



Monday Mirchi

FINANCE SECRETARY GOES ON LEAVE, RAISES EYEBROWS

Amid a huge pile of debts contracted by the previous government and the half a dozen formidable promises made by the new government in Telangana, Finance Secretary Ramakrishna Rao is undoubtedly on the hot seat of core administration. Yet, he has now proceeded on leave, ostensibly due to health reasons, raising many eyebrows and one obvious question: "Is the state's fiscal position beginning to tell on his health?" His leave comes at a time when the Finance Department is buzzing with hyper-anxious visitors who are after the release of their pending bills and other dues. Bureaucratic circles are discussing in a hush-hush manner whether Ramakrishna Rao's leave is due to covert pressure from politicians or overt pressure from contractors. In any case, the developments in the Finance Department over the next few weeks will be keenly watched, given the committed timeline of implementation of outlay-rich promises made by the Congress government.

MASTER HEALTH CHECKUP FOR BUREAUCRATS?

Very tight financial position, probe after probe, upcoming elections, poll-related EC-induced transfers, heat wave conditions and what not? In Telangana, babus are quite edgy. No wonder, it looks like it is time for a master health checkup for bureaucrats as they simply cannot wish away Bharatiya Janata Party Legislature Party leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy's statement that it was due to the pressure and tension given by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in the Kaleshwaram probe that Vigilance DG Rajiv Ratan suffered stroke and passed away. To avoid giving room for any further discussion on this political masterstroke, the state government is looking at a possible master health check-up camp for bureaucrats. It is a different matter that some bureaucratic circles are questioning the need for one.

POLL THROWS COLD WATER ON VACATION PLANS

"One man's meat is another man's poison", goes a proverb. Similarly, in Telugu, they say: 'Yenki pelli Subbu chavu kochhindi' (meaning, Yenki's marriage resulted in Subbi's death). Some of the bureaucrats in Telangana are facing a like situation. As is their wont,

-- Yours truly

some of the babus had finalized their family vacation plans, whether abroad or within India, taking advantage of the summer holidays. But the upcoming General Election has thrown cold water on their plans. Polling will be held in Telangana on 13th May. In view of the shortage of staff to help conduct the Lok Sabha elections, the state government has cancelled long-term leaves as well as permissions to go abroad granted previously to some of the bureaucrats. They have been asked to report to the government and be available for election duties. To sugar-coat the bitter pill, the government has attributed its decision to the Election Commission's directives.

CP LIKELY TO BE TRANSFERRED

NTR District Commissioner of Police Kanti Rana Tata is under the lens, with the police nabbing one of the culprits in the stone pelting incident in which Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was recently hurt during his bus yatra in Vijayawada. The police produced the accused before court. Now, the needle of suspicion is pointed towards TDP MLA candidate from Vijayawada central Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao. The Opposition has characterized the incident as 'security breach' and slammed the police for trying to 'frame' UmaMaheswara Rao. A little bird told us that the Election Commission may transfer Rana, following opposition's allegation that the CP had been acting in favour of the ruling party.

SUSPENDED IAS OFFICER GETS POSTING

Suspension can be a brief halt in a bureaucrat's journey; it need not be the end of it. Senior IAS officer Girisha, who had been suspended as Collector of Annamayya District at the behest of the Election Commission following complaints, has got a reprieve. Interestingly, his suspension was revoked after he gave an explanation to the higher authorities concerned. He has now been posted as Managing Director of the AP Housing Corporation Limited in place of K Venkat Rami Reddy, who has proceeded on medical leave for one month. Venkat Rami Reddy has been asked to report to the General Administration Department after his leave ends.

Stalwarts pitted against young turks in T-states

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The upcoming elections in the Telugu states will see a fight between political stalwarts and young turks. In the Telangana State the political fight in the coming Lok Sabha elections is 70 verses 54 and in Andhra Pradesh the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are 74 verses 51. The young Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy and the young Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy are fighting with K Chandrasekhar Rao and N Chandrababu Naidu respectively who were known as political Chanakyas in Telugu politics. In Telangana, K Chandrasekhar Rao had become the chief minister twice and in Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu had become the chief minister four times.

While in Telangana A Revanth Reddy has become the Chief Minister for the first time, in Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan is completing his first term as a Chief Minister and fighting to retain his post. Interestingly in Telangana former CM KCR sent Revanth Reddy to jail and in Andhra Pradesh former CM Chandrababu's hand was there in sending YS Jagan behind the bars. While both the Chief Ministers of Telugu states are in a strong position the former chief ministers KCR and Chandrababu are in a similar situation. Both are fighting for their political existence with young Chief Ministers.

Both KCR and Chandrababu claim that their parties BRS and TDP are national parties, but in the coming elections both parties have confined to their own states. Telangana-based BRS is

not contesting in Andhra Pradesh and Andhra-based TDP is not contesting in Telangana.

After the defeat in the recent Telangana Assembly elections, the BRS has become very weak as several senior leaders left the party. In Andhra Pradesh the TDP looked strong in the beginning, but after the alliance with Jana Sena and the BJP, the alliance is facing internal problems in every constituency. The political future of KCR and Chandrababu and their political parties depends on the outcome of coming elections in their respective states.

In the recent Telangana Assembly elections the then chief minister KCR in the public meetings said if the people defeat the BRS he will take rest in his farm house. After the defeat in the Assembly elections, KCR went to his farm house and is taking rest as he

said.

With the crucial Lok Sabha elections, KCR came out from the farm house and is fighting for his and his party's existence. In Andhra Pradesh the former chief minister and TDP supremo said if his party will not come to power in the Assembly elections he will quit politics. Chandrababu has an alliance with the BJP and maintaining cordial relations with the Congress at the national level. But KCR is maintaining equidistance with the BJP and the Congress and fighting with both parties at State and national level. The latest surveys indicate the victory of young Chief Ministers in their respective states. It appears the decades-long vast political experience of KCR and Chandrababu is not working before aggressive young Chief Ministers in their respective states.

Cong govt deceived farmers on loan waiver: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's LS candidate in Karimnagar, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that the Congress government deceived farmers by promising to waive farm loans up to Rs two lakh.

He said the Congress has been enacting dramas regarding the loan waiver scheme to make gains in the Lok Sabha elections.

He said the Congress too is deceiving farmers like the BRS.

After visiting the paddy procurement centre in Veerlapally in Rajanna Sircilla district on Sunday, Sanjay demanded that the state government should take responsibility for purchasing paddy that got wet in the recent rains.

He said that farmers are not in a position to know when they will get money from those who purchased their paddy.

Country punishing Congress for its 'sins': Modi

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country is punishing the Congress for its "sins" and the party that had once won 400 seats is unable to contest 300 seats in this Lok Sabha election. "Those who cannot contest elections, cannot win elections have fled the field. This time, they have come to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan. The condition of Congress is so bad," Modi said at an election rally in Jalore district.

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi is among the MPs elected to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan in February. Several Congress veterans have not been fielded in this Lok Sabha election,



but the party has rejected suggestions that they were shying away from contesting. "In the first phase of voting, half of Rajasthan has punished Congress. Rajasthan, which is full of patriotism, knows that Congress can never make India strong," PM Modi said.

