct the cofferdam on the site of the three pillars near the 7th block of the Medigadda barrage.

'I'll be Home Minister if Cong wins Bhongir'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy said that he will become the home minister in the next Cabinet expansion.

On Wednesday, as part of the election campaign, he toured Nakirekal constituency. Speaking on the occasion, he said that people strongly want him to become the home minister. He made the sensational remarks that if he was the

home minister, he would send the BRS leaders to jail first, in particular, Suryapet MLA Jagadish Reddy. He said that if Bhuvanagiri Parliamentary Congress candidate Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy wins with a huge majority, he will become the home minister. He said that the Congress is going to get majority seats in the State.

KTR does not fight shy of Hindutva!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the face of it, Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president K T Rama Rao does not fight shy of adopting soft Hindutva line or symbols.

In a clean break from the past, on Wednesday KTR took part in the Sri Rama Navami celebrations in the oldest Seetharama Swamy temple in Kukatpally. He offered prayers to the presiding deities in the shrine, noticeably along with party MLAs and MLCs.

Last week KTR had participated in Ugadi celebrations at Telangana



BRS leader KTR taking part in the Sri Rama Navami celebrations in the oldest Seetharama Swamy temple in Kukatpally on Wednesday

Bhavan, where he sat through the 'Panchagam sravanam', listening to astrological predictions made by a pandit for the year ahead.

Recently, KTR, when asked about his belief system, countered: "Did I ever say I am an atheist?"

Continued on Page 2

Ram Lalla honoured with 'Surya Tilak' on Ram Navmi'

PNS ■ AYODHYA

A beam of sunlight fell directly on Ram Lalla's idol at the new temple here on noon Wednesday, marking the "Surya Tilak" of the idol on the first Ram Navami since its consecration.

Devotees began queuing up at the Ram temple here before the break of dawn, district officials said. The local administration and the temple authorities had made special arrangements to handle the crowds on Ram Navami.

As the "Surya Tilak" of the deity took place, devotees outside in the sanctum sanctorum hailed the event by chanting "Jai Shri Ram". Inside, priests conducted an "aarti".

The "Surya Tilak" was made possible by an elaborate apparatus involving mirrors and lenses that directed sun rays into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, and onto



the deity's forehead. The Ram idol was consecrated in a ceremony led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22. In the middle of his Lok Sabha election campaign, Modi watched the event on his computer tablet. "After my Nalbari (Assam) rally,

I watched the Surya Tilak on Ram Lalla. Like crores of Indians, this is a very emotional moment for me. The grand Ram Navami in Ayodhya is historic. May this Surya Tilak bring energy to our lives and may it inspire our

As the "Surya Tilak" of the deity took place, devotees outside in the sanctum sanctorum hailed the event by chanting "Jai Shri Ram". Inside, priests conducted an "aarti".

nation to scale new heights and glory," he wrote on X. He also shared pictures of him watching the 'Surya Tilak'. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also shared a video of the

10 killed as cars rams into truck on Expressway



10 killed as cars rams into truck on Expressway

P5

1ST PHASE OF LS POLLS

Campaigning ends for in 102 seats



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Campaigning ended Wednesday evening for 102 Lok Sabha seats across 21 states and Union territories which will go to polls in the first phase on April 19 with top leaders of the BJP-led NDA and the opposition INDIA bloc making a last-gasp effort to woo voters.

Leading the charge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took whirlwind tours of various constituencies in the past few days, addressing rallies and holding roadshows, and asserting that he went to people with hope in 2014, trust in 2019 and guarantee in 2024. Many times he said there is "Modi's guarantee across the country and I am giving the guarantee of fulfilling all these guarantees".

Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and several of their cabinet colleagues, leaders of the Congress such as Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, and other parties also canvassed for their candidates. The BJP has come out all guns blazing at the INDIA bloc over corruption, dynasty politics and insulting the Constitution and Hinduism.

2



BJP will not cross 150 seats: Rahul

Says PM Modi is 'champion of corruption'

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday launched a blistering attack on the BJP, with Gandhi dubbing electoral bonds as the "world's biggest extortion scheme" and alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the "champion of corruption".

Addressing a joint press conference with Yadav here just two days before the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi also said there is a strong undercurrent in favour of the opposition INDIA bloc and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would not cross 150 seats in the polls.

Samajwadi Party chief Yadav asserted that "winds of change" are blowing from western Uttar Pradesh and there will be an INDIA bloc "clean sweep" from Ghaziabad to Ghazipur.

He also slammed the BJP over the issue of corruption,

saying "their balloon of morality has burst" and the electoral bonds issue has exposed them.

Asserting that this election is an ideological one, Gandhi said on one hand, there is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the BJP which are trying to end the Constitution and the democratic system of the country, and on the other, is the INDIA bloc that is protecting and defending the Constitution and the democratic system.

There are a few big issues in the polls such as unemploy-

ment and price rise but the BJP is engaged in diverting attention from them, said Gandhi, who was flanked by Yadav, Congress general secretaries Jairam Ramesh and Avinash Pande, Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajai Rai, and other Congress and SP leaders at the presser. "Sometimes the prime minister goes underwater in the ocean and sometimes he is on a seaplane but he does not talk about issues," he alleged.

Referring to a recent interview of Modi, Gandhi said it



was "scripted" and a "flop show" with the prime minister also giving an explanation on electoral bonds.

Will repeal NRC, CAA if INDIA bloc voted to power: Mamata

PNS ■ SILCHAR

Alleging that the BJP has made the entire country a "detention camp", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the CAA and NRC will be scrapped if

the opposition INDIA bloc forms government at the Centre. Addressing an election rally here in support of four TMC candidates in Assam, she alleged that there will be no democracy and elections if Prime Minister Narendra Modi returns to power for the

third consecutive term. "They (BJP) made the entire country a detention camp. This election is very dangerous. I have never seen such a dangerous election in my life," Banerjee said. She claimed that her Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa



Sarma filed a number of police cases while she was agitating in West Bengal supporting Bengali people in the two states.

'Came with hope in 2014, trust in 2019, and guarantee in 2024'

PNS ■ NALBARI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asserted that he went to people with hope in 2014, trust in 2019 and guarantee in 2024.

Addressing an election rally at Borkura ground here, the Prime Minister said there is "Modi's guarantee across the country and I am giving the guarantee of fulfilling all these guarantees".

"The North East is a witness to Modi's guarantee as the Congress had only given problems to the region but the BJP has made it a source of possibilities," the Prime Minister said.

"Congress fuelled insurgency but Modi embraced people and brought peace in the region. What could not be achieved in 60 years of Congress rule, Modi achieved it in ten years", he added.

He said that birth celebrations of Lord Ram are being held in Ayodhya after 500



years with a 'Surya Tilak' ceremony.

"We cannot join the celebrations in Ayodhya, but let us participate in the event by switching on our mobile flashlights and sending light and prayers to Lord Ram", he said.

"A new atmosphere is prevailing in the entire country as we celebrate the birth celebrations of Lord Ram in his own temple after 500 years and this is a culmination of centuries of devotion and generations of sacrifice", he added.

The Prime Minister said free ration will continue to be provided to all without discrimination for the next five years.

Free treatment of up to Rs five lakh under Ayushman Bharat for people aged 70 and above will be also given so that it doesn't become a burden for the family but "this son of yours (Modi) will take care of your medical costs".

During the next five years, three crore new houses will also be constructed for the poor, he said.

FORMER BRS MLA'S REMARK

Allegations are baseless, says CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy on Wednesday said that the allegations made by former Bharat Rashtira Samithi MLA Shakeel Amir regarding Jubilee Hills accident case involving his son Raheel are baseless. Reddy stressed that those involved in the crime will receive strict punishment.

The Commissioner's statement comes after Shakeel released a video in which he said, "Police are interrogating my son like a terrorist and threatening him with an encounter. The whole system is acting out of political enmity to implicate my son in the case. After Raheel was granted bail in the Praja Bhavan

accident case, Police are now trying to implicate him in a two-year-old accident case from Jubilee Hills."

Reddy said that the investigation is going on and there is no political or communal angle being used in it. The Commissioner stressed that strict legal action will be initiated against those trying to distort the investigation.

In March 2022, Raheel was involved in an accident at Jubilee Hills, Road Number 45. The accused rammed into four women leading to the death of a 2.5 month-old baby. At the time of the accident, four persons were present in the car. However, Raheel allegedly manipulated the case by sending one of the passengers to surrender.

Revanth...

Continued from page 1

Revanth amplified: "Telangana and AP have 42 MPs, we have got only one Cabinet Minister - Kishan Reddy.

Gujarat has 26MPs and they have seven cabinet ministers. In UP, they have 62 MPs and 12 are cabinet ministers."

Revanth Reddy said, "South India is in India only. Why did Modi not come here all these days? Why did he not release the budget? Why did he not give us the bullet train and riverfront like Sabarmati? He is remembering south India for votes. Even people of south India are educated and know politics well. For 10 years you were Prime Minister, what funds have you given to south. No financial allocation and political representation. BJP has no right to seek votes in south. South has banned BJP.

'Israel will decide how to respond to Iran's attack'

Netanyahu brushes off calls for restraint

PNS ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday his country would be the one to decide whether and how to respond to Iran's major air assault earlier this week, brushing off calls for restraint from close allies.

Israel has vowed to respond to Iran's unprecedented attack without saying when or how, leaving the region bracing for further escalation after months of unrest linked to the ongoing war in Gaza.

Israel's allies have been urging Israel since the attack to hold back on any response that could spiral. These calls were repeated on Wednesday

during visits by the British and German foreign ministers. The diplomatic pressures came as Iran's president warned that even the "tiniest" invasion of its territory would bring a "massive and harsh"

response. Violence meanwhile surged on Wednesday between Israel and the Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah, which fired a volley of rockets on northern Israel.

Massive response if Israel launches tiniest invasion: Iran

Iran's president has warned that the "tiniest invasion" by Israel would bring a "massive and harsh" response, as the region braces for potential Israeli retaliation after Iran's attack over the weekend. President Ebrahim Raisi spoke Wednesday at an annual army

parade that was relocated to a barracks north of the capital, Tehran, from its usual venue on a highway in the city's southern outskirts. Iranian authorities gave no explanation for its relocation, and state television didn't broadcast it live, as it has in previous years.

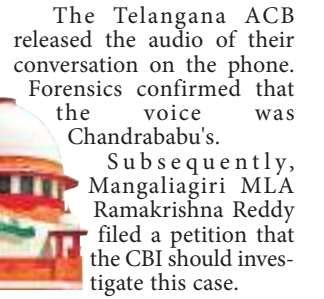
SC to take up trial of cash-for-vote case today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court will hear the sensational cash-for-vote case on Thursday. YSRCP MLA from Mangalagiri Alla Ramakrishna Reddy has filed a petition to include TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu as an accused in the case and hand over the investigation to the CBI. Chandrababu's advocate Siddhartha

During the Telangana MLC elections in 2015, Chandrababu offered money to MLCs to vote in favour of TDP. Chandrababu allegedly tempted MLC Elvis Stephenson to vote for the TDP candidate.

The Telangana ACB released the audio of their conversation on the phone. Forensics confirmed that the voice was Chandrababu's. Subsequently, Mangalagiri MLA Ramakrishna Reddy filed a petition that the CBI should investigate this case.



Police threatening...

Continued from page 1

It may be mentioned here that in 2023 Raheel allegedly rammed his car into a barricade near the Praja Bhavan at Punjagutta. He was in an inebriated state at that time and had tried to manipulate the case by getting another person to surrender claiming to be the driver.

BRS will be shut...

Continued from page 1

He offered to face "any punishment" should the BRS get even one seat.

Characterizing next month's Lok Sabha polls "a fight between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party", he exuded confidence that the grand old party would win 12-13 seats in the state. The Minister maintained that KCR and former minister KT Rama Rao would definitely go to jail. "We will welcome them in Cherlapally Jail

by constructing a double bedroom house for them," he said, mocking the double bedroom housing scheme of the previous BRS government.

Addressing a public meeting in Sangareddy District on Tuesday, the BRS chief had said that the Congress government might not last more than a year. The former Chief Minister remarked that nobody knew who would join the BJP and when. "We don't know, the Chief Minister himself may jump to the BJP," KCR had said.

'I'll be Home ...

Continued from page 1

He said that the contest in the elections will be between the Congress and the BJP.

In the parliamentary elections, the BRS candidates did not even receive deposits. It is certain that BRS will disappear after this election. He said that they would have won easily even if they had focused a little on Suryapet in the previous election. He advised not to trust leaders who do politics in the name of caste and religion.

Rahul will be PM...

Continued from page 1

We and the people have lost faith in EVMs, only the BJP has faith in them and that is not enough. "On BJP's 'Ab ki Baar 400 par slogan', the Chief Minister said, "It is good for sloganeering, but it won't succeed as PM Modi has got two terms but he has betrayed people. South India is in India only, why did he not come here earlier? Why did he not give us the bullet train and riverfront like Sabarmati. He is remembering

south India for votes". Revanth said, "He has not given political representation (President, Vice-President, Home Minister, Defence Minister) and financial allocation to south India. BJP has no right to seek votes here; south has banned them... BJP is doing legal corruption and all those who are doing such including Pinarayi Vijayan are coordinating with PM Modi. Why is he (Kerala CM) not supporting the LDF candidate in Wayanad? He is supporting Surendran (BJP's candidate)."

Heatwave to...

Continued from page 1

Khammam, Suryapet and Mahabubabad. The temperature is likely to rise 2-3 degrees Celsius in the following days. On April 19, a heat wave is likely to prevail over the aforementioned districts including Komaram Bheem Asifabad and Nalgonda. On April 20, similar conditions are likely to prevail over the aforementioned districts along with Karimnagar. On April 21, thunderstorms accompanied with lightning are likely to hit the afore-

mentioned districts along with Siddipet, Warangal, Hanamkonda and Medak. Among districts, Bhadradi Kothagudem (44.7) was followed by Nalgonda, Jatiyal (44.6) Mahabubabad (44.5) Rajanna/Sircilla (44.5), Karimnagar (44.2), Komaram Bheem Asifabad (44.2), Mulugu (44.2) and Hyderabad (41.6). The Telangana State Planning and Development Society (TSDPS) predicted that dry weather is likely to prevail in Telangana till April 20.

Campaigning ends for...

Continued from page 1

The Opposition leaders, in turn, have attacked the government over electoral bonds, alleged misuse of agencies, inflation and unemployment among other issues.

The BJP in its manifesto prioritised development and welfare while shunning populist measures and contentious issues like the NRC. Named "Modi ki Guarantee", the manifesto largely built on the government's existing welfare schemes targeted at different sections of society, while reiterating the BJP's commitment to roll out one-nation-

one-election and Uniform Civil Code, two issues mentioned in its 2019 manifesto too.

In its 45-page manifesto titled 'Nyay Patra', the Congress focussed on five "pillars of justice" and 25 guarantees under them.

Right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee for MSP, passing a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, a nation-wide caste census and scrapping of Agnipath scheme are among the promises made by the party in the manifesto.

Modi, however, lambasted the Congress manifesto say-

ing it carries the imprint of the Muslim League with "every page reeking of breaking India".

Eight Union ministers - Nitin Gadkari, Kiren Rijju, Sarbananda Sonowal, Sanjeev Baliyan, Jitendra Singh, Bhupendra Yadav, Arjun Ram Meghwal and L. Murugan, two former chief ministers - Biplob Kumar Deb (Tripura) and Nabam Tuki (Arunachal Pradesh), and former governor Tamilisai Soundararajan (Telangana) are among those in fray.

In 2019, the UPA had won 45 of these 102 seats and the NDA 41.

Notification for LS...

Continued from page 1

The BJP, energised with its better poll show-- in terms of seats and vote share in 2023 state elections, is eager to make more electoral inroads.

While the BJP and BRS have already announced their candidates for all the 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, Congress has named its nominees to 14 seats so far.

Chief Minister and state Congress president A Revanth Reddy, BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao and the BJP's candidates have already kicked off their poll campaign.

The campaign is expected to gather momentum after the issue of election notification on April 18. Revanth Reddy recently addressed two public meetings, while Chandrasekhar Rao, also

known as KCR, has also attended two BRS rallies organised during the last few days.

The Lok Sabha election is crucial for the Congress, BJP and BRS, especially the Chandrasekhar Rao-led party which is facing an existential crisis of sorts following its unexpected defeat in the Assembly elections held in November last year.

The election is also significant for CM Revanth Reddy as Congress needs to retain the momentum following its victory in the Assembly polls.

For BJP, Telangana is the only state in the south, after Karnataka, where it sees the possibility to win a substantial number of seats. BRS had won nine of the 17 Lok Sabha seats in 2019, while BJP and Congress secured four and three seats respectively.

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WORLD HERITAGE DAY

Minister Surekha throws light on TG's pristine grandeur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister of Forest, Environment and Endowments Konda Surekha on Wednesday said that the history of Mahojwala, which flourished as an Asmaka State even before Christ belongs to the Telangana region. On the occasion of 'World Heritage Day' organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) with the theme of 'Discover and Experience Diversity', the Minister commemorated the glory of Telangana State with famous historical buildings, heritage sites and monuments.



Golconda Fort Hyderabad

UNESCO in Telangana, shows the artistic skill of Telangana's sculptors.