He said the country does not want the conditions which existed before 2014 to return. "The Congress has hollowed out the country by spreading termites of nepotism and cor-

ruption. And today, the country is angry with the Congress and is punishing it for these sins. The youths are so angry that they do not want to see the Congress' face again."

Modi was addressing the public meeting in Bhinmal in support of BJP candidate Lumbaram Chaudhary.

"The Congress has itself to blame for its present condition ... The party that had once won 400 seats is unable to contest 300 seats on its own."

Why sanctioned posts...

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"If such staff can be taken on contract then why regular recruitment cannot be made?" the tribunal asked in an order passed on April 12.

It also noted the lack of proper facilities and infrastructure across state pollution control board and pollution control committee laboratories. "Out of

190 laboratories, only 14 laboratories are recognised as environmental lab under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA). Further, merely having National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) certification in 48 laboratories has no meaning unless they form a part of the environment laboratory," the tribunal said.

Grads can directly...

Continued from page 1

Such candidates are allowed to appear in a subject in which they want to pursue a PhD irrespective of the discipline in which they have obtained the four-year bachelor's degree," Kumar said. "The candidates having passed a four-year or eight-semester bachelor's degree programme should have a minimum of 75 pc marks in aggregate or its equivalent grade on a point scale wherever the grading system is followed," the UGC chairman said. A relaxation of five per cent marks or its equivalent grade may be allowed for those belonging to SC, ST, OBC (non-creamy layer), differently-abled, economically weaker sections and other categories of candidates as per the decision of the UGC from time to time, he added.

BJP Govt correcting Congress' corruption, misrule: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP government at the Centre is correcting the injustices, irregularities, corruption and nepotism of the Congress, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said.

After releasing the BJP's Lok Sabha manifesto in Telugu named 'Mana Modi Guarantee-2024' on Sunday at the state BJP office, Kishan said that the BJP is moving forward with the slogan 'Modi Guarantee' to build a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

He said the BJP had provided a stable government after



Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy releasing BJP Manifesto 'Mana Modi Guarantee-2024' along with Rajya Sabha member Dr K Laxman on Sunday

three decades in India. Terror attacks have come down substantially. The Centre is controlling Naxalism and the corrupt are going to jails, he said. Kishan said that the Indian

economy is now the fifth in the world and it will soon become the third largest. He said that the entire world is looking at India and listening to what India has to say on any issue.

He said that quality education, medical facilities and houses and making India the Vishwa Guru with the participation of all sections of people is Modi's guarantee. Kishan said that the BJP will realize the dream of 'One nation-one election' after coming to power again. He said that they would introduce strict laws to control question paper leaks and conduct all appointments transparently.

'Komatireddy brothers...

Continued from page 1

He reiterated: "I am saying with Yadagiri Laxminarasimha Swamy as witness that the Congress government will waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh before August 15".

Targeting former Bharat Rashtra Samithi Minister G. Jagdish Reddy, the CM said, "A three-foot leader who serves soda is speaking against the Komatireddy brothers. He has been criticising Rajgopal, saying that he is wooing me for the sake of a Minister post. The Komatireddy brothers did not enter politics by serving soda in liquor in dora's shed. They entered politics turning their blood into sweat. They came up in politics carrying the tricolour. If

anyone is eligible for the post of Chief Minister besides me, it is Komatireddy Venkat Reddy."

Earlier, Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy, who is the Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency in charge, praised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and later the Chief Minister hailed the Komatireddy brothers.

Addressing the gathering, Rajgopal said that the Komatireddy brothers were like an extra shoulder for Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Nobody can stop the Komatireddy brothers should they decide to join Revanth Reddy, he said.

The Congress government was setting right Telangana, which had become debt-riddled during

the BRS rule, Rajgopal said. He said that the Komatireddy brothers would win the Bhongir LS seat for the Chief Minister and that ensuring the victory of the Congress candidate Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy was his responsibility.

"We will take the responsibility of ensuring the victory of Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will take care of development," he said.

Rajgopal said that they had won 11 of the 12 seats in the erstwhile Nalgonda district and had just missed the Suryapet Assembly seat. The Congress would win with a bumper majority in Nalgonda and Bhongir, Rajgopal said.

Tummala asks officials...

Continued from page 1

He said that considering the problems faced by farmers regarding this, ministers have asked officials to approach the Election Commission once again and request permission for the release of funds and to assess the damage and submit a report.

Tummala emphasised that the TG government is ready to release compensation as soon as reports regarding crop damage are received.

Similarly, he expressed gratitude to the State Election Commission for permitting to invite tenders to procure seeds for distribution before the monsoon.

Democracy will end if 'Modi-Shah sarkar' returns to power: Kharage

PNS ■ SATNA

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage on Sunday claimed that democracy will end in the country if the "Modi-Shah sarkar" returns to power, launching an attack on the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah while addressing a public meeting in Madhya Pradesh's Satna district, Kharage said they will also scrap the Constitution. "They will scrap the Constitution scripted by Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. If you want to keep it alive, the right to vote for women, labourers and farmers, then vote for the Congress and its 'panja' (hand) symbol," he appealed to the voters.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was scheduled to address the rally in Satna but his visit was cancelled as he took ill, a party leader said



earlier, adding that Kharage would fill in for him.

The Satna Lok Sabha seat will go to polls in the second phase on April 26.

"Democracy will end if Modi-Shah's government returns to power," Kharage claimed addressing the public meeting held in support of Congress candidate Siddharth Kushwaha.

Accusing PM Modi of telling lies, Kharage said the PM keeps talking about "Modi ki guarantee" without taking his party's name. "He had said that if he became the prime minister, Rs 15 lakh would be given to every person by bringing back the black money stashed abroad."

Owaisi calls for...

Continued from page 1

where the AIMIM's provincial unit chief and MLA Akhtarul Iman is in the fray.

"The BJP-RSS falsely accuse the AIMIM of being against women's participation in politics. As early as 2004, we had fielded a female candidate in Secunderabad. Peace be upon her," said Owaisi, referring to late leader Humera Aziz.

He added, "Our point is since Independence, 17 Lok Sabha polls have been held in the country but the number of

Muslim women who became MPs has been just about 20. So why not reservations for Muslim women."

Owaisi, who is an alumnus of the Lincoln's Inn at London, and likes to be addressed with the prefix 'barrister', recounted the derision he faced upon moving an amendment, in Lok Sabha, to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam brought by the Narendra Modi government. "Speaker Om Birla said to me you want to bring in an amendment but there is hardly anybody to back you.

'BJP, BRS criticism on Cong...

Continued from page 1

The Minister said that BRS supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao must realise that he was no longer in a position to challenge the Congress. "KCR might have organised the defection of four MPs, 25 MLAs and 18 MLCs during his first term, and an additional 12 MLAs during his second term. However, those days are over.

After being rejected by the people, KCR is now stuck in a swamp. The more he struggles to escape, the deeper he will sink. KCR should focus on keeping his party together," he said.

"The BRS government inflicted significant damage to agriculture by undermining irrigation. Money running to thousands of crores was misappropriated under the guise

of project re-designing. Big-ticket loans were borrowed at high interest rates, creating a debt burden that would take at least two generations to repay. Despite all this, farmers are left without adequate water for irrigation and a dysfunctional Kaleshwaram Project," he said. Uttam said the response from the first phase of polling suggested a shift toward the Congress and its allies.

WORLD EARTH DAY

Environmentalists seek ban on plastic units

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad witnesses a rise in plastic waste generation during the post-Covid period compared to pre-Covid period. One can see heaps of plastics material discarded on roads, lakes and other areas thereby affecting nature's health. Plastic is not only harmful to nature but also to us. Despite, the Telangana government, along with various industries and organisations have implemented many initiatives such as using organic matter such as plant fibres, wood and flow-ers to make paper or cloth carry bags, bio bricks, tiles and puffed cloth toys to combat plastic usage, the reduction is very low compared to the amount of plastic waste gener-ated in the city.

As per the data released by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) in 2023, of the 8,000 metric tonne (MT) waste generated in the city, on an average, daily, 1,080 MT or 14.5 per cent is plastic waste. On the eve of World Earth Day, environ-mentalists and social activists have voiced their opinion on

curbing the usage of plastic effectively in the present and coming years as well.

Prof Purushotham Reddy, an environmentalist said, "The first step the Telangana govern-ment needs to take to curb plas-tic usage is to completely ban plastic manufacturing units."

Madhulika, an environmen-talist said, "Plastic has

increased due to corona. Compared to the pre-Covid period, a majority of areas are covered with heaps of plastic waste. With regards to indus-tries which are using alterna-tives to plastic or converting plastic for making roads etc are not getting sufficient plastic. Ban on plastic manufacturing units will definitely make a dif-

ference but this needs a very strong will."

Mohammad Abid Ali, a social activist said, "To effective-ly reduce plastic usage, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. Stringent regulations and incentives should target man-ufacturing industries to reduce plastic production and encour-age eco-friendly alternatives.

Dhruvansh celebrates by cleaning lakes

Dhruvansh organization cel-ebrated World Earth Day with the theme - Planet Vs Plastic at three lakes- Nekkampur lake, Mushki Cheruvu and Barlakunta by removing 859 kgs of plastic from all the three lakes combined on Sunday. This clean-up programme has included college students, corpor-ates, lake communities and school students.

The organization, with the aid of 130 volunteers, removed 150 kgs of plastics from Mushki Cheruvu, 350 kgs from Nekkampur lake and

350 kgs from Barlakunta lake.

A clean-up awareness pro-



gramme was also organised where jute bags and birdhouses were distributed to participants.

Madhulika, Founder of Dhruvansh said, "We displayed eco-friendly products to

replace plastic, like bamboo bottles, coconut bowls, bam-boo brushes, bamboo planters, penholders, bamboo combs, reused saree runners, bags, khadi bags, jute bags and bioen-zyme. Earth means water, birds, anomals, flowers, trees, reptiles, soil, air, insects and we all togeth-er have to live on this earth. However, plastic is posing a threat to our exist-ence and we need to learn plas-tic-mitigation measures. Lakes are choked by plastic, birds are dying, dogs and cattle are consuming plastic.

Adopt plastic-free lifestyle, says Minister Konda Surekha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister of Forests, Environment and Endowments, Konda Surekha said that people should adopt a plastic-free lifestyle. "When we rise and take up conserva-tion measures in the spirit of World Earth Day as a move-ment, earth can remain a hab-it-able planet in the future," she added.

The Minister said, "Mother earth is losing life due to excessive needs, greed and unintended actions of humans. Water sources are getting pol-luted. Inhaled air is becoming toxic. Rare species are dying and birds are disappearing. Temperatures are rising there-by leading to untimely rains and floods. The sea level is ris-ing dangerously which endan-gers human existence. People



The Minister said, "Mother earth is losing life due to excessive needs, greed and unintended actions of humans. Water sources are getting polluted. Inhaled air is becoming toxic.

are suffering due to decrease in availability of drinking water. We are losing the balance of nature and the balance of life."

She recalled how plastic is harming mother earth is a matter of concern to all people. The existence of this species is threatened by the harm caused by plastic. Keeping in view the harmful effects of plastic, the United Nations has called for 'Planet vs Plastic' on the occa-sion of World Earth Day. As per the call of the United Nations, in addition to the complete elimination of single-use plastic, the goal is to reduce plastic production to 60 per cent by 2040. "Everyone must follow the instructions of the United Nations, she added.

"We have to realise the truth that only if we save earth, we can save ourselves and then we will survive. We all need to cool down before nature takes its true f0orm. All people need energy to care for mother earth," she added.

No takers for city's Wall of Kindness

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Give and Share Centre, also known as the Wall of Kindness, situated opposite the Cyber Towers onHITEC-City Road, now seems aban-doned with only a few piles of clothing thrown along the footpath. Established by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, this initiative allows the public to donate clothes, sandals, vessels, books, bags and toys for the poor and homeless people.

The items that are left, can be picked up later by any needy person from that place. Sadly, the Feed the Need Fridge, once located near Shilparamam has disappeared. This fridge provided food for many homeless individuals left by the public. This wall of kindness once called a vibrant Give and Share Kiosk, is now left abandoned without any maintenance.

This concept, aimed to pro-



Wall of Kindness opposite the Cyber Towers can be seen abandoned with clothes strewn on the footpath

mote sharing and reducing environmental impact by dis-couraging excessive shopping and wastage, depends entirely on volunteers, enabling anyone to access what they need. Such generous deeds are crucial when things are tough, during this hot summer when home-less people need things like hats and food.

Upon visiting the Wall of kindness, the area has been just

a dusty footpath with a pile of clothes thrown on the foot-path. The lack of clear signs and artwork, along with faded text, makes the situation look worse.

An activist, Harish Daga said, "While other Wall of Kindness sites in the city are well-maintained, this particu-lar Give and Share Centre near the Cyber Towers has been neglected.

IKP Knowledge Park, Blockchain For Impact tie up for healthcare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IKP Knowledge Park, on Sunday announced a strategic partnership with Blockchain for Impact to join the BFI-Biome Virtual Network programme. This collaboration is aimed at nurturing young innovators and entrepreneurs in cutting-edge biomedical research and innovation to accelerate technology-driven healthcare interventions and outcomes for societal benefit. The MoU was exchanged on April 20, at IKP Knowledge Park by Dr Deepanwita Chattopadhyay, Chairman and CEO of IKP Knowledge Park, and Dr Gaurav Singh, CEO, BFI in the presence of Dr Sridhar Ramanathan, Vice-President, IKP, Dr Satya Prakash Dash, Senior Advisor, BFI and Dr Pooja Agrawal, Program Director, BFI.



Representatives of IKP and Blockchain For Impact sign agreement to boost biomedical innovation

Sandeep Nailwal, the founder of Blockchain For Impact, said, "With a dedicat-ed US\$ 15 million program for advancing biomedical research and innovation in India, the BFI-Biome initiative aims to bring leading researchers, tech-nologists and innovators together in the form of a net-work to discuss, identify, col-laborate, and innovate in the biomedical sector to solve

pressing health challenges."

Dr Gaurav Singh, CEO of BFI, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "IKP Knowledge Park's state-of-the-art incubation support for deep tech innovators and entrepreneurs has enabled many Med-Tech startups. By partnering BFI-Biome seeks to support translational research projects with the potential to revolutionise healthcare."

U-FERWAS seeks to increase poll percentage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

United Federation of Resident Welfare Associations (U-FER-WAS) requested the member Resident Welfare Associations to increase vote percentage in upcoming Lok Sabha elec-tions.