Thousands of years old Pandava cave rock paintings, Jain, Buddhist monasteries, thousand-pillored temple, Orugalla fort, Padmakshi fort, Bhuvanagiri fort, Charminar, Golconda fort, Mecca Masjid, Medak church, sculptures, paintings and epitaphs in the State show the historical, cultural diversity and splendor of

Telangana region. The Minister said that the Congress government led by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi established the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) with the intention of protecting the monuments that show the country's historical and cultural glory. She said, "We should have an understanding of the past and realise the truth that we can build a

bright future only by knowing the past. That is why the Department of Culture of the Government of India and the Department of Archeology of the State jointly organise the Heritage Week every year to create awareness among the people about the culture and historical buildings of India and their conservation."

The Minister suggested that every citizen along with the government should take responsibility for the conservation of heritage assets which are symbols of human development and culture. Many aspects related to conservation of heritage buildings in the fundamental rights and directive principles of the Constitution of India make this clear.

The Minister congratulated everyone involved in the work of bringing out the glory of Telangana hidden in the layers of time and made it clear that the Congress government is working sincerely to deliver the glory of Telangana heritage to the future generations.

Piety marks Sri Ramanavami



Archakas perform celestial marriage at Chikkadpalli



Devotees watching the kalyanam at Karmanghat temple



An idol of Rama being taken out in a procession at Puranapal



The idols of Rama and Sita being taken out in a chariot at Satilguda

Minister launches electric vehicle buying assistant app

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant move towards sustainable transportation, Jui, an electric vehicle buying assistant app, was launched on Wednesday. The event was attended by IT Minister of Telangana D Sridhar Babu. Telangana is a State known for its proactive approach towards emerging technologies.



Minister Sridhar Babu, along with Pranay Kommu and Mahanth Mallikarjuna, lighting the lamp

Speaking on the occasion, Sridhar Babu said, "Innovation and entrepreneurship are the driving forces behind our nation's progress. I commend the founders of Jui, Mahanth Mallikarjuna and Pranay Kommu, for their vision and dedication in creating a transformative mobility solution in the form of Jui App"

vehicles. Starting with two-wheelers, the largest segment in the country with over 150 million units, the app assists customers right from discoverability to delivery of the vehicle. While the buying assistant is open to the entire country, vehicles are currently being sold only in Hyderabad, with plans to scale to more cities in the coming months.

Mahanth Mallikarjuna, co-founder of Jui said, "The mission of Jui is to provide sustainable and efficient transportation options for everyone. With our innovative app, we aim to assist buyers in transitioning to electric vehicles."

Jui works with almost all popular electric two-wheeler brands and has partnered with Axis Bank and LoanTap for finance, and Reliance General Insurance, Chola MS and Kotak General Insurance for insurance needs. It is on a mission to transition one million buyers from ICE (internal combustion engines) to electric two-wheelers in the next year.

Names of 5.41 lakh voters removed in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ahead of the general elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced that the names of 5,41,201 voters in Hyderabad have been removed from the electoral rolls.

Among those removed, 47,141 voters are dead; 4,39,801 voters have shifted and 54,259 are duplicate voters. Due procedure was followed to remove these names from the electoral rolls. A special drive was conducted to identify such voters and corrections were done. In Hyderabad district, a total of 1,81,405 such voters have been identified and corrections have been made to their house numbers.

The authorities are also planning to bring split voters in families under one polling station. In Hyderabad 3,78,713 corrections were made so that split voters in a family are brought to one polling station. The Hyderabad Election

Officer took measures to ensure voter facilitation and for conduct of free and fair elections by means of identifying and eliminating PSEs, DSEs, dead, shifted voters from the electoral rolls. All the deletions have been done as per procedure duly collecting Form-7 and Form-8 as per ECI guidelines.

With regards to irregular house numbers, Secunderabad recorded the highest 31,042 deletions followed by Secunderabad Cantt (22,732) Sanathnagar (20,226), Yakuthpura (19,999) Musheerabad (19,700) and Jubilee Hills (14,429).

In terms of duplicate entries, Bahadurpura recorded the highest deletions (7,742) followed by Nampally (7072) and Karwar (6738) among others. In terms of split voters brought under a single polling station, Jubilee Hills recorded the highest corrections (47,357) followed by Chandryangutta (47,166) and Yakuthpura (42,327).

Guv performs special puja

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a special ceremony as part of Ramanavami at the Raj Bhavan Community Hall in Hyderabad on Wednesday, Governor of Telangana and Jharkhand, and Lt. Governor of Puducherry CP Radhakrishnan performed a special puja.

Expressing his heartfelt wishes on this auspicious occasion, the Governor prayed for the blessings of Lord Sri Rama, known as the remover of obstacles, for the prosperity and progress of both the State and the nation. He emphasised the importance of overcoming challenges to achieve peace and prosperity.



Earlier in the morning, the spouse of the Governor, Sumathi Radhakrishnan, participated in the Sita Rama Kalyanam organised by the Raj

Bhavan Pariwar members in the Raj Bhavan Community Hall. The Principal Secretary to

the Governor, along with other senior officers and members of the Raj Bhavan Pariwar participated in these celebrations.

Notice served to eatery for use of expiry goods

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The FSSAI Task Force Team, constituted recently by the Commissioner of Food Safety, has conducted inspections in Babylon Bar & Kitchen, Jubilee Hills on Tuesday and the team identified expired ingredients and bottled alkaline water without proper labelling, BIS certificate and FSSAI Licence in the stores.

Stock worth Rs 42,660 of Babylon Bar Kitchen premium alkaline water and British English sponge fingers packs worth Rs 1,797/- have been seized.

Expiry items worth Rs 7,748 have been discarded.

Notice has been served for the violations.

Further, based on the stocks found at Babylon Bar & Kitchen, Jubilee Hills, the team has conducted inspections in the manufacturing unit of Sri Beverages, Sy.No.431/2, Door No.31-741, Chennapuram, Jawahar Nagar, Medchal district and found deviations/violations as per FSSAI Act. The team has collected samples for lab testing.

Additionally, stock worth of Rs 2,58,720 has been seized. Notice for not possessing permissions were issued. Instructed the vendor not to conduct any commercial activity till permission is obtained.

Inter students' parents demand cut in fees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the hike of Intermediate fees by a majority of private junior colleges, parents are facing a huge burden to pay such huge fees. Many parents voiced out their grievances on the hike and demanded the government to lower the fees.

Venkatesh, parent of an Inter student, said, "It's a huge burden for parents like us to pay hefty fees every year. I don't understand why private colleges have to hike fees every year. Parents assume that the admission fee will be the same for two years. But when our child goes to the second year, the management hiked the fee by 50 per cent. This hike is a huge burden to parents who should afford the money to reimburse such hefty fee. Moreover, many private colleges are trying to blackmail



parents for paying such high fees. Hence, parents are struggling to voice out their grievances openly."

Shyamala, another parent said, "A majority of private junior colleges are hiking Intermediate fees in an illegal way. How can poor and middle class people afford to pay such hefty fees? I don't understand why the government fails to stop it. I request the government to intervene in this regard as soon as possible thereby curbing the fee exploitation."

Make Heritage Walk a success: GHMC chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Ronald Rose has announced on Wednesday to organise a Heritage Walk on the occasion of World Heritage Day which will be celebrated on April 18 and asked people to make the event a great success.

The walk starts from Da Rul Shifa at 7 am and ends at Osmania Hospital via Azakhana-e-Zehra Ashur Khana at Salar Jung Museum. He issued instructions to the Zonal Commissioners of Khairatabad and Charminar to make all arrangements for drinking water facilities there. This heritage walk is being organised under the direction of Dana Kishore, Chief Secretary of the State Municipal Department.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner and District Election officer (DEO) Ronald Rose on Wednesday announced that Rs 28,28,000 in cash was seized on April 16 as part of raids under the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

"He said Rs 28,28,000 was seized in the last 24 hours while goods worth Rs 4,72,161 were seized along with 243.61 liters of liquor. In all, 12 persons were arrested and eight

cases were registered, 19 complaints against cash and other items were resolved and 14 FIRs were registered. In all, 52 licenced weapons were deposited."

"Since the release of the election schedule till now, flying squad teams have collected Rs 3,06,54,220 by police, Rs 11,09,31,630 by IT department and Rs 15,79,690 cash was seized by SST teams," Rose added.

He said Rs 14,31,65,540 has been seized in Hyderabad as part of anti-corruption drive ahead of the General

Elections. Apart from cash, goods worth Rs 2 crore and 20,441.89 liters of liquor were seized.

"At least 185 people have been booked and 181 of these have been arrested so far. Five cases were booked for violation of the Model Code of Conduct and action was taken against five of them," Rose added. In all, 383 complaints regarding election-related cash and other items were resolved. FIRs were registered against 251 persons and 2,842 licenced firearms were deposited.

T-SAT to conduct special live programmes on DSC exam today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana-Skills, Academic and Training (T-SAT) CEO Bodanapalli Venugopal Reddy on Wednesday said that the T-SAT network is conducting

special live broadcasts on various subjects on expert channels. He also said that the live programmes broadcast on Maths, Science, Biology, Chemistry, English and other subjects will be re-broadcast on Vidya Channel at 6 pm the next day.

He suggested that the candidates writing the DSC competitive exams should take advantage of this opportunity to clear their doubts by participating in the discussion through phone calls. He said that till the completion of the DSC examination, the broadcasts of the awareness curriculum will continue.

The special live programmes are broadcast from Thursday from 11 am to 12 pm for an hour for nine days. Venugopal Reddy clarified that special live programmes have been arranged for the awareness of the candidates appearing for the DSC examination conducted by the Telangana government to fill up about 11,062 vacant teacher posts in various schools in



Two sentenced to jail for misbehaving with women

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In two separate cases of misbehaviour with and stalking women, the SHE Teams arrested two persons who were handed jail terms by the special magistrate.

In the first case, the victim got in touch with the accused through her cousin; both of them grew close, however the victim learnt that the accused was married and a father of two. She chose to be distant from the accused. However, the accused began to trouble her; the issue escalated to harassment and the victim approached the SHE Teams who registered a case and arrested the accused. The 13th special magistrate court sentenced the man to six days in prison and imposed a penalty of Rs 200.

In another case reported from Charminar, SHE Teams arrested a man for misbehaving with women in public. The special magistrate sentenced him to three days in prison and imposed a penalty of Rs 200 on him.

Housing will be up by 17% for elderly by 2050

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The global elderly population is increasing, with India expected to become the fastest-growing, accommodating up to 17% of the world's elderly by 2050. Hyderabad also comes with prominent healthcare facilities, giving access to advanced healthcare, creating awareness of the elderly care services and expansion of the senior care units by major players.

A report titled "Golden Opportunities from the Silver Economy, Analysing the Future of Senior Care in India" was unveiled on Wednesday. The report highlights significant growth in India's senior care seg-

ment, driven by favourable demographics, increasing chronic conditions and rising awareness. As seniors increasingly seek specialised care and lifestyle options, the demand for senior living facilities has surged in recent years.

CBRE South Asia Pvt. Ltd., a leading real estate consulting firm in India, unveiled the report.

The report shows that senior care landscape is rapidly evolving nationally, with 18,000 units spread across the country. The southern region leads with 62% contribution to the organised senior living and care segments, driven by factors like higher affordability and a growing accep-



tance of nuclear family structures. Major players in the senior care segment are concentrated in southern tier-I and II cities like Chennai, Coimbatore, and Bengaluru, with future expansion plans focused on cities like Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Pune, and NCR.

As per the report, currently, the total estimated target for senior living facilities in 2024 is around 1 million, expected to increase to 2.5 million in the next decade.

The report shows India's current spiking rate for senior living stands at less than 1%, high-

lighting significant room for growth compared to more mature markets.

The elderly care market in India has been increasingly establishing itself, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The senior living segment offers diverse housing options and services designed for older adults aged 60 and above, advancing independence, social engagement, and convenience. It includes independent living communities, assisted living facilities, memory care units and continuing care retirement communities, catering to evolving needs and ensuring compassionate care at every stage.

DEATH OF STUDENT DUE TO ALLGED FOOD POISONING

TSWREIS offers job to one of family members

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions' Society (TSWREIS) secretary has offered an outsourcing job to one of the family members of the student who died due to alleged food poisoning in the society's educational institution in Bhuvangiri. The society has also sent a proposal to the State government to sanction ex gratia to the bereaved family. It may be recalled that a student, identified as Prashant, died while undergoing treatment in hospital after taking ill due to alleged food poisoning. The release on Wednesday said that the society already gave Rs 20,000 to the family to meet the funeral expenses. Of the 407 students in the institute at Bhongir, 26 suffered from diarrhoea. They have

been admitted to government hospital at Bhongir. As the condition of some of the students was stated to be critical, they had been referred to Gandhi, Osmania, Miracel, Rain Bow, Sai Sanjivani and Ajay hospitals. All the students are the Class six students of the educational institute. The condition of all students subsequently improved except that of Prashant who later died while undergoing treatment. The school authorities have been monitoring the health condition of the students who have been discharged from the hospital and taking various precautions on the directions from hospital authorities. There were no instances of such incidents taking place in Bhongir residential school for over the past one year. There were no instances of student deaths in the institute.

Harish Rao demands Rs 50 lakh compensation

Former Minister T Harish Rao has expressed grief over the death of one of the 24 students of the Government Social Welfare Residential School at Bhongir while undergoing treatment for food poisoning. He said that the death of one of the students, identified as Prashant, moved him deeply. Life of the young student was nipped in the bud because of the inefficiency of the Congress government, he remarked.

The residential schools that saw dizzying heights during the BRS regime have been losing the credibility of the parents and students, he observed. The image of the residential schools is being tarnished by the series of suicides and food-poisoning incidents, he said. He called the death of Prashant as the government's murder and demanded a compensation of Rs 50 lakh to the bereaved parents.



Aruna to file papers today



PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR
BJP district president P Srinivas Reddy has said that BJP national vice-president DK Aruna, party candidate for Mahabubnagar LS seat, will file her nomination papers at 11 am on Thursday.

Union Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goel will participate as the chief guest in the event.

At 9 am, Aruna along with Goel will conduct special puja at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Pillalamarri route to the Collectorate.

Later, she will proceed to collectorate in a rally with the participation of BJP activists and leaders and file her papers.

Having filed the nomination papers, she will take out a two-wheeler rally from collectorate to Bhagiradha colony and undertake pada yatra clock-tower junction via one town junction, Ram mandir junction and pan chowrasta.

The Union Minister will address the street corner meeting at clock-tower junction, he said.

Sri Rama Navami celebrated with traditional fervour

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

Sri Rama Navami was celebrated with traditional fervour across Telangana on Wednesday.

The highlight of Sri Rama Navami celebrations in the state was the 'Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam' (celestial wedding of Lord Ram and Sita) in the temple town of Bhadrachalam on the banks of Godavari river.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and other dignitaries attended the event.

The Election Commission permitted the live telecast of Sri Rama Kalyanam subject to provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for the Lok



Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy at the celestial wedding in Bhadrachalam on Wednesday

Sabha polls, official sources said on Tuesday.

The ritual was performed by the Vedic scholars in Abhijit

Lagna amidst the streets of the temple town reverberating with the slogans of Jai Sriram. Chief Secretary Santi Kumari presented silk clothes and pearls to the deities on behalf of the state government.

People converged in the town in large numbers from the Telugu States to witness the celestial wedding. The Mithila Stadium was bedecked impressively by illuminating with electric lamps.

In the wee hours of Wednesday, the temple priests conducted Suprabhat Seva to the deity, followed by the conduct of The security has been beefed up by deploying 2,000 police personnel to rule out any untoward incident.

Komatireddy warns BRS against poaching Congress MLAs

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Wednesday made a surprise visit to the government hospital here as part of his tour in the district.

Later addressing media at his camp office here, Venkat Reddy took former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao to task for saying that the Congress government may not last for one year. The Minister wondered whether KCR was trying to purchase the Congress MLAs with the illicit money he had amassed. "If the BRS lays its hands on Congress MLAs, the foundation of the BRS office will be uprooted in Hyderabad,"



Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy speaking to the media in Nalgonda on Wednesday

he warned. In all, 30 BRS MLAs are ready to cross over to the Congress, but the Congress was in no mood to welcome them, he claimed. If the Congress was really serious to woo BRS MLAs into its fold, none would

remain in that party. He took objection to KCR calling Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy "lilliput".

He dismissed the claims by KCR that the latter had gone on indefinite fast for a separate Telangana. The Minister

claimed that KCR had taken Vitamin-D tablets during the indefinite fast.

KCR owed an apology to the people for encouraging corruption during his regime, he said.

The rice millers procured paddy after he took initiative and consulted the millers in Miryalaguda, he said.

He exuded confidence of Congress winning at least 12-13 LS seats and predicted that BRS would not open its account in the polls.

KCR apparently lost his mental balance after Kavita's arrest. He said that G Jagadish Reddy, former Energy Minister in KCR Cabinet, amassed thousands of crores.

School officials booked over 'saffron dress' row

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mancherial district police have booked a case against a school correspondent and principal for allegedly objecting to some students coming to the institution wearing 'Hanuman Deeksha dress' in Kannepalli village about 250 km from here.

According to Dandepally police, based on a complaint by the parents of the students, a case under sections 153 (A) (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion or race) and 295 (A) (insulting the religious feelings) was booked against the school

officials on Tuesday. The Blessed Mother Teresa High School management told PTI on Wednesday that two days ago, the principal asked the students to bring their parents after noticing that they were wearing saffron attire instead of a uniform.