The association called for a special general body meeting of the colony associations and administrate voter pledge to ensure that each all the resi-dents have their polling station details well in advance.

U-FERWAS general secre-

tary BT Srinivasan said, "The organisation will provide a few flyers to do some activities by this month-end." He also mentioned that if any issues help the people to get clarifi-cation from concerned booth level officer (BLO), use colony association social media more number of times to push vot-ing percentage. On the polling day, request each voter to through a selfie challenge to others after posting your pic-ture in a WhatsApp group or as a personal message, he added.

Tenets of Sanatana Dharma outlined

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) Hyderabad Chapter has celebrated All India Public Relations Day by organising a programme on the theme 'Values and Emerging India: Role of Public Relations' at Potti Sriramulu Telugu University on Sunday. The chief guest of the event was former chief secretary, Government of AP, LV Subramanyam.

Speaking on the occasion, Subramanyam, said, "Sanatan dharma doesn't approve any difference between personal life and public life. Love all is the

essence of it." He also said that a large section of people misunderstand the differ-ence between religion and spirituality. The essence of Sanatan dharma is widely misunderstood though it keeps people on the right-eous path and develops brotherhood among people.

He called upon PR profes-sionals to help people under-stand the relevance of Sanatana values for a better society.

Former chief information commissioner and noted journalist Buddha Murali, said, "Sanatana dharma is eternal and we all need to make the new generation

understand its importance."

PRSI Hyderabad Chapter chairman Dr S Ramu observed that the word 'sanatana' has assumed a wrong connotation due to various reasons. "There is nothing wrong in taking the good from ancient values for a better modern society," he said. He also said that PR professionals play a vital role in disseminating right infor-mation to the public.

While the Chapter's EC member Rajesh Kalyana read out the message sent out by the national president Dr Ajit Pathak, the Chapter's secretary K.Yadagiri pro-posed a vote of thanks.

Rheumatology meet held in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A two-day biennial con-ference on Rheumatology was conducted at the KIMS Hospital in Secunderabad. The highlights of the conference included the introduction of an image competition and a Rheumatology quiz for trainees, fostering engage-ment and knowledge-shar-ing among young Rheumatologists. Doctors from across India submitted 260 case abstracts for the conference.

Media Academy chief meets scribes hurt in mishap

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Media Academy Chairman K Srinivas Reddy on Sunday visited senior journalists after they met with an accident while on the way to Delhi.

The victims, Srinivas Rao of TV5 and Gopi of Swatantra TV, met with an accident in Madhya Pradesh late on April 20. They were shifted to Yashoda Hospital at Secunderabad. While Rao is undergoing treatment for grievous injuries, Gopi was treated for minor ones and discharged.

Reddy enquired about the journalists' health and urged the doctors to pro-vide better treatment.

Middle class people are buying more ACs in scorching summer

CHITHALURI REVANTH ■ HYDERABAD

Air-conditioner was a luxurious item in houses. But not any-more. Due to the offers on sales, middle class families are showing interest to buy ACs in the recent times. There has been an increase in the purchase of air-con-ditioners (ACs) in recent days to get respite from the scorching heat. Buyers are saying that due to the var-ious offers on electronic gadgets, the number of ACs are being sold more than in the previous years.

Bajaj Electronics team leader Ravi from Panjagutta said, "Due to the equated monthly install-ment (EMI) and various offers, many middle class people are buying ACs a lot this year. Compared to last year, the pur-

chase of ACs has increased in the present year. In March 2023, we sold around 900 ACs, but in March 2024 customers bought more than 1,400 ACs. Which is



500 more than the previous year."

On an average, around one lakh ACs have been sold this year. The main reason for the increase in the sales would be the EMIs, because there is a Rs zero down payment, which means when a buyer buys an AC, he

can take AC home without even paying a single rupee.

As a middle class family, they calculate every penny for the month. With a meager income, middle class people calcu-late on what they are going to buy. With zero down payment they feel that it would not be a burden for them. A customer named Pramod, a private employ-ee, said, "I am getting Rs 30,000 per month. I have two kids. A few days back temperature reached 42 degree. So, I did not want my children suffer in the hot weather, which may affect their health." However, with the completion of their exams, students of SSC and Inter have been staying at home. It would be one of the reasons for the increase in power consumption in the districts.

ECI seizes Rs 14 crore in Hyd district

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

District Election Officer (DEO) Ronald Rose said that since the Model Code of conduct (MCC) came into force on March 16, more than Rs 14.63 crore cash and Rs 6.90 crore of materials were seized in the Hyderabad district.

More than 20,900 liters of liquor was seized, 208 cases have been filed and 206 persons were arrested since the MCC came into force.

The DEO said that from Saturday 6 am to Sunday 6 am the ECI has seized Rs 5.88 lakh and Rs 1.62 crore worth of goods. Around 48 liters of

liquor was seized by the police authorities during the last 24 hours. "So far, 429 complaints have been received regarding cash and other violations and they have been resolved. FIRs have been registered against 284 people and 2,920 licenced weapons have been deposited in the police stations."



Ronald Rose

Hanuman Jayanthi fete at Kondagattu from April 22

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sri Anjaneya Swamy Devasthanam, Kondagattu, Jagtial district, will be organising Hanuman Jayanti Utsavam from April 22 to 24. All arrange-ments were made on behalf of the temple under the direction of the District Collector so that the devo-tees do not face any incon-venience.

Food safety officials were also asked to check the quality of temple offer-ings. Krishna Prasad is the Executive Officer in-charge of Vemulavada temple, who has been appointed as the superin-tendent to supervise the facilities for the devotees during the fair.

Liquor shops to remain shut on Hanuman Jayanti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy on Sunday ordered closure of liquor shops on April 23 on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti.

Liquor shops in Hyderabad and Secunderabad will remain closed from 6 am on April 23 to 6 am on April 24; registered clubs and bars attached to hotels are exempted from the order. Reddy issued the orders as per Section 20 (1) of the Telangana Excise Act, 1968.



NVS Reddy inspecting works of the Multi-Level Car Parking Complex

HMRL's computerised car parking inspected

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) MD NVS Reddy inspected the works of auto-mated and computerized Multi Level Car Parking (MLP) on Sunday as they are nearing completion. Being developed as a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project, this 15 floor MLP complex is the first of its kind in India with German Palis parking system.

Built on half-an-acre land of HMRL near Nampally Metro Station, this complex has 10 parking floors and five com-mercial floors. Out of the total built up area of about 1,44,400 sq ft., 68 percent is kept for parking of about 250 four wheelers and 200 two wheel-ers. The remaining 32 percent is used as commercial space for shops and a film theatre with two screens. Bhari Infra Pvt Ltd has developed this ultra modern MLP complex at a cost of about Rs.80 crore with a concession period of 50 years. The project suffered delays due to Covid impact, debt financing problems, glob-al supply chain disruptions etc. "All the imported materi-

als have now arrived and are being fixed as a jigsaw puzzle by experts", stated NVS Reddy.

The MLP complex uses state-of-the-art automated parking technology. On the ground floor of the complex there are four 'In or Out' (I/O) terminals fitted with turntables. The driver of a vehicle can simply leave the car on the turntable of the designated I/O Terminal. As a vehicle is enter-ing the MLP, the user/driver will be given a smart card, while regular users will be issued permanent Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) cards. They will be guided to the assigned I/O Terminal and by swiping the smart card in the card reader, the gate of the I/O Terminal opens and the user can conveniently leave the car on the turntable.

The MD indicated that the turntable is big enough for any vehicle to be conveniently left on it, unlike the existing few other automated parking com-plexes in Delhi and Mumbai, where the driver has to strug-gle to keep the vehicle on the limited designated space of the turntables.

‘Curb ABVP mob attacks’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tammineni Veerabhadram, State Secretary of Communist Party of India (CPI), has demanded that the police officials curb mob attacks by the activists of Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in Hyderabad Central University and take action against the culprits.

Veerabhadram said, “The ABVP leadership has been carrying out mob attacks in Hyderabad Central University for the past one week. About 20 students including seven female students were injured in the attack. Six people, including two students, had to be admitted to the hospital. Attacks are being carried out



according to a plan in an attempt to use sensitive issues in the election environment for political purposes. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) strongly condemns these attacks.”

After ABVP activists attacked the disabled Harsharaj

during the farewell celebrations on 13th of this month, Student Federation of India (SFI) leaders tried to make amends. Later on 17th, according to a plan, SFI workers attacked Faisal and injured the other students. On this occasion, while the injured were being taken to the hospital in an ambulance, the mob also blocked the ambulance. Girls were sexually abused. These things are evident in the videos, he said.

“ABVP is planning to use the incident in the university for political purposes. Those who were injured and those who tried to prevent the attack from happening are also implicated in the cases and harassed,” he added.

CM Revanth lost people’s trust in four months: MLA Vivekananda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharata Rashtira Samithi (BRS) Quthbullapur MLA KP Vivekananda said that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy lost people’s trust within four months after being in power. Along with him, the Congress party also lost its base in the country.

He held a press meet at the Telangana Bhavan on Sunday, where he said that the Congress party has deceived the people with the six guarantees. Leaders of that party gave affidavits to the people during the election campaign in 2023. But Revanth Reddy has not fulfilled his party’s promises in the last four

months.

He asserted that Revanth Reddy fears that the CM’s chair will be lost if more MP seats are not won in the upcoming parliamentary elections. “Revanth Reddy promised in the name of God that he would waive farmers’ loans in August. It comes under the violation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC),” he mentioned.

The cadre of the Congress party is revolting against Danam Nagender, Kadiam Srihari and Gaddam Ranjith Reddy who joined the Congress party from the BRS. Real estate businesses and builders are facing problems in the State, he added.

Six Maoists surrender to police in Bhadrachalam

PNS ■ KOTHAGUDEM

A Communist Party of India-Maoist, known as Maoist party, militia committee member and five party activists surrendered to the Kothagudem police on Sunday. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) 141 Battalion officers were also present when the Maoists surrendered to the police at Bhadrachalam.

The surrendered Maoists hailed from Dokupadu and Puttapadu villages on Telangana-Chhattisgarh border, the police said.

The Maoists, who surrendered to the police, were identified as Kartam Pojja, Ravva Sanna, Musiki Sanna and Kovasi Manga, committee members Madakam Joga and Ravva Lakka.

The six Maoists had been activist in the militia activities in both Chhattisgarh and on Telangana-Chhattisgarh border.



Police officers announcing the surrender of Maoists at a media conference in Bhadrachalam on Sunday

der.

The surrendered Maoists claimed that they had decided to surrendered as they were vexed the party ideology. The police accepted to the surrender of the Maoists. The awareness programmes organised by CRPF personnel in the villages led to the surrender of the Maoists, it is claimed.

The police, while appealing to the Maoist to join the mainstream of the society, said that

the party activists were resorting to extortion. The Maoists, who want to surrender to the police, may contact the nearest police, the police officers.

CRPF 141 Bn commandant Ritesh Thakur, second in commandant Kamal Veer Yadav and Assistant Commandant Revathi Arjunan, Dummugudem CI, B Ashok, Cherla CI A Raju Verma and SI P Ganesh were present.

Cyberabad Police busted a gaming fraud, nabbed 14 people

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A joint operation by the Medchal Police and Medchal Special Operation Team (SOT) have busted a gambling den in Kandlakoya village of Medchal district. The police have seized Rs 53,510 and gambling coins which are valued at Rs 61,620. Along with them, the police arrested 14 individuals during a raid on the premises.

The gambling was managed by Nuzivid seed scientist P Rajesh. Along with the arrest of 14 accused, the police also confiscated 13 cell phones and 36 sets of playing cards.

The total estimated value of the seized assets, encompassing cash, gambling coins and cell phones stands at Rs 1.8 lakh. Scientist Rajesh has been accused of orchestrating unlawful gambling activities for the past three years. The police said that up to 50 games were being organised daily by the accused, and Rajesh pocketed Rs 1,000 per game as commission.

Among those apprehended were individuals from diverse professional backgrounds, including a mason, medical store owner, farmer, supervisor, helper, businessman and a software professional. The case is being investigated.

Woman dies, man battling for life in suicide pact

PNS ■ ADILABAD

In what seems to be a suicide pact, a woman died and a married man is battling for life in hospital at Pipladhari village in the district on Saturday night. The police said the woman and the man consumed pesticide/



The police said that a 19-year-old woman died on the way to hospital, while the man, identified as Bhujan Rao, who was married and has two children, was undergoing

treatment at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Science in Adilabad.

They both hailed from the same village. They allegedly consumed pesticide in a farm.

The villagers, who noticed the duo lying unconscious, alerted the police who rushed them to hospital.

The woman and Bhujanga Rao allegedly fell in love with each other. But their parents rejected their relationship.

A case was registered. Investigation is on.



20 injured as four-wheeler hits van

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Twenty passengers suffered injuries, three of them seriously, in an accident at Sunkidi village in the district on Sunday morning.

The accident happened when a four-wheeler coming from Nandel in Maharashtra hit a van in the early hours of Sunday.

Thalamadugu Sub-Inspector Dhanashri said that the injured were admitted to RIMS-Adilabad.

Harish urges farmers not to sell paddy below MSP

The former minister visited a paddy purchase centre and asked officials to speed up the procurement process to end farmers’ misery

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Former minister and Bharat Rashtira Samithi leader T Harish Rao on Sunday appealed to farmers not to sell their produce below the minimum support price (MSP).

Harish Rao on Sunday visited a procurement centre at Pedda Koduru village in the district and the farmers poured out their woes. A woman farmer Rangavva said the farmers have been waiting for the last 15 days with their harvest at the procurement centre.

Harish Rao spoke to the Civil Supplies District Manager and urged him to speed up the procurement. He explained to the officials that the farmers have



Former minister T Harish Rao interacting with farmers at a purchasing centre in Siddipet district on Sunday

been waiting for long to sell their produce. The harvested paddy would get wet if it rained. He also spoke to the Additional Collector and Revenue Divisional Officer to help the

farmers sell their produce.

He sharply criticised the Congress government for failing to pay attention to the problems being faced by farmers. The motors fitted to the pump

sets in farms burnt out due to fluctuations in power supply.

Later, speaking to the media in Medak, Harish Rao recalled that the late Indira Gandhi, when she contested from Medak promised to make it a district. But she failed to deliver on her promise. BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao after becoming chief minister, created Medak district. It was the KCR government which brought rail connectivity to the Medak district. The KCR government ensured that the water for irrigation reached the tail-end areas.