Later, a group of people demanded an apology from the school management and some angry protestors allegedly vandalised the school windows on Tuesday, according to video footage given by the school correspondent. The protestors also allegedly demanded an apology from the correspondent, he said.

No-trust move against Kollapur municipal chairperson carried

PNS ■ KOLLAPUR

The no-confidence motion moved by the Congress councillors against the Kollapur BRS municipal chairperson Vijayalakshmi on Tuesday at the venue of new library building was carried out with 16 votes receiving in favour of the motion.

There are 20 councillors in the Kollapur municipality. Out of them, 15 belong to the Congress. Municipal chairperson Vijaya Lakshmi, BRS councillors Pasupula Krishna, Krishna Murty, Satyam Yadav and Anita were conspicuous by their absence.

The police have beefed up

security at the venue under the leadership of DSP Srinivas Yadav.

Kalwakurthy RDO Srinu, who is the presiding officer, allowed voting to take place on the motion as the quorum was present at the venue. MLC Kuchukulla Damodar Reddy, who is an ex-officio member of the council, and 15 Cong councillors raised their hands to support the motion in the voting carried out by show of hands.

The municipal commissioner said that the new chairman will be elected on directions from district collector at a date to be intimated later.

Quenching thirst of tribals in Agency areas still a distant dream

PNS ■ ADILABAD

As the summer progresses, the drinking water problem in remote tribal hamlets in Agency areas of the district has been compounded with the groundwater table has receding.

The Adivasi people living in the tribal hamlets have been finding it difficult to quench their thirst. The young and old alike have been bearing the brunt of the acute shortage of drinking water.

Adivasi hamlets in Narsapur village panchayat of Utanoormandal, Indravelli, Narnur, Gadigudamandals have been facing acute drinking water shortage forcing the tribals to collect water from nearby streams and agri-



Tribal people gather at well to collect water in one of the tribal hamlets in Adilabad district

cultural wells.

The Mission Bhagiradha programme of the BRS regime, implemented with a

matter of great prestige, failed to quench the thirst of the tribal hamlets. Though the pipelines have been laid under

the programme, the officials have failed to supply drinking water properly. In some cases, the supply of drinking water to the tribal hamlets is zero as the pipelines developed a technical snag.

The Adivasis are seen trekking three KM to fetch water from the nearby streams. All members of the family were seen fetching water from the streams and other sources of water near their hamlet.

The tribals allege that the government, inspite of allocating funds for development of the Agency areas, has failed to quench the thirst of the people and solve the problems of tribals. It was high-time the government resolved the drinking water problem.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Filing of nominations begins today

ROs ready to receive nomination papers: CEO Meena

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena has said that nomination papers will be received from the candidates from Thursday onwards, which is the most important phase of the election process. The election officials of all the districts have already completed the arrangements for this. The CEO said that the candidates for Lok Sabha seats are to file their nominations in the respective collectorates and those for Assembly seats, at RDO offices or Tahsildar Offices in their respective constituencies.

Each candidate can file a maximum of four sets of papers and contest in any two seats only. Along with the candidate, only four others will be allowed to enter the RO's office, while the rest will be stopped 100 m away.

The CEO added that only three vehicles are allowed with the candidate. The Lok Sabha candidates will have to pay Rs



25,000 and the Assembly candidates, Rs 10,000, as security deposit. SC and ST candidates are required to pay 50 percent of the amount. The candidates are to file their nominations following the election code of conduct. The process will be video

recorded; CC cameras have been installed in the room where the nominations are received right from the entry gates. As part of the implementation of the model code, the processions of the candidates and the nomination filing will also be video recorded.

The candidates have to bring 13 types of documents to file nominations. Those contesting for Parliament seats should apply in Form 2A and Assembly candidates in Form 2B. The nominations will be received from 11 am to 3 pm from April 18 to 25. The papers will not be accepted on public holidays.

The candidate can submit their nomination either directly or through his proposer to the RO or to the concerned ARO only. They should submit details of newly opened bank accounts in their name along with the nomination. A help desk will be set up for receipt of nominations. Though nominations can be filed

Election schedule in Andhra Pradesh

- April 18** – Filing of nominations begins
- April 25** – Last date for receipt of nominations
- April 26** – Scrutiny of nominations
- April 29** – Last date for withdrawal of nominations
- May 13** – Polling
- June 04** – Counting of votes

through the Suvidha app, copies of the nominations have to be submitted physically to the RO, the CEO said.

Candidates should submit their affidavit through Form-26. The value of Form 26 stamp paper is Rs 10 or more. E-stamp can also be used if physical stamp paper is not available.

From the time of nomination of the candidate, the cost incurred will be accountable. Advertisements in newspapers and paid news are also counted in the candidate's account, CEO Meena added.

Attack on CM: One more nabbed

However, NTR district police remain clueless about the actual culprit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After detaining five youth from Vaddera Colony in connection with the stone-pelting incident on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Saturday night, the police nabbed one more suspect from the same colony in connection with the incident.

According to sources, the suspect identified as Vemula Durga Rao, an auto-rickshaw driver, was picked up by the police on Wednesday morning. Even after interrogation, the NTR district police remain clueless about the actual culprit in the stone attack on CM Jagan.

Stones were pelted on CM Jagan's 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra four days ago. The CM was injured after being struck by a stone above his left eyebrow. Despite detaining

five suspects for questioning, the authorities are yet to identify the actual assailant.

NTR District Commissioner of Police Kanthi Rana Tata, on Monday, announced Rs 2 lakh reward for any information that could help in resolving the case. Clarifying the situation, the Commissioner said that they recovered multiple stones, but were yet to confirm which was used in the attack.

The police have questioned 52 people and detained some 'local miscreants with criminal backgrounds'. Eight special teams have been formed to catch the culprit. A case under IPC section 307 (attempt to murder) has been registered, and the Commissioner expressed confidence in obtaining strong leads to nab the accused.

INDIA CORNER

Woman kills self by jumping from PG building in Delhi

A 29-year-old woman allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the second floor of a paying guest accommodation in northwest Delhi, police said on Wednesday.



Elgar Parishad case accused Shoma Sen walks out of prison

Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case accused and former Nagpur University professor Shoma Sen was released from a prison here on Wednesday afternoon, an official said.



School headmaster stabbed multiple times, hospitalised

The Government Railway Police (GRP) have arrested a 39-year-old man for trying to kill a school headmaster at Dombivli in Maharashtra's Thane district by stabbing him multiple times, an official said on Wednesday.



'Modi govt will eliminate Naxals in very short time'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Narendra Modi government will eliminate Naxals from the country in a very short period of time, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted on Wednesday.



The central government has been conducting incessant operations against terrorism and Naxals, he said in a statement, a day after security forces gunned down 29 Maoists in Chhattisgarh.

"I can say with conviction that operations against Naxals will continue in the times to come, and under the leadership of Modi, we will uproot Naxalism from our nation in a very short period of time," Shah said.

The home minister said since the formation of a BJP government in Chhattisgarh three months ago, more than 80 Naxals have been eliminated, more than 125 arrested and more than 150 have surrendered.

Shah said a large number of camps of security forces have been set up in Maoist-affected areas since 2014. Since 2019, as many as 250 such camps have been set up, ending the security vacuum, he said.

In the biggest ever encounter in Chhattisgarh, security personnel on Tuesday gunned down 29 Naxalites, including some senior members, in Kanker district.

Bullet marks on trees at encounter site where 29 Naxals were killed

PNS ■ KANKER

Silence hangs over the hillocks adjoining Hidar and Kalpar villages in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district where 29 Naxalites were gunned down by security forces in an encounter. Hours after the biggest encounter ever in the state ended, bullet marks could be seen on the trees at the site on Wednesday.

He came to know about it only on Wednesday, he said, talking to reporters at Kalpar village. Sukku had joined the outlawed CPI (Maoist) as a child and despite the family members trying to persuade him to quit, he stayed with the Maoist movement, Lingaram said. The family was yet to contact the police to claim Sukku's body, he added.

Woman can't be held accountable for abetting suicide of lover: Delhi HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A woman cannot be held accountable for abetting the suicide of a man if he ends his life due to 'love failure', the Delhi High Court has observed while granting pre-arrest bail to two persons in an abetment of suicide case.

The court said another person cannot be blamed for the wrong decision taken by a man of a "weak and frail mentality". "If a lover commits suicide due to love failure, if a student commits suicide because of his poor performance in the examination, a client commits suicide because his case is dismissed, the lady, examiner, lawyer respectively cannot be held to have abetted the commission of suicide," Justice Amit Mahajan said.

Those in power worship 'satta' not 'Shakti': Priyanka

PNS ■ SAHARANPUR (UP)

Attacking the BJP, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday said those ruling the country are not worshippers of 'satya (truth) or 'Maa Shakti' but only of 'satta (power)'.



She was speaking during her first roadshow in Uttar Pradesh in support of the INDIA bloc candidate from Saharanpur Imran Masood, hours before the campaigning for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections came to an end.

The roadshow covered a distance of about two kilometres in areas with a sizeable Muslim population. It started from the Jain Bagh area, passed through Raiwala, JBS Inter College, Kamboh Bridge and ended at the Qutub Sher police station area.

Addressing a large crowd, she appealed to them to make Masood victorious with an overwhelming majority. "The people in power are not worshippers of 'satya' (truth) or 'Maa Shakti'

(Goddess Shakti) but only of 'satta' (power).

"For 'satta', they can go to any extent, they can topple governments, buy MLAs and give the country's assets to the rich," she said.

Her remarks come in the backdrop of the BJP attacking the Congress over its leader Rahul Gandhi's "fight against Shakti remark and accusing the opposition party of insulting Hindu Gods.

Targeting the BJP, the Congress leader claimed that "if there is no glitch in EVM, these people are not going to win more than 180 seats."

The Congress general secretary also attacked the ruling party over the electoral bonds issue.

"If the electoral bond is transparent then why was the list not made available to the people earlier? It was only when the Supreme Court intervened that the list came out," she said.

"The company which was earning a profit of Rs 180 crore donated Rs 1100 crores to BJP. Black money was converted into white through electoral bonds," she alleged, adding that it has exposed "Modi's corruption".

BJP accuses DK Shivakumar of 'brazen abuse of power'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

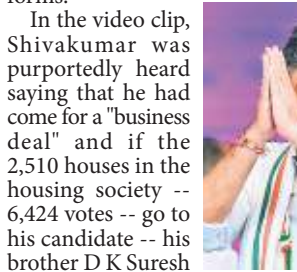
BJP leader Amit Malviya on Wednesday accused Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar of "brazen abuse of power" after a video of him seeking votes from the residents of a housing society in Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha segment was shared widely on social media platforms.

responsibility as a minister to provide amenities to the people.

"DK Shivakumar, Deputy CM of Karnataka, in a brazen abuse of power, holds voters of a large housing society in his brother DK Suresh's constituency, to ransom. Sounding every bit menacing, he wields a threat, couched in crass humour, that if the residents don't vote for his brother, he would know (since their vote is in 2/3 booths) and not provide water and CA site..." he alleged in a post on 'X'.

"Irrespective of who the people choose to vote (for), it is DK Shivakumar's responsibility as a minister to provide amenities to the people. If he doesn't, then the BJP will, when they come to power. But such threats and quid pro quo for delivering what one has been voted for is UNACCEPTABLE," he further alleged.

Tagging the Election Commission of India on 'X', he urged them to take note of the multiple model code of conduct violations and intimidation in this case.



In the video clip, Shivakumar was purportedly heard saying that he had come for a "business deal" and if the 2,510 houses in the housing society -- 6,424 votes -- go to his candidate -- his brother D K Suresh is seeking re-election from Bangalore Rural in the coming elections -- then he assured them that their major issues concerning supply of Cauvery river water and need for a civic amenity site would be resolved by him within three months.

Sharing the video clip, Malviya, the BJP IT department head, attacked Shivakumar, the state Congress chief, and said that irrespective of who the people choose to vote for, it is his



10 killed as car rams into truck on Expressway

PNS ■ NADIAD (GUJARAT)

As many as 10 persons travelling in a car died after their speeding vehicle rammed into a truck on the Ahmedabad-Vadodara Expressway near Nadiad town of Gujarat's Kheda district on Wednesday, police officials said.

"The car was going towards Ahmedabad from Vadodara when it rammed into the rear side of the truck on the expressway.

While eight people died on the spot, two injured persons, who were shifted to a nearby hospital in an ambulance, succumbed later," said Inspector of Nadiad Rural police station Kirit Chaudhary.

Nadiad MLA Pankaj Desai said it is possible the truck stopped on the left lane of the expressway due to some technical fault and the car driver did not get enough time to apply brakes and crashed into it.

Poll strategists turn campaigners in political war rooms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Excel sheets, powerpoint presentations, targeted content sharing, survey reports, technology and endless data -- these elements may have been missing from traditional election campaigns in India a couple of decades ago but today they drive the winning strategy with poll strategists assuming an important role in a shift from being backroom boys.

As India goes to polls, the stakes are higher than ever. It is said elections are fought on emotions and they are an art more than science, but the

rise of poll strategists would suggest otherwise.

The poster boy of political consulting had emerged in the form of Prashant Kishor whose team advised the Narendra Modi-led BJP to a resounding win of 282 seats in the 2014 general elections.

Kishor started Citizens for Accountable Governance (CAG) as a non-profit in 2013. Two years later, it was rechristened Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), which has since strategised and campaigned for candidates in several elections.

In 2014, it launched some of



the marquee campaigns to build "brand Modi" like 'Chai pe charcha' (conversations over tea) and the Statue of Unity movement; it also implemented 3D hologram rallies in India

for the first time with Modi while positioning him as Vikas Purush (man of progress).

Having worked with many parties in shaping their election campaigns, often successfully, before launching his 'padyatra' in Bihar with a stated goal to usher in transformative changes to boost the backward state's development, Kishor says he does not think he is doing anything drastically different.

"What I was advising political parties and their leaders earlier, I am now directly communicating to people, be the issues they should raise or

building grassroots organisation," he said during a recent interaction.

Sunil Kanugolu, who played a crucial role in several BJP state campaigns, is now part of the Congress task force for 2024. He is credited with the Karnataka victory and the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Partha Pratim Das got into consulting when as his final project at IIM-Bangalore, he advised Ajay Singh, who was contesting from Jewargi in Karnataka in 2013 for the assembly elections. Singh went on to defeat the sitting BJP MLA by 36,700 votes.

ISRO to continue lunar mission until an Indian lands on Moon: Somanath

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Indian Space Research Organisation will continue its Chandrayaan series of lunar probes until an astronaut from the country lands on the Moon, said ISRO Chairman S Somanath on Wednesday.

Last August, the premier space agency's Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft made a soft landing on the south pole of the lunar surface, making India the first country to achieve the feat.

"Chandrayaan 3 has done very well. Data has been collected and scientific publication has just started. Now, we want to continue the



Chandrayaan series till an Indian lands on the Moon. Before that, we have to master many technologies, such as going there and coming back. That we are trying to do in the next mission," he told reporters

on the sidelines of an event. Somanath was in Ahmedabad as the chief guest of a programme organised by the Astronautical Society of India.

About India's first-ever human space flight mission, Gaganyaan, Somanath said ISRO will carry out an uncrewed mission, a test vehicle flight mission and an air-drop test this year.

"The air-drop test will happen on April 24. Then two more uncrewed missions will happen next year and then the manned mission, if everything goes well, by the end of next year," the ISRO chairman said.

Study links being online to higher risk of absenteeism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Spending too much time online to the point of giving up necessary activities, such as eating, sleeping and exercising, is linked to heightening the risk of school absence among teens, new research conducted in Finland has found.

Girls are more vulnerable to using excessive internet than boys, possibly because they tend to use social media more than boys, researchers said.

However, more boys were found to report truancy or absence from school than girls, while girls were found to report more of absences due to medical reasons.

The team of researchers, including those from the University of Helsinki, found that getting the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep and exercise, and a trusting relationship with parents with whom they could share concerns seemed to be protective. Their findings are published in the journal Archives of Disease in Childhood.

For the study, the researchers analysed the data of more than 86,000 adolescents aged 14-16, taken from the School Health Promotion study, a national biennial survey. The teens were asked about their relationship with parents, including how often they shared concerns with them, along with their



sleep and physical activity.

The internet use of the teenagers was measured using a validated scale -- Excessive Internet Use (EIU) -- which is based on aspects, such as neglect of family, friends, and

study, and not eating or sleeping because of being online. The researchers found that girls were 96 per cent likelier to use the internet excessively than boys, who were 79 per cent likelier to do so. They also

found that about a third slept for fewer than eight hours over the weekdays, and roughly the same fraction of the participants reported low levels of physical activity -- less than three days a week.

The research team found that spending too much time online was associated with a 38 per cent higher risk of truancy and 24 per cent higher risk of school absence due to medical reasons.

They also found that being able to share concerns with parents was strongly associated with the lowest risk of both truancy and school absence due to medical reasons, with close to 60 per cent being less

likely to play truant and roughly 40 per cent less likely to be absent from school because of an illness.

Good relations with parents, longer night sleep over weekdays and physical activity were all found to be significantly protective, the team said.

Being an observational study, however, a cause-and-effect relationship could not be established, they said.

"Our results are relevant for professionals organising and working in school health and wellbeing services, especially when professionals meet students whose school absences raise concern," the authors wrote.

Govt divided farmers, orchestrated split in Morcha: Rakesh Tikait

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait has attacked the BJP, alleging that the split in the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which had led the 2020-21 farmers' movement, was orchestrated by its government at the Centre.