Harish Rao ridiculed the government for going back on its promise to waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh.

Raghunandan Rao alleges ‘relations’ between Revanth and KCR families

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Medak Lok Sabha constituency M Raghunandan Rao alleged on Sunday that there is a “relation” between the former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy’s families and hence the Congress government is not arresting BRS Medak Lok Sabha candidate Venkatrami Reddy.

Raghunandan said that he found no difference between



Revanth Reddy and KCR. KCR appointed MLA who won on cycle symbol as minister. Revanth Reddy gave tickets to the MLA who won on car symbol,

he pointed out.

While participating in the meet-the-press programme on Sunday, Raghunandan Rao warned the Chief Minister of trying times ahead. He said, “Revanth Reddy’s sixth sense is working perfectly and hence he commented in Mahabubnagar that a conspiracy is hatched against him.

Raghunandan Rao accused Revanth Reddy of being involved in the Cash-for-Vote case.

Raghunandan Rao found fault with former minister T

Harish Rao and Revanth Reddy for criticising him saying “Whether Raghunandan Rao, who lost elections in Dubbaka, will be able to win Medak.” Raghunandan asked Harish Rao to tell how KCR, who lost the election in Kamareddy, can embark upon bus Yatra. He asked why Revanth Reddy contested from Malkajgiri after losing the election in Kodangal. Raghunandan Rao asked CM Revanth Reddy to tell how many BCs are there in his cabinet.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Sajjala downplays Chiru’s support to Oppn alliance

- Terms elections a battle between pro-poor YSRCP & power-hungry Oppn

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

General secretary of YSRCP, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has brushed aside the Tollywood star Chiranjeevi’s endorsement of the TDP-Jana Sena-BJP coalition, saying that regardless of opposition alliances, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will emerge victorious in the upcoming May 13 elections. “Chiranjeevi’s backing of the alliance candidates comes as no surprise. However, no matter how many join their ranks, we remain steadfast in our anticipation of victory,” stated Sajjala confidently.

Speaking at a press conference in Penamalur on Sunday, Sajjala disclosed that the ruling party leadership is assessing the electoral landscape constituency by constituency. He said that the welfare and developmental initiatives of the YSRCP government have positively impacted 80 per cent of the population.

Sajjala said that the TDP had forged alliances with Jana Sena Party and BJP solely to wrest power, devoid of any genuine agenda for the State’s progress. He termed the election as a battle between the people-centric YSRCP and power-hungry opposition factions, urging voters to choose between CM Jagan Mohan Reddy’s pro-people governance and the alternative presented by Chandrababu and his associates.

Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh and party regional coordinator Alla Ayodhya



- Sajjala asserts Jagan’s eventual victory in the May 13 elections regardless of opposition alliances.
- The YSRCP State general secretary highlights his party’s widespread welfare and development initiatives benefiting 80% of the population.
- Sajjala calls Pawan Kalyan an immature politician with unclear motives, seemingly aligned with Chandrababu Naidu.

Ramireddy provided a succinct overview of the party’s accomplishments in the Penamalur constituency.

Sajjala highlighted that under the YSRCP government, the benefits of welfare and development had reached 80 per cent of the population, prompting Chandrababu’s alliance formation due to an inability to face Jagan’s leadership alone. He noted the defection of a Penamalur MLA to the TDP but expressed confidence in the party’s increased majority in the constituency, reaffirming their optimism for sweeping victories across the Machilipatnam parliamentary segments.

Regarding Pawan Kalyan and his Jana Sena Party, Sajjala questioned the clarity of his political motives, suggesting an undue inclination towards Chandrababu. Predicting an electoral defeat for Naidu’s party and consequently the end of Pawan Kalyan’s political career, he remarked on the latter’s perceived dependence on the TDP chief’s directions, branding him an immature politician whose relevance holds no sway over YSRCP’s agenda. Sajjala exuded confidence in the electoral prospects of the party’s candidate and Housing Minister, Jogi Ramesh, projecting a substantial victory margin in the Penamalur seat. He also anticipated sweeping success for the ruling party across all seats within the Machilipatnam parliamentary segments. He announced Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy’s nomination filing scheduled for April 25, along with the imminent release of the party’s manifesto within two days.

Make Rahul PM to bring Ram Rajyam: Jagga Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president T Jagga Reddy stated that AICC leader Rahul Gandhi is an ‘heir’ of Lord Rama and if the people want the Rama Rajyam, they have to make Rahul Gandhi as Prime Minister.

In a chit chat with the media persons on Sunday at Gandhi Bhavan, Jagga Reddy said that the poor got their due under Rama Rajya. Lord Rama never wanted temples to be built for him.

Jagga Reddy said that the Telangana BJP leaders Kishan Reddy, Bandi Sanjay and Eatala Rajender have to say ‘Jai Sri Ram’ if they wanted to survive in politics. Jagga Reddy questioned the BJP leaders whether the problems being faced by people come to an end with the construction of temples?

Finding fault with Eatala



Rajender for criticising Rahul Gandhi, Jagga Reddy said that the former’s political stature was small when compared with that of Rahul Gandhi. He said that the national politics are revolving around Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi. However, there is a huge difference between Rahul Gandhi and Modi. Nobody knows who Modi was before

LK Advani’s Rath Yatra. Advani announced Modi’s name as Gujarat CM in sealed cover after the BJP won Gujarat elections after Rath Yatra. “Modi was a sealed cover

CM.” Rahul Gandhi selected the CMs of several States, he said.

Jagga Reddy said that Rahul Gandhi is a fighter, however, Modi is a leader who came to power. He appealed to the people to ensure the victory of 14 MPs in Telangana to make Rahul Gandhi PM.

WORLD EARTH DAY

‘Reboot the Earth’ India Event to be held in May

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the occasion of the World Earth Day, “Reboot the Earth” has been launched by the Salesforce, CRM solutions provider. The India event is scheduled for May 22 and 23 in Hyderabad. This initiative involves a series of climate-focused innovation hackathons, in partnership with five United Nations agencies like the United Nations Secretariat, UN Youth Office, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology and Digital Public Goods Alliance. The hackathon in Hyderabad aims to unite young computer programmers, administrators, architects, salesforce ecosystem experts, scientists and others to devise solutions for the current climate crisis.

Each event will recognise a winning team, granting them a prize package inclusive of support funds, an invitation to the official Reboot the Earth awards ceremony at the OSPO’s for Good conference in the New York City in July, and a pro bono mentorship from Salesforce and its part-

ners.

“Reboot the Earth” offers a platform for innovators to collectively create digital public goods that tackle local climate challenges. This provides sustainable solutions, leveraging diverse expertise and cutting-edge technology to drive meaningful global progress towards strength and sustainability. Participants will utilise various technologies, such as open data, AI, salesforce tools over two days to develop solutions designed to address local climate crises while being expandable for wider adoption.

Managing Director, India Operations and Site Lead - Technology & Product at Salesforce India, Sanket Atal said, “At Salesforce, our commitment to a sustainable future is ingrained in our core values. We actively lead the nature-positive movement, using technology to drive change. Our partnership with the United Nations to launch ‘Reboot the Earth’ highlights our dedication to building a world that prioritises environmental well-being, ensuring a healthier and a more stronger planet for all, particularly for future generations.”

INDIA CORNER

'Meat' thrown in UP village temple; 4 booked

Four people here have been booked in connection with an incidence of meat being found inside a temple here, Police said on Sunday. Sikanderpur Police Station SHO Dinesh Pathak said a piece of meat was found in the Hanuman temple in Maldah Chatti area on Saturday afternoon. When templegoers spotted the meat, they became infuriated and blocked the Sikandarpur-Belthra highway in protest. The blockade was ended only after police assured the protesters of action against the culprits. Pathak said on the complaint of Amber Pandey, an office bearer of a Hindu right wing group, an FIR under Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code (desecration of a place of worship) was registered against Ram Dayal, Ram Niwas, Kamaluddin, and Manzoor Hasan. Force has been deployed in the village to prevent any flare ups, police said.



Woman, partner arrested for killing husband

Police have arrested a woman and her partner for allegedly killing her 33-year-old husband and trying to portray the murder as a road accident, an official said on Sunday. Naresh Chander of Bhaderwah in Doda was brought to Jammu's Gandhi Nagar hospital by his wife Shailu Devi in the early hours of April 7. She claimed that Chander was injured in an accident in the Gole Gujral area of Pounchik in the city's outskirts, a police spokesperson said. Acting on the information, a police team arrived at the hospital and recorded Shailu Devi's statement, the official said. Chander's post-mortem was conducted after he died and an FIR registered at Domana police station. During investigations, it came to light that Shailu Devi's statement was "misleading and mismatched with the accident theory". Accordingly, all technical evidences were collected and statements recorded, the spokesperson said.



Thief who posed as judge, bailed out criminals dies at 85

From posing as a judge and granting bail to undertrials to stealing fancy cars for personal commute, Dhani Ram Mittal had several capers to his name in his decades-long career in crime. He died on Thursday aged 85 due to health issues, police said. Named in more than 150 theft cases in Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab and Rajasthan, Mittal, had been put behind bars over 90 times. "His crime list is long, he was directly involved in more than 1,000 cases of theft, cheating, impersonation and forgery in his lifetime," a senior police officer, who did not wish to be named, said. According to police sources, Mittal was first involved in a case of cheating 1964 and did not stop. A senior officer of the Delhi police recalled that Mittal stole cars from the parking lot of Jhajjar court in Haryana for personal use. "When we were reading his criminal profile.



No one can stop CAA in West Bengal: Rajnath

PNS ■ MALDA

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday asserted that the BJP delivers on its promises, and maintained that no one can stop implementation of the CAA in West Bengal.

He said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, but is a law for granting Indian citizenship to people displaced from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on religious grounds.

"The Congress, Trinamool Congress or the Left parties make promises during elections that are not fulfilled, but the BJP delivers on its promises," he said, addressing a rally here in support of BJP candidate from Malda Uttar constituency, Khagen Murmu.



He asserted that no one can stop the implementation of CAA in West Bengal, along with the rest of India.

"Mamata didi says she will not allow CAA in her state. Why is she trying to hoodwink the people of West Bengal," Singh said.

The Centre had in March implemented the CAA, notifying the rules four years after the

law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

Singh said that India is treated with respect under the Narendra Modi-led government, unlike under previous dispensations.

"When we say something in an international forum, it is listened to with respect," he said, adding that Modi's pledge is to turn India into a developed country by 2047.

Singh said promises like abolishing Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya have been fulfilled, and that there are indications of the coming into being of a 'Ram Rajya'.

The defence minister said the BJP government at the Centre has also delivered on its promise of abolishing 'triple talaq'. "We can not only bring to book terrorists inside our territory, but if anyone tries to attack our unity and pride from outside, we can dare to go beyond our borders to teach them a lesson; this is our strength," Singh said.



BJP targeting me, we are not safe: Mamata

PNS ■ KIMARGANI(WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday alleged that the BJP is targeting her and her nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and they do not feel safe.

Her allegation came a day after the Leader of the Opposition in the assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, said that there would be a "big explosion on Monday which will shake the TMC and its top brass".

"The BJP is targeting me and Abhishek, we are not safe, but we are also not afraid of the saffron party's conspiracy.

HEALTH MINISTRY TO STATES, UTS

Act strictly against hospitals involved in illegal transplant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union health ministry has asked all states and UTs to investigate any violations and take appropriate action, including suspension of registration, against hospitals performing illegal organ transplants, officials said on Sunday.

In a letter to all states and UTs, Dr Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS), Government of India, urged all states and Union Territories to ensure regular collection and sharing of data of all transplant cases, including those of foreigners, with the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) on a monthly basis.

The ministry's direction comes over two weeks after an organ trafficking racket, involving Bangladeshi nationals, being run in Haryana and



Rajasthan was busted.

Referring to media reports mentioning commercial dealings in organs involving foreign citizens, Dr Goel stated, "It has also been noted from the registry of NOTTO that there has been a surge in the number of organ transplants of foreigners in the country, which calls for monitoring of such transplants by the state or UT government authority concerned."

Goel, in the letter issued on April 10, directed that appropriate authority of the state

appointed as per the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, should investigate the transplant cases of foreign nationals in their respective states.

He also asked the officials to take appropriate actions whenever a breach of any provision of the Act or any of the rules made thereunder are noted.

"Investigate any violation of the THOTA, 1994 and rules thereunder and take appropriate action including suspension of registration for performing Organ Transplant, of the hospitals involved in illegal activities," the letter said.

"It should be ensured that a unique NOTTO-ID for both donor and recipient is generated by the hospital from NOTTO website (www.notto.mohfw.gov.in), in all cases of organ transplant, whether from a living donor or deceased donor," the letter said.



Centre wants to curtail people's rights: Priyanka

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday said the BJP-led Union government wants to change the Constitution and curtail the rights of people.

Addressing a rally in Chhattisgarh's Balod in support of the Congress' Kanker Lok Sabha candidate Biresh Thakur, she also decried the use of religion in politics and said this was never the tradition of the country.

"The Constitution has given you the right to vote, given you reservations, ensured protection of tribal culture and facilitated the development of Dalits. The BJP-led Union government wants to change this Constitution and curtail people's rights," she claimed. She said any change in the

Constitution will impact everyone and people would not be able to lead a respectable life since their rights would be lost, including that of asking questions.

The intention of the BJP-led Centre is not right, the senior Congress leader alleged.

Asserting that 'show off politics' had gained ground and was the trend in the country, she said, "Today, when a leader performs puja, a camera must be there and it should be seen on television. There has to be showing off."

"Indiraji (former prime minister Indira Gandhi) had a puja room to perform rituals but she did it in solitude. It was not to show off. Religion should not be used in politics as it has not been our tradition," the Congress leader further said.

If Congress & allies win, there will be riots, atrocities: Shah

Katihar, April 21 (PTI) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday charged the Congress-led opposition with being soft on terror and indifferent towards the uplift of deprived castes, and alleged that their return to power could cause "riots, atrocities and poverty".

Addressing an election rally in the Katihar Lok Sabha constituency of Bihar, the former BJP president also credited his party with having given the nation, in Narendra Modi, its "first OBC prime minister" who has "put an end" to dynasty politics.