Under the SKM's banner, a large number of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, had held a year-long protest on Delhi's border points -- Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur -- against the now-repealed three farm laws.

"The Samyukt Kisan Morcha left Delhi as one, but some people later parted ways. The government of India wanted to create another movement and they created it," he said in an interview with PTI.

The split, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader said, led to the creation of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political).

The SKM is not part of the ongoing protest of the SKM (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) over farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm

debt waiver.

The agitation started on February 13 with the organisations calling for a "Delhi Chalo" march, and since then, farmers, mainly from Punjab, are at camping at the Shambhu border after being stopped by the Haryana Police.

Referring to the past clashes between protesters and police at the border, Tikait said the SKM has condemned the use of force against farmers. However, the splinter group (the SKM (Non-Political)) has not tried to initiate any discussions with the SKM, he claimed.

"Our effort for the last two years has been that the SKM remains together and any call is given together. The SKM is not a part of that (Delhi Chalo) movement. They (SKM (Non-Political) and KMM) are talking with the central government," he said.

The SKM was created so that farmers can be united, said Tikait, whose outfit was among the 41 organisations that came together under the banner of the SKM to protest against the laws.

Now, a number of new farmer unions are being formed to divide farmers, he claimed and added that this is part of a "conspiracy".





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PAPER WITH PASSION

SC votes for EVMs

The apex court has summarily rejected the idea of reverting to ballot papers for registering votes

General elections would be held through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) as the Supreme Court has voiced its disapproval of criticism directed towards them; it has summarily dismissed the idea of reverting to ballot papers. This statement comes amid debates regarding the reliability of EVMs. Many Opposition leaders have publicly expressed scepticism regarding the accuracy of EVM results, citing concerns of tampering and the potential undermining of the democratic process. The Supreme Court's stance underscores the need for a pragmatic approach towards electoral reforms, balancing concerns of transparency and efficiency in democratic practices. The use of EVMs in elections has been a subject of contention since its introduction in India in the 1990s by the Congress Government. While proponents argue for its efficiency, accuracy and ability to streamline the voting process, critics raise concerns over potential vulnerabilities to tampering, hacking and manipulation. These concerns have fuelled



calls for a return to traditional paper ballots, perceived by some as a more secure and transparent method of voting. However, the Supreme Court's recent remarks shed light on the practical challenges associated with such a regression. The transition from paper ballots to EVMs was a significant leap forward in the electoral process. Reverting to paper ballots would not only be a step back in terms of technology but also pose logistical challenges in managing large-scale elections in a country as populous as India. The Supreme Court is right in its stand as replacing EVMs with paper ballots will be a humongous exercise. However, there is a middle ground called VVPAT

— the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). A tangible link between electronic voting and the traditional paper ballot system, it provides voters with the opportunity to verify their vote by displaying a paper slip containing the chosen candidate's name and symbol. A little tweaking of the system to collect paper slips with the candidate's name the voter voted for and counted along with the electronic votes would go a long way in making the system transparent. Critics of EVMs have often pointed to instances of alleged tampering and discrepancies in election results. While these concerns merit attention, it is essential to distinguish between genuine issues and unsubstantiated claims driven by political agendas. The integrity of the electoral process is paramount, and any allegations of malpractice should be thoroughly investigated and addressed. Perception plays a crucial role in shaping the legitimacy of election outcomes, and measures to strengthen transparency and accountability are essential. Rather than advocating for a wholesale rejection of technological advancements, the focus should be on enhancing the security, transparency and accountability of the electoral process. Making VVPAT counting and matching mandatory would indeed go a long way in clearing the doubts about the EVMs.

PICTALK



National Cadet Corps perform a drill during their 10-day summer season camp at Nagrota, in Jammu

Showdown in Karnataka

As Karnataka braces for the Lok Sabha elections, the political arena is set for a fierce clash between the Congress and the BJP-JD(S) alliance

The Lok Sabha elections are coming up in Karnataka and will be held in 28 constituencies on April 26 and May 7. The Congress party and the BJP-JD(S) alliance will compete to win voters' support. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited the State multiple times to campaign for BJP candidates. BJP has the support of former chief minister Yediyurappa, who is widespread among the Lingayat community and is a significant vote bank in the State. These elections are crucial for Karnataka's future and mark a pivotal moment in its history.

Karnataka has been a stronghold of Congress for many years. It supported Prime Minister Indira Gandhi even after the Emergency, is a testament to its political significance. This historical significance is evident from the victories of Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, who both won seats in Karnataka for the Congress party.

These elections are not just a contest but a high-stakes battle between Congress, BJP and the Bharatiya Janata Party-Janata Dal (Secular) alliance. They symbolise the BJP's re-entry into Karnataka's political landscape. The election could shift policy priorities and governance style, potentially impacting various sectors of the State's economy and society. The results will have significant consequences for people's lives, making their participation and understanding of the process crucial.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seeks to emerge victorious in the upcoming Karnataka elections to solidify its regional dominance in the South, enhance its standing in national politics and extend its sphere of influence in southern India. In contrast, the Indian National Congress is committed to protecting its Government in the State. At the same time, the Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)] endeavours to survive in a highly competitive political climate. In essence, JD(S) is striving to attain political longevity.

The BJP's campaign in Karnataka centres around PM Modi's achievements and Congress's fail-



ures. It targets two influential communities, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, who are crucial to its electoral strategy. The Lingayats, being a dominant community in the State, have traditionally supported the BJP.

In contrast, the Vokkaligas, another influential community, has been a JD (S) stronghold. Winning over these communities is crucial for the BJP's electoral success. The BJP faces some local conflicts. For the first time since 2014, the party has had an open rebellion. The reason for this is the BJP-JDS alliance, which has yet to be well received. The Congress, too, has its rebel candidates. Congress is targeting SCs, STs and Muslims in Karnataka.

The Congress Government implemented five essential poll guarantees promised last year, which included free bus rides for women, increased funding for education and job creation. These promises were designed to address specific concerns of the region's voters and reflect the party's commitment to social welfare and economic development.

Three pre-poll surveys by Edina, News 18 and India Today Group predict con-



THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTED FIVE ESSENTIAL POLL GUARANTEES PROMISED LAST YEAR, WHICH INCLUDED FREE BUS RIDES FOR WOMEN, INCREASED FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AND JOB CREATION

flicting results for Karnataka's upcoming elections. Edina predicts Congress will win 17 seats and the BJP-JDS alliance will bag 11. News 18 forecasts NDA will win 25 seats, Congress only 3. India Today Group predicts NDA will win 24 seats with a 53 per cent vote share. The INDIA alliance, a regional party alliance, is expected to secure only four seats with a 42 per cent vote share. These surveys provide a snapshot of the current political landscape.

They can help readers gauge the potential outcomes of the election. There is a significant shift from the 2019 polls when Congress and JD(S) were allies. The BJP aims to secure the Vokkaliga vote in Old Mysore and tilt the election in their favour. The Vokkaligas, a dominant community in the Old Mysore region, have traditionally supported the JD (S). The BJP's strategy to win over this community involves a combination of caste-based outreach, promises of development and highlighting the failures of the JD (S) Government. If successful, this strategy could significantly impact the election outcome and the State's political landscape.



KALYANI SHANKAR

The BJP has fielded a top cardiologist, a member of the Mysuru royal family and an ex-chief Minister among its candidates. It has also fielded some new faces. The Congress has many ministers' relatives and these candidates can impact the result.

Since the BJP formed its first Government in 2008, the 'toppling game has been ongoing. Money and positions often play a significant role in luring legislators to shift loyalties, adding another layer of complexity to the State's political landscape. Both parties are willing to spend money.

The upcoming election in the State poses a decision for voters. They must choose between supporting the Congress party they previously elected in the Assembly polls or the BJP, which had held power earlier. While some may prefer the Congress, the BJP still has a loyal following. Suppose the voters choose to reject the BJP. In that case, it'll signify that the political party's access to the South has been closed, at least temporarily and the return of Congress is on the right track.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MEDICAL SUPPLIES SCANDAL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Delhi Government's Vigilance Department Exposes Kejriwal", published on April 16, this is my response. Recent revelations concerning irregularities in medical procurement by the AAP-led Delhi Government raise serious concerns. The findings of the Vigilance Department indicate a pattern of favouritism towards specific individuals and companies during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in significant losses for the Government. The involvement of high-ranking officials, including the Health Minister's OSD RN Das, in managing tenders to benefit particular entities is troubling.

The exploitation of the pandemic crisis to swindle funds from the public exchequer is deplorable. The notice's assertion that procurement procedures were blatantly ignored, coupled with allegations of cartelisation among suppliers, paints a grim picture of corruption within the health department. The revelation that certain companies, allegedly linked to influential individuals, secured lucrative contracts further deepens suspicions of foul play. While the AAP-led Delhi Government dismisses the allegations as baseless, the call for accountability is paramount. Swift and transparent investigations are necessary to restore public trust and ensure such egregious malpractices are rooted out effectively.

Vishwajeet Aparna | Jaipur

NATO'S EVOLVING CHALLENGES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Challenges galore for NATO@75", published on April 16, this is my response. NATO, an alliance born in the aftermath of World War II, faces a multitude of challenges as it marks its 75th anniversary. Criticism from within Europe, coupled with the rise of right-wing nationalism, underscores the need for NATO to adapt. Its traditional focus on military might must now contend with non-traditional threats like cyber warfare and terrorism. Moreover, NATO's credibility is under

The power of young citizens



Apropos the news article, "A call to vote responsibly beyond party lines", published on April 16, this is my response. India's youthful population yields immense power through their vote, a power intrinsically tied to responsibility. As we step into adulthood, we're not just celebrating a milestone but embracing a civic duty to shape the nation's

future. The call is clear: transcend party lines and scrutinise progress objectively. Our nation's trajectory demands introspection—are we advancing equitably? Are policies benefiting all strata of society?

The electoral process is our mechanism for accountability, a tool to measure leadership against promises made. Infrastructure, industry, healthcare, education—these sectors reflect our collective welfare. As citizens, we must assess policies impartially, ensuring transparency and inclusivity. Our vote signifies unity, transcending divisive lines for the greater good. Informed decision-making isn't just a privilege but a necessity. Our diverse nation thrives when every voice is heard and every concern addressed. Let's harness the power of our vote to pave the path towards a stronger, more inclusive India.

Keerti Punia | Chandigarh

scrutiny due to perceptions of American hegemony and its military interventions worldwide. The proposed aid package to Ukraine highlights NATO's role in geopolitical tensions, particularly concerning Russia. However, India's rejection of a US offer to join NATO signals a broader reluctance among nations to align too closely with Western military alliances. As NATO faces an uncertain future, navigating the complexities of global power dynamics will require strategic reforms and a renewed commitment to its founding principles of security and cooperation.

Aryan Kant | Sonipat

MENTAL IMPACT OF NUTRITION

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Mangoes are nature's antidepressants", published on April 15, this is my response. Poor nutrition doesn't just affect our bodies—it deeply impacts our mental well-being too. In an insightful exploration by Rajdeep Joshi, the link between nutrition and mental health is emphasised, with a focus on the often overlooked benefits of mango consumption. Nutrition is the

cornerstone of good health and its deficiency is intertwined with mental health issues like depression and anxiety. While various factors contribute to depression, nutritional imbalances are often sidelined. Key vitamins and minerals play pivotal roles in managing psychological well-being, influencing optimal brain function and stress levels.

Mangoes emerge as natural mood enhancers, packed with serotonin-boosting tryptophan and vital minerals like potassium and magnesium. Incorporating mangoes into our diet not only promotes physical health but also aids in relieving nervous tension and improving mood. The recipe provided, a nutritious mango salad, offers a delicious way to harness the mental wellness benefits of mangoes, blending their goodness with other wholesome ingredients. It's a flavorful reminder that what we eat profoundly impacts not just our bodies, but our minds too.

Jitu Majumdar | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The new age of quantum technology

The scientific community celebrated April 14 as World Quantum Day to raise awareness of quantum science's impact across diverse fields

The world of science is on the cusp of a transformative era driven by the burgeoning field of quantum technology. Quantum science is founded on several key principles that underpin the behaviour of particles and systems at the quantum scale.



The term "quantum scale" refers to the realm of physics that deals with phenomena occurring at very small scales, typically at the level of atoms, subatomic particles and fundamental particles. It encompasses the principles of quantum mechanics, which govern the behaviour of particles and systems at these tiny dimensions. At the heart of quantum technology lies the principles of quantum mechanics, a branch of physics that describes the behaviour of particles at the smallest scales. Quantum mechanics introduces uncertainty and the notion of superposition, where particles can exist in multiple States simultaneously. Furthermore, entanglement, another fundamental quantum phenomenon, links the properties of particles regardless of distance, enabling instantaneous

communication between them. These counterintuitive phenomena, once relegated to the realm of theory, are now being harnessed to create groundbreaking technologies with the potential to revolutionise numerous fields. India has a long and rich history in quantum science. Pioneering work by Satyendra Nath Bose on quantum statistics laid the groundwork for many modern quantum technologies, including Bose-Einstein condensation, quantum superconductivity and quantum information theory. Over the past few decades, advancements in quantum science have surged, laying the groundwork for a new era characterised by unparalleled computational power, secure communication and transformative applications across various sectors. One of the most captivating applications of quantum mechanics is the

development of quantum computers. These machines leverage the power of superposition to perform calculations exponentially faster than traditional computers. By manipulating qubits (quantum bits) that can be 0, 1, or both simultaneously, quantum computers can explore a vast array of possibilities concurrently. This unparalleled processing power holds immense promise for drug discovery, where simulating complex molecules can accelerate the development of life-saving medications.

Another revolutionary application of quantum technology is in secure communication. Quantum key distribution (QKD) utilises the principles of quantum mechanics to establish secure cryptographic keys between parties. By encoding information into the quantum States of particles and leveraging entanglement properties, QKD ensures that any attempt to intercept or eavesdrop on the communication would disturb the quantum State, thereby alerting the parties involved. Quantum cryptography safeguards sensitive information

in critical areas like financial transactions, national security communications and protecting intellectual property. By exploiting the extreme sensitivity of quantum systems to minute changes, scientists are developing sensors capable of detecting the subtlest variations in magnetic fields, gravity and temperature. This has profound implications for medical imaging, where ultra-high-resolution MRIs can provide detailed analyses of tissues and organs, aiding in early disease detection and personalised medicine. In navigation, quantum sensors can lead to more precise GPS and navigation systems, which are crucial for autonomous vehicles and various scientific endeavours. The Government of India, under the Department of Science and Technology, has initiated the National Quantum Mission (NQM), which aims to harness the transformative potential of quantum technology to address national challenges and foster innovation.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN





FIRST COLUMN SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

To return to a life of harmony with nature, we need to realise our spiritual identity



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

A few centuries ago no one worried about climate change, because there was no reason to do so. But as humans extracted more from nature and dumped an increasing amount of waste, including highly toxic substances, on it, the ecological balance began to get disrupted. This process has accelerated over the centuries and brought us to the present situation where, according to some experts, the entire human race faces extinction shortly.

Climate change and global warming are sometimes thought of as things that will happen in the future. But scientists are finding increasing evidence that the planet is changing now - and that people must take a large share of the blame for this phenomenon. They further explain that excessive carbon emissions through industrial and vehicular pollution, use of CFCs and plundering of forests and natural resources have depleted the ozone layer. This has trapped more and more solar radiation inside the earth's atmosphere. As a result, the earth is heating up which has begun to trigger a chain of natural upheavals like floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides in recent times.

To prevent such an eventuality, humans need to work on themselves. Man does not need to master nature. The human soul is the master of all that is material. It is when the soul begins to identify itself with the body that it comes under the influence of matter and vices. In the Golden and Silver Ages, when all human souls had self-awareness and divine qualities, nature was their obedient servant. The elements of nature made life pleasant in that era, which is remembered in religious texts as paradise or heaven.



Because the divine beings of that world were free of vices, they never exploited or despoiled nature. Instead of having to be environment-friendly, they had a truly friendly environment. They were friends not only to their fellow beings but also to all matter. This State of affairs continued till the beginning of the Copper Age when the souls forgot who they were and began to come under the influence of the body and the vices. They then began to exploit natural resources, gradually harming the environment. In return, nature too ceased to obey souls who had lost mastery over themselves. As the influence of the vices grew, so did the plunder of nature and what was once a harmonious relationship turned more into one between an exploiter and the exploited.

The Prime Minister of India in his speech at the UN said "We can achieve the same level of development, prosperity and well-being without necessarily going down the path of reckless consumption. It doesn't mean that economies will suffer; it will mean that our economies will take on a different character. For us in India, respect for nature is an integral part of spiritualism. We treat nature's bounties as sacred. Yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; and a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change."

Now, if we wish to go back from the brink and return to a life of harmony with nature, we need to realise our spiritual identity and values. Such awareness will make us naturally eco-friendly and send out a positive energy that will bring the elements of nature into harmony with us again. If a critical mass of humans begin to live with this spiritual awareness, nature will by itself become our friend and humanity will look at a golden instead of a doubtful future.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist; views are personal)

The roots of Wahhabi extremism



HASAN KHURSHID

The world reels under the grip of Wahhabi terrorism, orchestrated by Saudi rulers with Zionist affiliations, masquerading behind a façade of Islam



Today entire world is gripped in the clutches of Wahhabi terrorism spearheaded by Zionist Saudi rulers, wearing the cloak of pseudo-Islam, who are hiding their faith in Judaism. All terrorist organisations, such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Lashkar e Taiyaba, Lashkar e Jhangvi, etc; follow the ideology of Wahhabism, a newly created cult of Saudi rulers, the pseudo-Muslims.

The activities of this cult can be best explained through the words of renowned British historian Charles Allen, who in his book, God's Terrorists -The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad, writes, "Wahhabi is a guiding ideology behind modern Islamist terrorism. In the 18th century, a violently intolerant re-interpretation of Islam took root in the Arabian desert. Its followers became known after their founder (Sheikh Muhammad Najdi ibn Abd-al Wahhab), as Wahhabi. The creed was then exported to India and its north-west frontier Afghanistan."

Sheikh Najdi was born in 1702, in the desert of Najd, a rocky plateau of the Arabian Peninsula. About Najd, Charles Allen writes, "Indeed for many Arabs, Najd had only negative associations. There was a popular saying that 'Nothing good ever came out of Najd' and it was related in the Hadith that the Prophet had three times been called upon to ask God to bless Najd and had three times been called upon to ask God to bless Najd and had three times refused, answering on the third occasion, 'Earthquakes and dissension are there and there shall arise the horn of Satan.' In the years following the ministry of Al-Wahhab, there were many who argued that this prophecy had been confirmed." In 1744, Najdi ibn Wahhab, sidelining the preaching of true Islam by Prophet Mohammed, created a new version of



WAHHABISM IS NOTHING BUT PSEUDO-ISLAM. HOWEVER, WHEN OPPOSITION MOUNTED AGAINST HIS IDEOLOGY, NAJDI WAS SHREWD ENOUGH TO FIND A PATRON IN MUHAMMED-IBN SAUD, A BEDOUIN TRIBAL CHIEF WHO MADE USE OF HIS NEW VITRIOLIC VERSION OF ISLAM FOR POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION

Islam called Wahhabism. His ideology is enshrined in Kitab-al Tawhid (book of unity), which prescribes the forceful conversion of Muslims and non-Muslims to his Salafi or Wahhabi ideology, wherein he manifestly says, "Follow my ideology, else get ready to be killed." His ideology was strongly opposed by Muslim masses, including his father and uncle.

So, Wahhabism is nothing but pseudo-Islam. However, when the opposition mounted against his ideology, Najdi was shrewd enough to find a patron in Muhammed-ibn-Saud, a Bedouin tribal chief, who made use of his new vitriolic version of Islam for political consolidation. Ibn Saud belonged to the Jewish tribe of Anza Ben Wael.

Islam is not the original religion of Saudi Arab rulers. Sheikh Najdi, also belonging to Jewish ancestry, not only made an alliance with Ibn Saud but also got his daughter married to Ibn Saud's son Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud. Thereafter, the faith was of Sheikh Najdi and the sword was of Ibn Saud. A dynastic government was established as a result of this partnership, which is continuing in the name of Saudi Arabia.

In 1766, Muhammed ibn Saud was killed and his son Abd-al-Aziz took over as Emir (temporal leader). He introduced firearms in the holy war or jihad, replacing conventional weaponry. He accelerated his attacks in a spectacular bid to extend his territory and as Allen says, "He issued every holy warrior a 'firman' or written order addressed to gate-keeper of heaven, requir-

ing him to be admitted forth-with should he die on battle." Since then it has been the common schismatic, fraudulent practice of terror operators to misguide and exploit the youth for recruitment with the promise of paradise.

The history of Wahhabism has been written with the blood of innocent people. On June 2, 1792, Sheikh Muhammad Najdi-ibn-Abd-al Wahhab died, leaving his 24 wives and 18 children and his son-in-law Abd-al-Aziz speeded up his violent actions and conversions. In 1802, he attacked Karbala in Iraq, desecrating the holy shrine of Hazrat Imam Husain. Lieutenant Francis Warden wrote, "They pillaged the whole of it and plundered the tomb of Hazrat Imam Husain, slaying in the course of the day, with circumstances of peculiar cruelty, killing about 5,000 of the inhabitants. A huge amount of booty was seized."

In 1803, Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud obtained a visit permit from the Shareef of Mecca on the pretext of performing Hajj; whereupon his Wahhabi fighters laid waste in Islam's holiest shrine (Kaaba), like the accursed Yazid had desecrated it in 682 AD. According to T.E Ravenshaw, author of A Memorandum on the Sect of Wahhabis, "They robbed the splendid tombs of the Mahomedan saints, who were interred there; and their fanatical zeal did not even spare the Prophet's Mosque (in Medina) which they robbed of the immense treasures and costly furniture to which each Mahomedan Prince of Europe,

Asia and Africa had contributed his share."

In 1804, a Wahhabi gang again crossed the great desert in the Hijaz and destroyed tombs of the Prophet's family members at Jannat-ul-Baqi, the ancient century of Medina and even despoiled the grave of Prophet Mohammed. In 1925, Wahhabis demolished the holy shrines of Hazrat Fatima Zehra, daughter of Prophet Mohammed and his grandsons, as well as the birth-place of Prophet Mohammed.

In India, the 500-year-old Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992, by a radical Hindu mob led by Sangh Parivar leaders. Intellectuals across the globe, irrespective of caste, creed, religion or region, condemned the demolition. Muslims across the world protested. Several lives were lost. In its landmark judgement of 2019, the Supreme Court held that the demolition was illegal and directed the authorities to allot an alternative plot for a mosque as compensation.

On the other hand, the more heinous crime of multiple demolitions of holy shrines, relics and heritage sites together with massacres took place in Saudi Arabia at the behest of Saudi Arab's Wahhabi/Salafi rulers of Zionist ancestry, on 8th Shawwal 1344 Hijri (1925 A.D), but surprisingly no Muslim of any sect reacts or protests against the pseudo-Muslim Saudi rulers. Is it because those perpetrators are Muslim for name sake?

(The writer is a legal journalist and author. The views expressed are personal)

Temperature soars as our ignorance threatens Earth's future

The relentless rise in global temperatures paints a stark portrait of humanity's disregard for the environment, echoing a dire warning for the planet's future

The temperature in the world is increasing day by day, due to the ignorance and carelessness of the people. The problem of rising temperatures is seen all over the world. The world's Climate changes day by day. The rising temperature is a bell of danger for the living world. If we are not aware, then we will not be able to deal with the problems of the future. All living beings need water, air and heat to survive. The changes in the quality and quantity of water and air will give birth to uncountable problems. When the atmosphere or the climate changes the changes are also seen in the living world, as we see now. The desert's biome is differ-



KALI DAS

ent from Iceland's biome. In Australia we can see its national animal kangaroo, In Iceland we can see polar bears and penguins. Fruits, vegetables, flowers and forests also differ due to climate change. When the temperature of the earth is increasing, it poses a big threat to everyone. We don't know whether we will get the same fruits and vegetables tomorrow that we get now. Today the animals, birds or insects that we see all around us will they extinct or survive we don't know. We don't have any information about living beings, how many species of them have already extinct every year is not known doubt they enrich our lives. We

don't account for how much our lives have been affected since they disappeared. If our outer is affected then our inner is also affected. It is worth considering. We are destroying our environment because of our greed. Inhumanity is seen in humans today. There are two reasons behind the increase in global temperature, one is man-made and the other one is natural. Man-made causes are deforestation, cutting of trees, use of vehicles and excessive use of fossil fuels. Natural causes where earthquakes, Storms, forest fires, gas accidents coal burning etc. The main cause of global warming is the greenhouse effect. A greenhouse is a glass house for keeping trees,



which does not allow the heat to go away from the glass house. It is used to save the trees. The greenhouse effect is seen in the increase of carbon dioxide and methane gas. When the temperature increases by one degree, it greatly affects our environment. The ice accumulated

in the South Pole and the North Pole of the Earth is starting to melt. The glaciers in the Himalayas of India are also starting to melt and the water from these glaciers is causing floods in the rivers coming out of the glaciers. Nowadays days Shiv ling in Amarnath is melting within in few days. In the future, as

the heat increases, the rivers will cause flood and they will join the sea with the flood water. Many intellectuals of the world are concerned about the increase in global temperature. The solution to these problems is only by planting trees. The only way we can save our planet is by plantation and forest protection. Trees give us oxygen and reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. So planting trees is only one solution to the problem. The tree planting program should be carried out regularly. When the Seawater rises it enters nearby cities and villages. In the fourth chapter of the twelfth skanda of the Bhagavatam, there is a description of the flood or the pralaya where the

matter of Prithibi becomes hot and causes a flood or pralaya. It is also said that the rays of the sun will destroy the living world. How to save the living world should be the main subject of our course of studies in educational institutions. As long as the world is standing at the door of destruction we should not count the numbers of profit and loss but the message of collective development and collective happiness and peace should be spread. The intellectual people of India always sent messages of peace and goodwill to the world. Today let India be the guide of the world to protect the planet.

(The writer is a columnist, poet and social worker; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Hathway Cable and Datacom posts net profit of Rs 34.57 cr

Hathway Cable and Datacom Ltd on Wednesday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 34.57 crore for the March quarter. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 14.61 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal, Hathway Cable and Datacom Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations during the quarter under review was at Rs 493.37 crore as against Rs 459.59 crore in the year-ago period. Total expenses were marginally higher at Rs 493.52 crore as compared to Rs 484.49 in the corresponding period a year ago, the company said. For FY24, Hathway Cable and Datacom said its consolidated net profit was at Rs 99.29 crore, up from Rs 65.37 crore in the previous fiscal. Consolidated revenue from operations in FY24 was higher at Rs 1,980.97 crore as against Rs 1,858.44 crore in FY23, it said. The company also said its board has approved the appointment of Prashant Kate as the Chief Information Security Officer with effect from April 17, based on recommendation of the nomination and remuneration committee.



Govt notifies specifications of IFFCO's Nano Urea Plus

The government has notified specifications of a new product 'Nano Urea Plus' fertiliser to be manufactured by cooperative IFFCO in the country in the next three years. Nano Urea Plus is a new version of nano urea meant for meeting crop nitrogen requirements at critical growth phases. According to a gazette notification, the government has approved Nano Urea Plus in liquid form with 16 per cent nitrogen content in weight by weight, and pH value of 4-8.5 and viscosity of 5-30. This product will be manufactured by the cooperative major IFFCO for a period of three years, it said. Currently, IFFCO offers 'Nano Urea' which has 1-5 per cent weight by weight nitrogen content. The Nano Urea Plus has more nitrogen. "IFFCO's Nano Urea Plus is an advanced formulation of Nano Urea in which nutrition is redefined to meet crop nitrogen requirement at critical growth phases. It is used in place of conventional urea and other nitrogenous fertilisers for promoting soil health, farmer's profitability & sustainable environment," IFFCO Managing Director and CEO U S Awasthi said on a social media platform X.



Funskool seeks to transform India into global hub

Toy manufacturer Funskool India, part of tyre major MRF Group, has taken up expansion at its manufacturing facilities in Tamil Nadu to make India a global hub for toy manufacturing. The expansion work at its premises in Ranipet, would effectively double the manufacturing capacities. The upgraded facilities in both Unit 1 and 2 of the manufacturing facilities represent a substantial investment in Funskool's production capabilities, a company statement here said on Wednesday. "Funskool India has experienced remarkable growth over the years. With this expansion, we solidify our position as a leader in India's toy industry and move closer to our goal of transforming India into a global hub for toy manufacturing" Funskool India Ltd Chairman Arun Mammen said after inaugurating the upgraded facilities. Besides the two units at Ranipet, Funskool India has 1.62 lakh sq ft of manufacturing space at its first plant in Goa.



"India's economy will grow at 8-8.3% in current fiscal"

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is estimated to grow at 8-8.3 per cent in the current fiscal, industry body PHDCCI said on Wednesday. The country's GDP will grow at an average of 6.7 per cent over the next 23 years to become a USD 34.7 trillion economy by 2047, with a per capita income of USD 21,000, it added. "We are projecting a growth rate of 8 to 8.3 per cent for India's economy for the current financial year," PHDCCI Chief Economist SP Sharma said. Addressing a press conference, he said India's economy has robust growth fundamentals. "Gradually after 2035, the growth rate will start decelerating from the peak, and on an average, our growth rate, the real GDP (gross domestic product), will be 6.7 per cent overall in the next 23 years," Sharma noted.



India's economy will attain the size of USD 34.7 trillion by 2047 with a per capita income of USD 21,000, the industry body said. The chamber has suggested 10 key enablers for the country to become a developed economy by 2047 in a report. It has recommended reducing the cost of doing business and enhancing the global scal-

ability of promising sectors like fintech, information technology, automobile and renewable energy to boost the economy. The chamber has suggested a special focus on the development of the semiconductor industry. It has called for continued handholding to the startup ecosystem to become the second largest in the world by

2030. The recommendation also includes capacity building for exports -- with a potential 75 products to be focused on to enhance export volumes in global trade. The chamber has suggested reform measures for the agriculture and food processing sector, besides filling the vacant positions at the national and state levels, including the judiciary, police, medical and paramedic, military and paramilitary and education, among others. It has also pitched for a greater push to digital transformation to be among the top five countries in the Government AI Readiness Index by 2047. The 10-pronged approach also suggests bolstering the renewable energy segment to enhance its installed capacity to 1,500 GW by 2047.



'Investment in fixed income products will double'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Grip Invest, a technology-driven trading platform for fixed-income products, expects investment through its platform to double to Rs 2,000 crore over the next 12 months. The total investment in corporate bonds and other debt products has crossed Rs 1,000 crore recently and it should double in the next 12-14 months, Grip Invest Founder and CEO Nikhil Aggarwal said. There is growing interest among retail investors in fixed-income products as the risk is lesser compared to the stock market, he said.

Crude oil import bill drops but import dependency hits new high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's crude oil import dropped 16 per cent in the fiscal year ended March 31 as lower international rates but the dependency on overseas suppliers rose to a new high, official data showed. India imported 232.5 million tonnes of crude oil, which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel, in the 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024), almost the same as in the previous financial year. But it paid USD 132.4 billion for the imports in FY24 as against USD 157.5 billion import bill in 2022-23, oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) data showed. The world's third largest oil importing and consuming nation has been able to add to its domestic production drop, raising its import dependence. Import dependence of crude oil soared to 87.7 per cent in



2023-24, up from 87.4 per cent, according to PPAC. Domestic crude oil production was almost unchanged at 29.4 million tonnes in 2023-24. Besides crude oil, India spent USD 23.4 billion on import of 48.1 million tonnes of petroleum products like LPG. It also exported 62.2 million tonnes of products for USD 47.4 billion. Other than oil, India also imports gas in its liquid form, called LNG. After the price shock of 2022-23, import of 30.91 billion cubic meters of gas cost USD 13.3 billion in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024.

This compared with USD 17.1 billion spent on import of 26.3 bcm of gas in 2022-23 when energy prices shot up to record levels in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Net oil and gas import bill (crude oil plus petroleum product plus LNG import bill minus exports) stood at USD 121.6 billion in 2023-24, down from USD 144.2 billion. Petroleum imports as percentage of India's gross imports (in value terms) stood at 25.1 per cent in 2023-24, down from 28.2 per cent in 2022-23. Similarly, petroleum exports as a percentage of the country's gross exports came at 12 per cent in 2023-24 as compared to 14 per cent in the previous year. India's fuel consumption rose 4.6 per cent to a record 233.3 million tonnes in the year ended March 31, 2023. This compared with 223 million tonnes consumption in 2022-23 and 201.7 million tonnes in 2021-22.

Samsung introduces IoT-driven TV sets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading consumer electronics maker Samsung is targeting to cross Rs 10,000 crore sales mark from its TV business in 2024 in the Indian market led by growing demand and premiumisation in the segment, a company official said on Wednesday. The company, which introduced a new line-up of Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled TV sets, controls around 21 per cent of the vol-



ume of the fast-growing Indian TV market and expects to consolidate beyond that in 2024, said Samsung India Senior Vice President, Visual Display Business Mohandeep Singh.

Tata Comm profit declines marginally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Communications' consolidated profit declined marginally to Rs 321.55 crore in the fourth quarter ended on March 31, 2024, according to a regulatory filing. The company posted a profit of Rs 326.64 crore in the same period a year ago. The consolidated revenue of Tata Communications during the reported quarter increased by 24.5 per cent to

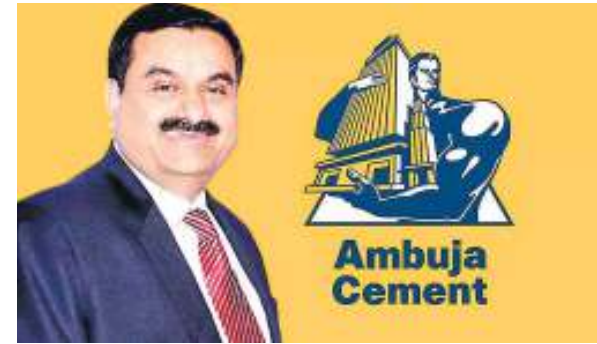
Rs 5,691.7 crore from Rs 4,568.66 crore in the same quarter a year ago. For the year ended on March 31, 2024, net profit declined to Rs 969.58 crore from Rs 1,800.87 crore at the end of 2022-23. The annual income from operations of Tata Communications increased by 17.5 per cent to Rs 20,968.82 crore in fiscal year 2024 from Rs 17,838.26 crore in fiscal year 2023.