"Modi wiped out Naxalism



and reined in terrorism. When the Congress was in power, terrorists struck at will and nobody could muster the courage to retaliate. In contrast, the attacks in Uri and Pulwama were followed quickly by surgical strikes

and Balakot airstrikes. Our security personnel went across the border with Pakistan and the terrorists were bumped off in their own hideouts," said Shah.

He also slammed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for taking exception to raising the issue of abrogation of Article 370 in poll rallies outside Jammu and Kashmir, saying "it is a matter concerning the whole country".

"People from Rajasthan and Bihar have shed their blood fighting the insurgency there. Now Kashmir has been fully integrated with the rest of the country," he said.

Congress seeks action against CPI(M) mouthpiece

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress in Kerala on Saturday lodged a complaint with the Press Council of India (PCI) against the ruling CPI(M)'s mouthpiece in the state for allegedly publishing fake news about its leaders.

The Congress alleged that the CPI(M) mouthpiece carried an article on April 18 accusing it of carrying out an obscene campaign against Left candidates.

A caricature, published along with the report, features photos of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee President, Leader of

Opposition in Kerala, UDF Candidate of Vadakara Lok Sabha constituency, and others holding a digital device, indicating that they were spreading "extremely derogatory morphed porn videos", it alleged.

The complaint was lodged by Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly V D Satheesan.

Alleging that the article was intended to malign and destroy the opposition leaders in Kerala, he further charged that it was "political in nature", with the goal of gaining an unfair edge in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The LoP, in the complaint.

'Extreme events of 2023 in line with predictions'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Multiple regions across the world simultaneously experiencing heat extremes could become an "emerging feature" of a warmer planet, according to a new study.

The new research that reviewed the weather and climate of 2023 also said that many of the extreme events experienced last year are consistent with predictions previously made about a warmer world.

Putting the events of the warmest year on record in perspective, researchers said that in a warmer future, more events involving record-breaking hot temperatures occurring earlier in the year, and cyclones exacerbating rainfall extremes are in order.

Change in seasonality of extreme events too is another trend the researchers observed. "We are seeing extremes



The new research that reviewed the weather and climate of 2023 also said that many of the extreme events experienced last year are consistent with predictions previously made about a warmer world.

appearing in seasons in which they are usually less likely. Heatwaves, for example, appeared in spring 2023 in southwestern Europe, Brazil, Morocco and South Africa," Robin Clark of the Met Office in the UK, a co-author of the study published in the journal Advances in Atmospheric Science, said.

Further, multiple regions across the world simultaneous-

ly experiencing heat extremes could become an "emerging feature" of a warmer planet, the researchers said. Many regions of North America, southern Europe, northern Africa, and Asia together experienced record-breaking hot extremes in the

month of July last year. The team also found that intense cyclones exacerbated rainfall extremes such as the Libya flooding in September and the North China flooding in July 2023.

They said that an increased occurrences of such events too are in line with projections about the future under continued global warming.

"Many of 2023's events are consistent with projected future changes in a warmer world, showing the challenges that are to come, while some were a surprise, suggesting there is still more to learn about what's potentially around the corner," Wenxia Zhang from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Chinese Academy of

Sciences, and the lead author of the paper, said.

Droughts in California in the US and the Horn of Africa transitioned into floods in 2023, and more of such events are projected to occur in the coming decades, the authors said.

The compounding effects of drought-to-flood events can be more severe compared to when floods and droughts occur separately, they said.

The researchers also found that wildfires, such as those that occurred in Hawaii and Canada last year, are causing widespread damage, along with threatening emissions targets aimed at limiting global warming. Ecosystems have come under immense pressure due to wildfires, they said.

The authors called for improved predictions and early warning systems to be better prepared for climate hazards.

Sunita Kejriwal at Ranchi rally

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Sunday accused the BJP-led central government of denying insulin to her husband alleging that it wants to kill him.

She asserted that the opposition INDIA bloc will fight against the "dictatorship" of the BJP and win.

"They want to kill my husband Arvind Kejriwal. his food is under camera observation; he is denied insulin. My husband is a sugar patient who has been on insulin for 12 years; he needs 50 units of insulin daily," Sunita said at the Ulgulan Nyay Rally in Ranchi.

She claimed that her husband was jailed for working for the people "Jan Seva" and no charges could be proved against him.

"We will fight against dictatorship and win. The gates of jail will break and Arvind

Kejriwal and Hemant Soren will come out," she said.

Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. He is lodged in Tihar jail.

The ED also arrested Soren on the night of January 31 in



a money laundering case linked to an alleged land fraud.

'Kejriwal ko insulin do': AAP

Carrying insulin, the workers and leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party protested outside the Tihar jail in west Delhi on Sunday and demanded that insulin be given to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who is suffering from diabetes.

Delhi cabinet minister Atishi and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Sanjeev Jha were present at the protest site. Scores of party workers carrying placards saying 'Kejriwal ko insulin do'

sang 'Raghuapati Raghav Raja Ram' outside the jail.

"This is not a protest. The people of Delhi are worried about the health of Chief Minister Kejriwal who is diabetic. They have sent insulin for him," she said. Atishi alleged there is a "conspiracy" to harm Kejriwal. "The Tihar administration had said they have specialist doctors but yesterday they wrote to AIIMS for a diabetologist.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

New beginnings

The CJI hopes new criminal justice laws will expedite cases lingering on for long years

Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud has lauded the enactment of new criminal justice laws, hailing it as a watershed moment for the nation's judicial organ. The judiciary plays a pivotal role in shaping the legal landscape and the CJI's endorsement of the new laws underscores the profound impact these legislative reforms are poised to have on the Indian society. The recent amendments to criminal justice laws mark a paradigm shift in how the legal system approaches crime, punishment and rehabilitation. With a focus on expediting trials, enhancing victim protection and ensuring fair treatment to all parties involved, these laws signify a departure from archaic colonial practices towards a more equitable and efficient framework. One of the key aspects of the new laws is the emphasis on expeditious trials. Delayed justice has long been a concern in India, with cases hanging in courts for years. At times, individuals awaiting trial may spend more time in jail than they would have if found guilty and sentenced.



This situation can extend for years, if not decades. As of December 2022, 4,34,302 prisoners in Indian jails were under trial, which is 75.8 per cent of the total prison population.

The new criminal laws set out to correct this. By streamlining procedures and introducing stringent timelines for trials, the amendments aim to address this issue and ensure that justice is swift and accessible to all. Moreover, the heightened emphasis on victim protection programmes is a crucial development. Victims of crime often find themselves marginalised within the legal process, facing intimidation, harassment and prolonged trauma. The new laws incorporate provisions

to safeguard their rights, providing them with legal support, counselling services and other forms of assistance to navigate the judicial system with dignity and resilience. Furthermore, the reforms underscore the principle of equality before the law by ensuring fair treatment to all individuals, irrespective of their social status or background. By promoting transparency, accountability and due processes, the amendments seek to instill public confidence in the legal system. The CJI has rightly emphasised the transformative potential of these legislative changes, highlighting their role in fostering a more just and equitable society. However, while the enactment of these laws represents a significant milestone, their success ultimately hinges on their implementation. Effective enforcement, adequate resource allocation and ongoing monitoring are imperative to ensure that the intended objectives are achieved in practice. Nonetheless, a beginning has