Adani infuses Rs 8,339 cr more in Ambuja Cements

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani's family infused an additional Rs 8,339 crore in Ambuja Cements, raising its stake in the company to 70.3 per cent, to help the cement maker's manufacturing capacity. The Adani family previously invested Rs 5,000 crore in the company on October 18, 2022, and Rs 6,661 crore on March 28, 2024. With the latest investment, it has completed Rs 20,000 crore planned infusion, the company said in a statement. "The promoters of the company - Adani family - has fully subscribed to the warrants program in the company by

Raises stake to 70.3 per cent



further infusing Rs 8,339 crore, thereby infusing a total amount of Rs 20,000 crore," it said.

The latest infusion raises the Adani family stake in Ambuja Cement by 3.6 per

cent to 70.3 per cent. In all, its holding in Ambuja Cement has increased from 63.2 per cent to 70.3 per cent. The fund infusion will help Ambuja accelerate its growth ambitions to almost double its existing capacity to 140 million tonnes per annum by 2028 from 76.1 million tonnes as of December 31. "With this, promoters have further strengthened Ambuja post-acquisition, giving Ambuja capital flexibility for accelerated growth, capital management initiatives and best-in-class balance sheet strength to accomplish its various strategic initiatives," the statement said.

FY25 to be transformative year, says Vedanta's Anil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mining tycoon Anil Agarwal has said the current financial year that started on April 1 will be a transformative year for his conglomerate Vedanta as it prioritises disciplined growth while parent eyes a USD 3 billion deleveraging in the next three years. In a communication to shareholders, Vedanta Ltd Chairman Agarwal said the group will pursue sustainable growth

while maintaining a healthy balance sheet. "These include further deleveraging (parent) Vedanta Resources by USD 3 billion in the next 3 years and achieving an annual group EBITDA of USD 7.5 billion within 2 years," he said. "FY25 will be a transformative year for us on many fronts as we prioritise disciplined growth, operational excellence, and exploring opportunities along the value chain," he said.



WORKSPACE IN INDIA

GCCs, 3-party IT service providers driving demand : Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

International companies outsourcing jobs to India have become a major driver of office demand in the country with global capability centres and third-party IT service providers contributing 46 per cent to the total leasing of workspace during 2023, according to Knight Frank. Real estate consultant Knight Frank, in its latest report 'Asia Pacific Horizon: Harnessing the Potential of Offshoring', noted that the offshoring industry in India has grown significantly into a



leading global service provider, accounting for 57 per cent of the global offshoring market. The consultant explained that the offshoring market involves companies outsour-

ing business processes or services to external providers located abroad, aiming to leverage cost savings, specialised skills, and operational efficiencies. The offshoring market, also known as Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), encompasses various models such as Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and Global Business Services (GBS). GCCs are internal units set up by companies in offshore locations, while the GBS involves centralised service delivery units providing a range of services globally.

Retail investors' interest in MFs growing: ICRA Analytics

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Rising awareness and growing interest among retail investors in mutual funds (MF) have led to a doubling of the number of folios in the last five years, according to leading research firm ICRA Analytics. The total number of MF portfolios, as of March 2024, stood at 17.79 lakh crore, up from 8.97 lakh crore in March 2020. ICRA Analytics said retail investors are showing greater interest in investing in equities and bonds through the MF route.

The firm said that according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India, retail investors account for 91.3 per cent of the MF folios, while high net worth individuals (HNIs) constitute around eight per cent and institutional investors at less than one per cent. ICRA Analytics said that equity-oriented funds top the list of folios at 68.7 per cent, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) at 11.7 per cent, while hybrid schemes comprise 7.7 per cent.



EU questions TikTok on app that pays users for watching

PNS ■ LONDON

European Union regulators said Wednesday they're seeking details from TikTok on a new app from the video sharing platform that pays users to watch videos. The European Commission said it sent TikTok a "request for information" on the TikTok Lite app that has been quietly released in France and Spain. The commission wants to know about the risk assessment that TikTok should have carried out before deploying the app in the European Union. "We have already been in direct contact with the Commission regarding this product and will respond to the request for information," TikTok said in a statement. Such evaluations are required under the bloc's Digital Services Act, a sweeping law that took effect last year with the aim of cleaning up social media platforms. The commission is the 27-nation bloc's executive arm and top enforcer of digital regulations.

TECH ROLES IN NON-TECH SECTORS

Women participation to grow by 24.3%: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women's participation in technology roles in non-tech businesses is expected to grow by nearly a quarter by 2027 across all levels, including freshers, junior, mid-senior, leadership, and C-Suite levels, a report said on Wednesday. The tech women's participation rate in non-tech industries stood at 19.4 lakh workforce in 2023, which is expected to grow by 24.3 per cent to 24.1 lakh employees by 2027, TeamLease Digital's report - Women at the Heart of India's



Digital Evolution, has revealed. With only 0.5 per cent of the total women workforce engaged in tech roles in non-tech sectors,

there is a pressing need to amplify female participation in this domain. Having said that, the tech sector is increasingly priori-

tising the employment of women and India's women's STEM participation stands at 43 per cent globally, which is the highest in the world," TeamLease Digital Chief Executive Officer Neeti Sharma said. This would further grow this year (2025) on the basis of the sustained efforts of the government and women-centric programs enabling increased participation of women in tech, inclusive maternity and childcare support, she stated. The TeamLease Digital - 'Women at the Heart of India's Digital Evolution', report is

based on data obtained from its wide network and proprietary database, as well as several public sources from 2019 till 2023. Further, mentioning city-specific statistics, the report found that the percentage of women joining the workforce from tier I cities (55 per cent) outnumbered the tier II cities. Women hiring is projected to centre in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat in the coming months, with talent being hired in locations such as Chennai, Pune, Nasik, Coimbatore, Kochi, Aurangabad, and Vadodara, it stated.

Global uncertainties drag mkts from peaks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global uncertainties, mainly escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, have led to a massive correction in the equity markets in the last 3 days after a record-shattering rally that saw the BSE Sensex crossing the historic 75,000 mark last week. Hotter-than-expected US inflation data fuelled concerns that the Federal Reserve will hold back on delivering the cuts to interest rates. Also, foreign fund outflows and profit-taking contributed to the correc-



tion in the equity markets. "The heavy correction in the market can be attributed to several factors, including the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, which have heightened geopolitical uncertainties and prompted risk aversion among investors.

BEING A 'MARHAM' FOR THOSE IN NEED

Dedicated to supporting different causes, including autism, thalassemia, and issues of transgender people, *The Pioneer* brings to you the NGO Marham Resonating Resilience, as we connect with the founder on the causes.



SHIKHA DUGGAL

The question is not what I have achieved, but what have I done for others to achieve?" said His Highness Aga Khan. This feeling was the driving force behind the founding of the NGO Marham Resonating Resilience in Hyderabad. Their goal with Marham is to make every moment of tears valuable, every heart unique, and every smile that is lost come back. They went through several delicate subjects to try to make a difference in the lives of at least a few people. They have, in fact, begun working on issues including autism, thalassemia, and transgender people. We find out more in an exclusive interview with the founder, Dr. Nabat Lakhani: "As the founder, I was already very clear about the kind of philanthropy I wanted to perform in the city and for the people living in the city when I first arrived here in Hyderabad. Something truly remarkable! My main goal was to tell the tales of the unsung heroes. I

began with a magazine that had stories that weren't very popular or successful but that did highlight a number of the difficulties they had overcome."

In the stories that she wrote, she first encountered a group of transgender people. Later, she came across two autistic champions named Varun and Usaid, whose tales touched her differently—as if they had always been family. Also an obstetrician-gynaecologist, she shares, "They grew closer to me as I learned more about them and listened to them more. One of my family members has major thalassemia; thus, I felt our nation needed to take action to stop something preventable."

To raise awareness of thalassemia, Marham organised a panel discussion with representatives from all relevant fields, such as gynaecologists, hematopathologists, pediatricians, blood bank pathologists, and parents. The goal was to reach a consensus and persuade them that the most effective way to prevent this fatal disease is through antenatal screening for thalassemia. She also mentioned, "We didn't end there, either. Depending on the lab, the test can cost between Rs. 1500 and Rs. 4000. After almost seven months of steadfast work despite many obstacles, Marham started persuading gynaecologists to screen all pregnant and planning couples at just 200. Now, after nearly seven months of hard work, we are almost at the finalisation of our tie-up with the Telangana Health and Family Welfare Department, where tests



will be performed at no cost."

They produced a short video about autism; the performers are all autistic, and it was shown in front of the governor. It has taken home multiple awards and is currently undergoing testing on over-the-top platforms to educate the public about autism and the fact that people with autism are not disabled. In addition, she emphasises, "We conducted a walk and encouraged other bloggers and Instagrammers to talk about it for it to spread further. The autism odyssey was a two-day conference that I created out of my brainchild's desire to bring together all the players involved in improving these people's lives, whether it be in education, therapy, a job, or other areas. With it, we held a cultural event to highlight the Asd's abilities and demonstrate inclusivity. We opened the first autism discussion forum in Hyderabad to meet the goal of providing support for every parent who asks, "What's next for us?"

The foundation has asked the Telangana CSR Wing Director to assist them in getting brochures

Marham, I took the brunt of the consequences."

Then their literary works support inclusion by encouraging those who are stigmatised to tell their stories and come out to live on par with society. They also try to integrate them at different levels in their works before even urging others to do the same. For instance, "When we discuss employment with people who have autism, we first offer them jobs in different capacities within our own businesses, as well as those of our friends and family, and then we push society to follow suit. We place more faith in deeds than in words. Collaboration and teamwork, in my opinion, can only slightly alter the marginalised work we are trying to do. For a greater impact, it is crucial to unite individuals working on related projects in clusters under one roof."

What about their turning points? Alright, together with spouse screening, they have examined over 1000 samples for thalassemia major, with a 4% detection rate. Although parent groups already exist, they have launched the first-ever forum just for individuals with autism. However, the founder's goal was for the individuals to have a voice that goes beyond their parents, just like any of them. More than 100 members have enlisted thus far. They created the first awareness film, which isn't a documentary and features acting by autistic people themselves. It has four festival victories. They are still employing people with autism in a

variety of ways. They have taken care of the needs and outings of the thirteen girls they adopted from an orphanage, as well as their English and soft skills training.

The achievements don't stop there: "We have funded four college degrees for the city's impoverished families. We have several locations set up for menstruation products, literature, and rations for different city slums. We've established libraries in two slum education centers. We conducted a free breast screening event featuring heavily discounted scans and patient follow-ups (we screened 150 people, of whom 3 were identified and received treatment). We have been successful in persuading the Telangana government to collaborate with private practitioners to test patients for thalassemia at a modest cost of only Rs. 200. We are currently doing the first breast screening in the city, using visually challenged people who have had extensive training from Enable India."

Future plans call for them to actually include these stigmatised groups in schools, open a transgender cafe, eradicate Thalassemia major, usher in a time when people with autism work alongside them in a variety of fields, enable autistic people to live independently even after their parents pass away, and, above all, live up to their core motto, Return Every Missing Smile.

The founder states, "I don't understand why the marginalised communities are given less attention in this society, as she ends our interview with us. "Why treat them with contempt? When there is work to be done, these individuals are asked to work hard and are exploited as cheap labour. And these 'owners' don't even bother to give them payment!"

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Bhoomika Meena, known for her compelling movies like *Slum Golf* and *Chuhedaani*, shines in the women-centric movie *Dukaan*, which delves into the sensitive topic of surrogacy, often surrounded by several misconceptions. "The process began with extensive script readings, discussions with the directors, and working on the Gujarati accent," reveals the actress, who plays the character of Kinjal. Basically, understanding Kinjal's background extends beyond the film by providing a fantastic way to fully understand and portray her complexities. In the realm of *Dukaan*, where performances have garnered acclaim, embodying the role of Kinjal was challenging for her. "Bringing Kinjal to life in film presented an exhilarating challenge. Navigating her complexities, understanding her origins, and deciphering her reactions required a deep dive into the character's nature. While the director's vision provided invaluable guidance, it was my exploration and interaction with the character that truly shaped the portrayal. Embracing the unknown territory of Kinjal's persona was both daunting and rewarding—an aspect of acting that I relish." "Her childhood memories, her relationship with her father, and how the absence of her mother shaped her worldview. Her passion for mathematics and the challenges she faced in pursuing education led her to become a math teacher in Ahmedabad. For me, understanding the character deeply is crucial," she explains. The film sheds light on surrogacy while also exploring themes of love and sacrifice, and there is something for the audience to learn from. She recalls, "When I was in my 8th grade, I created a presentation on surrogacy for my mother, who is a gynaecologist. With surrogacy being a sensitive topic, there have been several misconceptions surrounding it. Siddharth and Garima have meticulously researched and portrayed both the commercial and emotional suspects of surrogacy in our film. By doing so, they aim to dispel misunderstandings and provide a clearer understanding of this complex issue. From this perspective, our film became a must-watch." Working with visionary directors is a dream for most actors, and so has it been for Bhoomika too. Collaborating with Siddharth-Garima, renowned for their compelling storytelling, was a truly enlightening experience for her. "Their meticulous vision and profound understanding of the script profoundly influenced my portrayal of Kinjal. With their clarity and direction, half the battle was already won, ensuring a performance aligned with their impactful narrative." As a newcomer to Bollywood, the role of Kinjal, she feels, tends to shape the representation of women and their compelling narratives. She expresses, "*Dukaan* truly celebrated the strength and depth of women's experiences and

relationships. My character Kinjal embodies this empowerment by playing a pivotal role in Jasmine's journey, showcasing the resilience and support among the women. Through characters like Kinjal, the film highlights the nurturing yet formidable nature of women, shaping a narrative that resonates with real-life experiences." Her journey from being a Kathak dancer to Bollywood, she believes, has been incredibly influential in shaping her approach to acting. Theatre experiences during her school, college, and professional years also played a significant role. "Drawing inspiration from life itself, I am eager to learn, often seeking out new teachers and workshops that enhance my craft. Just like my days as a student juggling academics and extracurriculars, I continue to explore and learn in Mumbai. *Mujhe tho aisa lagta hai har jagah gyaan bat raha hai bas seekh lo* (It seems to me that knowledge is everywhere, just grasp it)." In the realm of cinema, where stories often delve into the depths of human emotions, there exists a profound responsibility for actors and actresses. When a film tackles sensitive issues, it demands more than just memorising lines and hitting marks. It necessitates a deep understanding, empathy, and a willingness to bear the emotional weight of the characters they portray. She says, "As an actor, my solemn duty is to embrace the essence of the character. Guided by the director's vision, I tread the delicate line between reality and illusion, weaving authenticity into every gesture and every dialogue. It is in this truthful portrayal that the soul of the character unfurls—a tapestry of emotions, struggles, and victories. Through the lens of the camera, I honour the weight of responsibility, ensuring that even the most charged themes find their gentle resonance on the silver screen." Be it her characters in *Slum Golf* or *Chuhedaani*, she feels that what unites all these characters is their blend of vulnerability and relatability. In the fast pace of life and working in a dynamic industry like Bollywood, Bhoomika tends to prioritise self-care and maintain her unique self. "When I first set foot in Bombay, a sense of belonging enveloped me," she recalls. It was as if the city whispered, "You're home." Amidst the myriad challenges, everything seemed to align—the chaos, the dreams, and the relentless pursuit of my passion. But let me digress; that's a tale for another day. Love and focus became my guiding stars. They kept me grounded, even during the tempests. And discipline? Oh, I embraced it like a cherished partner. Early mornings, crisp routines—I enjoy them. My body and mind, my instruments, demanded care after all working hours. So, I danced, sang, and immersed myself in acting exercises. Books became my confidantes, whispering secrets of the craft. And then there's my secret garden—the window grill adorned with dozens of plants. In Bombay, where

'In Bombay, where dreams collide, I found content in art'

Bhoomika Meena, who is currently gaining much traction for her portrayal of Kinjal in *Dukaan*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing insights on her character, working with the director's on the sensitive topic of surrogacy, and more.



dreams collide and realities intertwine, I find content in the art, the process, and the simple joys—a symphony of belonging." As an artist, Bhoomika intends to reflect the truth through her work. Movies are the mirrors of society, and so, "I crave to be part of impactful movies that portray the

complexities of a character and explore various aspects of real life. I am an aspiring visionary, fueled by dreams and a deep desire to create a lasting impact through my work. With unwavering faith and the grace of a higher power, I am confident that my aspirations will indeed become reality."



The importance of preconception counselling

INTRODUCTION:

In today's society, many people choose to postpone motherhood for a variety of reasons, including job growth, financial stability, and personal aspirations. While this trend encourages individuals to follow their goals, it also emphasises the significance of smart family planning. Planning for a child later in life requires distinct considerations and potential problems; thus, preconception consultation with an appropriate specialist is an important step in motherhood.

ADDRESSING UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS:

During preconception counselling, couples can address any underlying health issues that may impact fertility or pregnancy outcomes. Conditions including polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, thyroid issues, and reproductive organ anomalies can all have an influence on fertility and need specific treatment. Fertility specialists can assist patients in overcoming these hurdles and improving their chances of pregnancy by conducting a thorough examination, doing all the necessary investigations, and developing tailor-made programs in terms of weight loss or any ailments that need further control before planning pregnancy. Preconception counselling involves consulting a fertility expert before conception to improve reproductive health and increase the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy. This comprehensive approach tackles numerous elements of fertility, such as lifestyle choices, medical history, genetic testing, and fertility preservation alternatives. Couples may confidently navigate the complexity of family planning when they work with a fertility expert.

AGE-RELATED FERTILITY CHALLENGES:

As people age, both male and female fertility declines, with a steady drop in reproductive capacity and an increasing chance of infertility. Women's ovarian reserve and egg quality drop, and men's sperm quality and quantity may

decrease. Couples who meet with a fertility expert can examine their reproductive health and explore proactive strategies to improve fertility results. If the tests show that the fertility potential has gone down, you should take appropriate steps immediately. If the fertility status is good, then you can be reassured that you can comfortably delay the pregnancy in case you are not planning. If you are in the borderline range, you can think of egg freezing.

Genetic counselling and screening are essential for couples considering having a baby later in life to determine the risk of hereditary illnesses and chromosomal abnormalities. Certain genetic disorders, such as Down syndrome, Tay-Sachs disease, and cystic fibrosis,

Couples who get genetic testing and counselling can make educated decisions regarding family planning, including the possibility of preimplantation genetic testing (PGT) during assisted reproductive treatments.

Couples may explore fertility preservation strategies to delay pregnancy for personal or medical reasons. Women who expect to have children later in life may choose to consider egg freezing (oocyte cryopreservation) as a way to preserve their fertility. Similarly, men might explore sperm banking to save their sperm quality and viability for future use. Individuals who approach fertility preservation proactively can maintain reproductive autonomy and parental possibilities later in life.

Planning for a child later in life allows people to follow their dreams and objectives before beginning a family. However, in order to maximise reproductive health and fertility potential, this decision must be carefully considered and implemented. Preconception counselling with a fertility specialist can provide vital advice and support, addressing age-related reproductive issues, underlying health concerns, genetic considerations, and fertility preservation strategies. Couples can confidently begin on their route to motherhood by taking proactive precautions and obtaining professional counsel.

(The author, Dr. Lakshmi Chirumamilla, is a Fertility Consultant, at Nova IVF Fertility, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad.)

what's brewing?



Bollywood actress Rakul Preet Singh launched her first dine-in restaurant, "Arambam - Starts with Millet" at Madhapur in Hyderabad. The fitness enthusiast is also onboarding as the brand ambassador for Arambam. Known for her commitment to a healthy lifestyle and nutritional well-being, Rakul with Arambam represents a shared vision for fostering healthy dietary practices and overall well-being.



Rakul Preet Singh



Vision IAS conducted a seminar on UPSC preparations, where Mulagani Udaya Krishna Reddy, who secured All India Rank-780th, and Kesarapu Meena, who secured All India Rank-899th both students of Vision IAS Hyderabad center, shared some strategies during the seminar.



Amiksha



Actresses Amiksha, Preeti, and Sravanthi, along with Madhav Bung, managing director of Brinda Diamonds, graced the launch of Anaga lab grown diamond jewellery from the House of Brinda Diamonds, at Basheerbagh in Hyderabad.



Shrutika



Bhuvana



Urmila



Preeti Kumar



Sravanthi



Aparna

PARTY

CURTAIN RAISER

CURTAIN RAISER



The city of pearls, Hyderabad welcomed a remarkable addition to its vibrant preview of NOHO - an interactive pan-Asian culinary oasis. The weekend echoed the concept in its true sense over an immersive interactive dining high-energy experience, drawing inspiration from the vibrant silk-route, Noho, stands as a haven where dining transcends into an exquisite experience.

Step into the vibrant world of Street Food Friday at Cayenne Mercure Hyderabad KCP. Immerse yourself in a celebration of local-style street food, right here. From the crispy perfection of pakodas to the mouthwatering goodness of pav bhaji, and from the tangy burst of golgappas to the hearty warmth of ragada, our menu is a true ode to the flavors and traditions of Indian street cuisine. Join us for an unforgettable gastronomic journey that will transport you to the bustling streets of India.

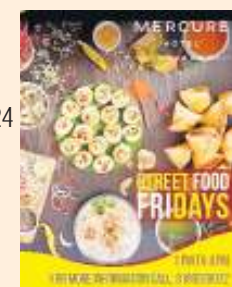
Street Food Friday promises an experience that will tantalize your taste buds and leave you craving for more.

Don't miss out on this culinary extravaganza.

When : 19th & 26th April 2024

Where : Cayenne, Mercure Hyderabad KCP

Time : 7 PM-11 PM



Calling all sneakerheads in Hyderabad

Experience a journey like never before with Superkicks, India's renowned sneaker and streetwear brand. Get ready to unveil the highly anticipated Beatcamp experience, where you can immerse yourself in a harmonious blend of learning and play. This innovative event offers an unforgettable voyage of exploration and artistic expression, where you can discover your hidden talents and showcase your skills. Join us for an evening of inspiration and creativity, featuring a Co-Sign Listening Experience spotlighting @pinacoladabluess, cutting-edge fashion at a pop-up by @labelnain, and a Beat Making

Workshop led by @amp.bph.And. The night will conclude with an exclusive After Party, where you can celebrate your journey and network with fellow sneakerheads.

Date : 20th April 2024, Saturday

Location : Superkicks Hyderabad

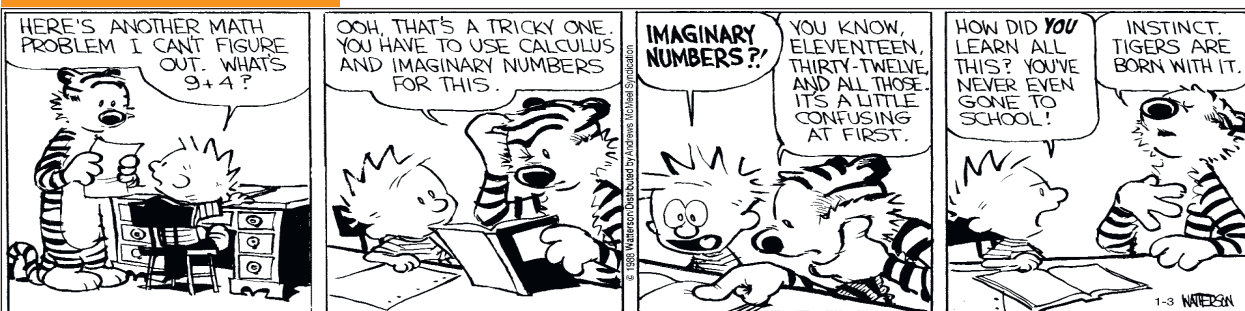
Timing : 4 PM - 7 PM - beat Making Workshop
7 PM - 8 PM - Pinacolada blues Co-sign Listening Session
8 PM onwards: After-Party (RSVP Only)

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



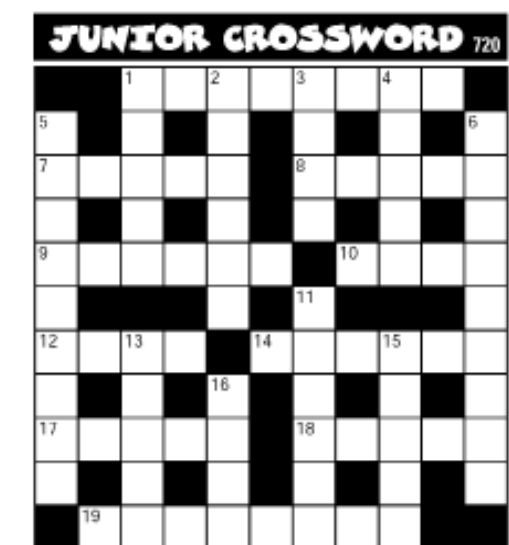
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

9	1	4	3	7	2	6	8	5
5	2	7	4	6	8	3	9	1
8	3	6	9	5	1	4	7	2
1	9	2	5	3	6	8	4	7
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2	8	3	1	4	7	9	5	6
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6	5	9	8	2	3	7	1	4

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

- Observing
- A thrown weapon
- A large stream
- The writer of a book
- A small green creature
- Weapons
- Purchased
- Beneath
- Railway coaches pulled by an engine
- Soft shoes worn indoors

DOWN

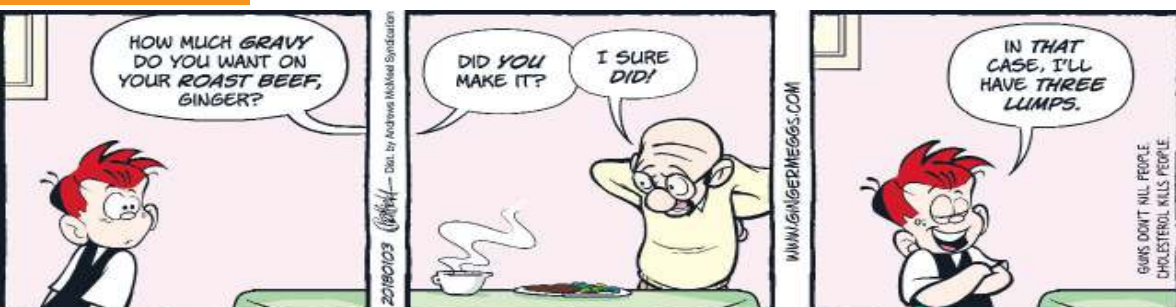
- Grind this up for flour
- Extreme fear
- Difficult

4 Not ever
5 A green pointy vegetable
6 Scares
11 A container for a drink
13 A soldier's award
15 Sheep eat this
16 A journey

SOLUTION 719

W	R	I	G	L	E	D	U
I	T	E	O	T			
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GINGER MEGGS



Akhilesh Kalaru talks about 'Market Mahalakshmi': A PRODUCER'S PERSPECTIVE

Indianapolis-based producer Akhilesh Kalaru, the man behind the upcoming film *Market Mahalakshmi*, is gearing up for its release with optimism and excitement. In an interaction with the media on Wednesday, Akhilesh shared insights into his journey, the film's unique narrative, and the challenges and joys of producing a movie from afar.



K. RAMYA SREE

Akhilesh Kalaru, a familiar name in Indianapolis, is now making waves in the world of Indian cinema with his debut production, *Market Mahalakshmi*. This romantic drama, helmed by acclaimed director VS Mukkesh, promises a refreshing take on love and relationships. Starring Kerintha Parvateesam and Praneekaanyika, the film is set to hit theaters on April 19 under the banner of B2P Studios. Reflecting on his journey into filmmaking, Akhilesh shares, "I've been passionate about movies since childhood. However, family commitments led me down a different path initially. But once the time was right, I decided to pursue my dream, especially after connecting with director VS Mukkesh, whose dedication and vision inspired me."

Taking on a project with a relatively new director might seem like a risk to some, but for Akhilesh, it was a calculated leap of faith. "There's no business without risk," he asserts, adding, "When Mukesh narrated the story of *Market Mahalakshmi*, I saw the potential and decided to back this project wholeheartedly."

Speaking about the film's narrative, Akhilesh maintains a sense of intrigue:

"The story is deceptively simple—a love story between an independent girl and a software professional. We've kept a significant surprise under wraps, waiting for the audience to discover it on-screen." Coordinating production while residing in the US presented its own set of challenges, but Akhilesh credits his team and director Mukkesh for making the process smoother. "Managing shooting schedules and production remotely was initially daunting, but with a dedicated team led by Mukesh, we navigated through successfully."

When asked about casting decisions, Akhilesh is resolute in his satisfaction. He shared, "Both Parvateesam and Praneekaanyika brought their characters to life with incredible chemistry. The ensemble cast delivered beyond expectations."

Addressing concerns about box office success, Akhilesh exudes confidence. "I believe in the potential of *Market Mahalakshmi*. Completing this project was no small feat, and with its imminent release, we are optimistic about its reception." Looking beyond this venture, Akhilesh is already eyeing future projects. "This film has been a tremendous learning experience. I hope to produce more films and carve a niche for myself in the industry."

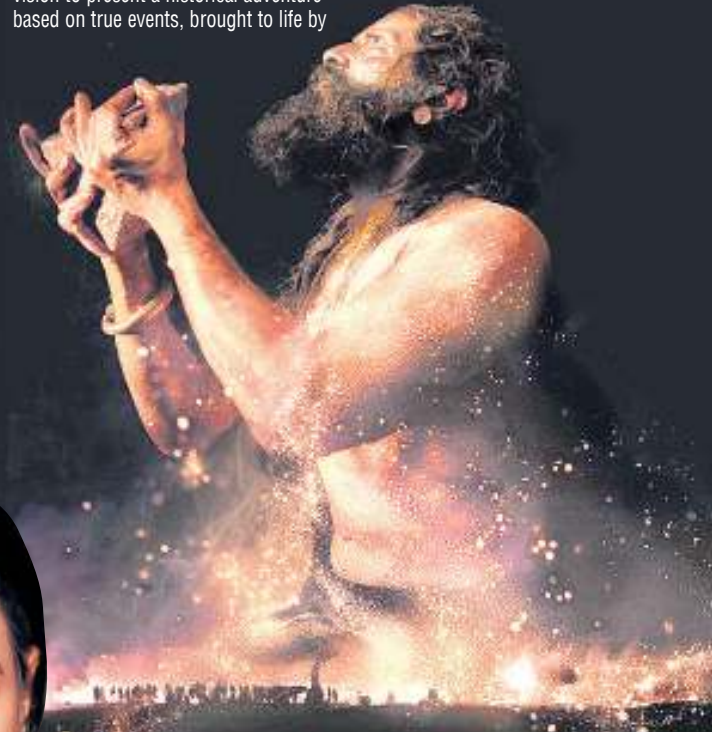
As *Market Mahalakshmi* prepares to hit screens alongside other releases, Akhilesh emphasises support for all filmmakers. "Every movie deserves success. I urge audiences to embrace diverse narratives."

For Akhilesh Kalaru, *Market Mahalakshmi* isn't just a debut—it's a testament to his passion and dedication to storytelling. As the countdown to April 19 begins, anticipation mounts for this promising cinematic offering from B2P Studios.

Vikram's birthday treat from THANGALAAN

In a thrilling development, Jio Studios and Studio Green Films have teamed up for the eagerly awaited film *THANGALAAN*, helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Pa. Ranjith and starring the iconic actor Chiyaan Vikram. The collaboration promises a cinematic spectacle set against the historic backdrop of the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) in the early 1900s, showcasing the untold story of oppressed communities involved in the exploration of gold in South India. As anticipation for *THANGALAAN* reaches fever pitch, the project marked a special milestone on Wednesday—Chiyaan Vikram's birthday—with an exclusive glimpse release. This captivating video offers fans a glimpse into Vikram's stunning transformation for the film, serving as a mesmerising tribute to his special day. Director Pa. Ranjith shared his excitement about the project and the tribute video, stating, "*Thangalaan* is a vision to present a historical adventure based on true events, brought to life by the phenomenal efforts of Vikram sir and the entire team. I am thrilled that Jio Studios, is partnering with our producer, Studio Green K.E. Gnanavelraja, to present this film. I am confident that *THANGALAAN* will resonate globally with audiences."

The ensemble cast of *THANGALAAN* includes Vikram alongside Parvathy Thiruvothu, Malavika Mohanan, Pasupathi, and Harikrishnan Anbudurai. With music direction by G.V. Prakash Kumar, the film promises a compelling narrative rooted in real-life events, shedding light on the overlooked contributions of marginalised communities during the gold exploration era. Currently in post-production, *THANGALAAN* is gearing up for a grand theatrical release across Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Hindi languages. The official release date will be unveiled soon, promising audiences a captivating historical adventure brought to life on the silver screen.



Vikram's Chiyaan 62 officially titled as Veera Dheera Sooran

Celebrated actor Chiyaan Vikram, renowned for his versatile performances and distinctive roles, received a special birthday treat on Wednesday as the makers of his upcoming film released the title teaser. It has been confirmed that his 62nd film is titled *Veera Dheera Sooran*, promising a captivating cinematic experience. Directed by SU Arun Kumar under the banner of HR Pictures, it showcases Chiyaan in a compelling mass avatar that is sure to thrill his fans. The title teaser introduces Vikram's character, Kali, a grocery shop owner who finds himself confronted by villains from his past. In the action-packed teaser, Kali's calm demeanour belies his formidable capabilities as he faces off against thugs determined to exact revenge. Armed with wit and firepower, Kali outsmarts his adversaries, leaving them intimidated and defeated. The teaser hints at a film filled with adrenaline-pumping sequences and the trademark charisma of Chiyaan Vikram. *Veera Dheera Sooran* promises to be a high-octane entertainer, packed with mass appeal and gripping narrative twists. SJ Surya and Dusara Vijayan join Vikram in pivotal roles, adding depth to the ensemble cast. The film features music by GV Prakash Kumar and cinematography by Theni Eshwar, elevating the visual and auditory experience.



Nithiin's Robin Hood releasing on December 20

Prepare to witness Hero Nithiin like never before in his upcoming film *Robin Hood*, directed by Venky Kudumula. This exciting project promises a fresh perspective on Nithiin's talent, with Venky Kudumula crafting a character that showcases the actor in a completely new light. The teaser introduced Nithiin as a charismatic thief with a touch of humor, while the recent birthday glimpse unveiled a more action-packed side of his character. Produced by Mythri Movie Makers, *Robin Hood* boasts a lavish budget, ensuring top-notch production values and technical excellence. Excitement is soaring as the release date for *Robin Hood* has been confirmed for December 20. The strategic timing aims to leverage the Christmas and New Year holidays, offering audiences the perfect blend of entertainment and commercial appeal. The release date poster featuring Nithiin exudes a fierce aura, depicting him seated on a sports bike with intense determination. Technically, Sai Sriram handles cinematography, while GV Prakash Kumar scores the soundtrack. Prawn Pudi serves as the editor. Rajendra Prasad and Vennela Kishore play pivotal roles in this movie. Further details about the leading actress are yet to be revealed.

90's TEAM ANNOUNCE NEW WEB SERIES TEACHER

Director Aditya Haasan made a stellar debut with the web series *#90's - A Middle-Class Biopic*, captivating audiences with its nostalgic and authentic storytelling on the popular OTT platform ETV Win. Now, the team behind *#90's - A Middle-Class Biopic* returns with another compelling narrative titled *Teacher*. Helmed once again by Aditya Haasan and produced by Naveen Medaram under MNOP (Medaram Naveen Official Productions), this new series promises to deliver another delightful treat for viewers. To kick off the excitement, the makers unveiled a thrilling poster on the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami, showcasing the picturesque setting of a Telangana village named Ankapur. The poster depicts students joyfully cycling to school against a backdrop of lush green fields and coconut trees, hinting at the heartwarming tale that awaits. *Teacher* explores the humorous escapades of three mischievous students who encounter Color Swathi, playing the role of a teacher, in Ankapur. This encounter sets off a touching story of transformation, filled with innocent love and heartfelt moments between the students and their teacher. The series boasts a talented ensemble cast



including Swathi Reddy (Color Swathi), Nikhil Devadula (known for *Baahubali*), Nitya Sri (from *C/o Kanchera Palem*), and others. Siddharth Sadasivuni provides the melodious music, while Azeem Mohammed captures the picturesque village through his cinematography.

Samyuktha launches Adishakti

In a significant and auspicious moment coinciding with Ramanavami and Taranavami, actress Samyuktha Menon unveiled a transformative initiative named *Adishakti*. This pioneering endeavour is dedicated to empowering and uplifting women across diverse backgrounds. *Adishakti* represents a comprehensive initiative designed to tackle the myriad challenges faced by women and provide them with essential support and resources to thrive. The initiative encompasses areas such as education, skill development, health, and wellness, aiming to empower women holistically and foster their growth. Samyuktha's vision for *Adishakti* is to create a world where every woman can realise her full potential and live a life of dignity and purpose. Samyuktha's initiative promises to make a lasting impact by addressing systemic barriers and nurturing a supportive environment for women's advancement.



NARA ROHIT'S NEXT TITLED SUNDARAKANDA, RELEASING IN SEPT

Celebrating a significant milestone with his 20th film, actor Nara Rohit teamed up with debutante director Venkatesh Nimmalapati for an exciting romantic comedy produced by Santhosh Chinnapolla, Gowtham Reddy, and Rakesh Mahankalli under the esteemed banner of Sandeep Picture Palace (SPP). Titled *Sundarakanda*, this upcoming movie promises to bring colorful nuances and relatable moments to every viewer. The film's title and essence were unveiled through a captivating first look poster, showcasing Nara Rohit in a suave and stylish avatar, holding a plant with a pot in one hand and a book in the other. Against a backdrop of college students bustling by, the poster sets the tone for a lively and entertaining narrative. The movie is set to hit theaters on September 6, coinciding with Ganesh Chaturthi, making it a festive treat for audiences. In addition to Nara Rohit's charismatic presence, *Sundarakanda* features Vriti Vaghani as the lead actress, accompanied by a talented ensemble including Sridevi Vijaykumar, Naresh Vijaya Krishna, and Vasuki Anand in pivotal roles. It has cinematography by Pradeep M. Varma and music by Leon James. With its blend of romance, comedy, and vibrant storytelling, *Sundarakanda* promises to be a delightful cinematic experience, marking a special milestone in Nara Rohit's illustrious career.

Sree Vishnu's next is an investigative thriller

Actor Sree Vishnu continues to ride high on the success of consecutive blockbusters like *Samajavaragamana* and *Om Bheem Bush*, marking the best phase of his career. The versatile actor, known for his diverse roles, announced his next project—an intriguing investigative thriller helmed by director Hussain Sha Kiran. Produced by Sandeep Gunnam and Vinay Chilakapati under the banners of Lightbox Media and Picture Perfect Entertainment, this upcoming thriller features Reba John as the female lead opposite Sree Vishnu, reuniting them after the blockbuster *Samajavaragamana*. The film has already completed 60% of its shoot and is progressing swiftly towards completion. Joining Sree Vishnu and Reba John is a talented ensemble including Veer Aryan, Ayyappa Sharma, Sudarshan, Racha Ravi, and others, ensuring a compelling and engaging narrative. Describing the film's genre as an "investigative thriller," Sree Vishnu promises his signature style with an added layer of intrigue and suspense. The movie aims to captivate audiences with its unique storyline and compelling theme. Behind the scenes, Vidhya Sagar handles the cinematography, while the music is composed by Kaala Bhairava. Renowned editor Sreekar Prasad brings his expertise to the project.



Actor Thiruveer's next unveiled on Sri Rama Navami

Versatile actor Thiruveer, who has gained fame for phenomenal performances and selecting diverse concepts, has revealed his next project. RES Entertainment and Star Pictures Production No. 1 announced this on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami. The film will be jointly produced by Radhakrishna Thelu and Ramakrishna Reddy. The movie will be helmed by Ghanta Satish Babu. Thiruveer in this film. Ramakrishna Reddy (RK), who has worked as the chief associate director on films like *Billa*, *Mukunda*, and *Brahmostavam*, will make his debut as a producer with this movie. Radhakrishna Thelu, who has produced projects like *Ardhashathabdam* and *Loot*, is backing this film on a grand scale alongside RK. Director Ghanta Satish Babu, who previously served as an assistant to Srikanta Addala on films such as *Kotha Bangaru Lokam*, *Mukunda*, *Seethamma Vaakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*, and *Brahmostavam*, made his directorial debut with *Butterfly* and is now poised to captivate audiences with this project. This movie unfolds with a mythological concept set between the Treta Yuga and the Kali Yuga. Ayyappa P Sharma, Srikanth Iyengar, Sathya Prakash, Sameta Gandhi, Misala Laxman, and Pankaj Kesari play pivotal roles in this film, which promises gripping thrills. Rami Reddy serves as the cinematographer, and Marthand K. Venkatesh is the editor for this film.





Punjab Kings, Mumbai Indians desperate to resurrect IPL campaign

PTI ■ MULLANPUR

Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians will be desperate to resurrect their faltering campaigns in the Indian Premier League when the two bottom-rung teams face-off here on Thursday. Only a few decimal points separate the two teams after six matches each and are coming off defeats in their respective last outings, which mean pressure will be high on both the camps to get their act together. For Punjab, the challenge of getting the best out of their top order has compounded with regular skipper Dhawan being sidelined for seven to 10 days due to a shoulder injury. The only bright spot for PBKS this season has been resolute displays from their unsung

Indian players Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma, who both bat lower in the order and have had to make up for the shortcomings at the top more than once. The form of Prabhshimran Singh - 119 runs in six matches at 19.83 - is a concern and the same can be said for India wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma. With selection for the World Cup squad on the horizon, Jitesh, who has managed a mere 106 runs in six outings at 17.66, would be under the pump too. PBKS will have to find more support for their overseas bowling duo of Sam Curran (126 runs and 8 wickets) and Kagiso Rabada (9). The Indian pair of Arshdeep Singh (9) and Harshal Patel (7) have both been easy targets for batters. Mumbai Indians would know they have enough firepower in the camp to turn the tide but a collective effort on a consistent basis is the need of the hour. Two wins at home against Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru did end



their three-match losing run, but a loss to Chennai Super Kings despite Rohit Sharma's century meant the five-time winners have forced them to go back to the drawing board. It starts with Hardik Pandya's form and role in the side. The all-rounder has looked to share responsibility in bowling department but his economy rate of 12 is alarming. On the same parameter, Gerald Coetzee (9) and uncapped Akash Madhwal (4) have given away more than 10 runs an over. With the bat, Pandya has not provided any consolidation while batting first or finished matches in the latter half. At the same time, Pandya has faced hostile environments at various stadiums in all the games he has played so far this season, something that could have an adverse impact on a player. Rohit and Ishan Kishan's form thus become crucial for Mumbai Indians, for whom Suryakumar Yadav has produced mixed results.

TEAMS (FROM):
Punjab Kings: Shikhar Dhawan (c), Matthew Short, Prabhshimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Chanay Thyagarajan, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.
Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalki Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.

Rinku credits Gambhir for Narine transformation as specialist opener

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Sunil Narine opening for Kolkata Knight Riders in this IPL has proved to be a masterstroke and credit for the West Indian's move up the order should go to team mentor Gautam Gambhir, reckons Rinku Singh. Narine smashed his maiden T20 hundred on Tuesday, a 56-ball 109 against Rajasthan Royals. His form at the top this season has been nothing short of remarkable considering he aggregated just 154 runs over the past three seasons while batting lower down the order. As an opener this season, he has already collected 276 runs in six games. After scoring a memorable hundred at the Eden Gardens, Narine gave due credit to former captain

Gambhir for making him open for the first time since 2017. In the post-match interaction, Rinku echoed Narine's words. "You can see the way Narine is batting this time. In every match, he's making runs, opening the batting and that was his (Gambhir's) idea only," Rinku said. Narine was unleashed as an opener under Gambhir's captaincy in 2017 when he smashed IPL's fastest fifty in 15 balls, a record that was gradually improved by KL Rahul (14), Pat Cummins (14) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (13). Narine also has a 13-ball 50 for Comilla Victorians in the Bangladesh Premier League in their match against Chattogram Challengers in 2022. Earlier he would just swivel his bat, but this time Narine is seen batting



with skill and poise as his stroke-making in the arc has vastly improved. Asked about the transformation, Rinku said: "Nothing much has changed. It's the result of his sheer hard work at the nets. 'I've just noticed one change -- he's more patient now. Earlier he used to swing his bat to every ball, now he has restrained himself and playing according to the merit of the ball. He is batting thoughtfully and wisely.' But Narine's century went in vain as Jos Buttler (107 not out; 60b) showed his masterclass to single-handedly steer Rajasthan Royals to an eight-wicket win in the final ball of the match. "It happens sometimes but it won't impact much. Our team is doing very well. We are not thinking much (about the loss). Credit to RR they

did well. Also, you need a bit of luck in your favour. It was there day. Buttler innings was the turning point. Full credit goes to him," Rinku said. With the KKR top-order going strong this time, the finisher Rinku, who was KKR's leading rungetter in IPL 2023 with 474 runs at 59.25, is not getting much opportunities. This season Rinku has an aggregate of 83 runs at 27.66 and is yet to score a fifty. But his strike-rate has been a handsome 184-plus. "Our top order batters are doing so well that I'm not getting much opportunities to show my batting this time." Rinku played as an Impact Sub on Tuesday and that was because of a niggle. "I had a niggle, I will be back to playing the full match against RCB on Sunday," he said.



Iyer fined ₹12 lakh for first slow over rate offence

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Shreyas Iyer has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during their IPL game against Rajasthan Royals here. KKR lost to Royals by two wickets here on Tuesday with Jos Buttler smashing an unbeaten 107 off 60 balls. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Iyer was fined Rs 12 lakhs," said the IPL in a release. It was the Royals' sixth win in seven matches while KKR suffered their second loss in six games.

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Jos Buttler has seen "crazy things" happen in the IPL and he drew inspiration from the likes of Virat Kohli and Mahendra Singh Dhoni to single-handedly pull off the highest run chase in the tournament's history here. Buttler smashed an unbeaten 107 off 60 balls as Rajasthan Royals came back from the dead to beat Kolkata Knight Riders by two wickets on Tuesday night. Fittingly, Buttler hit the winning runs. The Englishman was struggling to even walk towards the end but didn't give up. Chasing a record 224, Royals were 121 for six in the 13th over. "Keep believing, that was the real key today. I was struggling a bit for rhythm. At times you feel frustrated or you are questioning yourself. I tell myself it's okay,

Guys like Kohli, Dhoni keep believing and that is what I tried to do: Buttler

keep going, you'll get your rhythm back and try to stay calm. "There's been plenty of times throughout the IPL, you've seen crazy things happen. Guys like Dhoni and Kohli, the way they stay till the end and keep believing and I tried to do the same," Buttler said at the post-match presentation. Both Dhoni and Kohli have played some exhilarating knocks in the ongoing tournament even though the latter has not found enough support from his team and has mostly ended up on the wrong side of the results so far. Buttler also credited head coach Kumar Sangakkara for building



his self-belief. "That's something Sanagakkara has told me a lot - there's always a breaking point. The worse thing you can do is to not fight and give your wicket away. "He (Sangakkara) just tells me to stay there and at some point, the momentum will change. That's been a big part of my play over the last few years." He termed Tuesday's knock as his best IPL innings. "I would think so (best IPL innings). Very satisfying." RR skipper Sanju Samson said Buttler is a special player and when he is on song, no target is safe. "Very happy with the win. We were wondering like the

wickets we lost. Rovman (Powell) hit a couple of sixes and that's when we felt like we were in the game. Some luck also, they also played really well. The quality of spin they had, they bowled really well. This ground suited them. "Jos (Buttler) did what he does for us in the last 6-7 years, so happy for him. It (Buttler's knock) should go right on top. Being an opener, if he gets in, no runs are unchaseable. He does something special," he said. KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer said it was a bitter pill to swallow for his team. "I would second that actually (bitter pill to swallow), emotions were a roller coaster, certainly didn't think we will get into this situation. "It's a funny game at the end of the day, he (Jos Buttler) was striking the ball cleanly and timing them so well, have to take it on the chin and move on," Iyer added.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national selection committee is unlikely to blood any rookie IPL performer during the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas but a couple of tried-and-tested faces might have to brace up for disappointment when the squad is finalised by the end of this month. With the ICC making it mandatory to announce the provisional 15-member squad by May 1 cut-off date, Ajit Agarkar and his colleagues have some straightforward choices to make if every member of the team is fit. "There would not be any experimentation or left-field selections. All those who have played for India and have done well consistently in T20 Internationals and the IPL will be rewarded," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. It is understood that one among Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal might miss out but in case both proven performers are selected in the final 15, then only one among two finishers — Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh and Chennai Super Kings' Shivam Dube — will get the nod. The other close call could be for the second wicketkeeper's slot where Sanju Samson has competition from Jitesh Sharma, KL Rahul and Ishan Kishan. Rahul and Kishan bat at the top of the order, and they haven't tried batting in the middle order in this IPL so far, which makes it difficult for the selectors to analyse their

NO FRESH FACES LIKELY INDIA T20 WC SQUAD



impact down the order. Although Hardik Pandya's bowling fitness remains a concern, there is no immediate doubt on his selection. Much like him, Virat Kohli's inclusion is also a formality. The other automatic selections are

skipper Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja, Rishabh Pant, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj and Kuldeep Yadav. These 10 names, if fit, will definitely be on the flight across the Atlantic.

It is understood that Siraj is being rested by RCB as he has been playing constantly and needed workload management. In the choice between Gill and Jaiswal, the former has scored more runs but in case of Jaiswal, who has

been a big find for Indian cricket, the selection committee might not give up easily on him merely for a few low IPL scores. Also, being the only left-hander in inside the top four is a novelty and in a largely unidimensional top

order. However, if Gill piles up enough runs, it will be a difficult choice unless the selectors accommodate both and drop one among Shivam and Rinku from the 15. The reserve spinner's slot could also be a three-way battle between Axar Patel, a handy batter apart from being an accurate left-arm spinner, Yuzvendra Chahal, who is yet to play a single T20 World Cup match in his nine-year international career, and Ravi Bishnoi, who plays for Lucknow Super Giants. While Chahal is head and shoulders above the other two in terms of bowling skills, his repeated omissions from important squads leaves a big question mark about his inclusion showpiece in June. **IMPACT PLAYER RULE IS HURTING TEAM SELECTION:** A former international player, who is also a broadcaster, gave an interesting insight. "The 'Impact Player' rule, which is basically a glorified '12-a-side' cricket contest has been good for IPL viewership but detrimental for Indian cricket. It has killed the concept of all-rounder and hence a half-fit Hardik Pandya also has premium value because he can bowl," he stated. "Think about it, if there was no Impact Player rule, could MS Dhoni (not Ruturaj Gaikwad) as CSK 'skipper' afford to not bowl Dube? Selectors don't know about Dube's bowling form. "Similarly, a guy like Rahul Tewatia is no longer in contention despite being a good finisher, who also used to be a handy leg-break bowler. He

doesn't bowl now as he is an 'Impact Player'. Who is it hurting? The national team," he pointed out. **NEW CROP OF T20 PLAYERS:** The likes of Riyan Parag, Mayank Yadav, Abhishek Sharma, and Harshit Rana have all performed well but it is understood that the selection committee would like to follow the process of easing them in via bilateral cricket instead of putting them to test in a high-stakes World T20 game. There are two white-ball series against Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka and these young men would be in line for their India debuts at that time. Nitish Reddy, who is a seam bowling all-rounder and was part of India Emerging side that toured Sri Lanka last year, could also follow the same path. It will be interesting to see if BCCI makes arrangements for the likes of Mayank Yadav, Harshit Rana or Akash Madhwal to be taken as net bowlers, which will also give them good exposure. **The probable 20 (15+5 stand bys) in contention:** **Specialist Batters (6):** Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rinku Singh **All-Rounders (4):** Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel. **Specialist Spinners (3):** Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Ravi Bishnoi. **Wicketkeeper-batter (3):** Rishabh Pant, KL Rahul and Sanju Samson. **Pacers(4):** Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan.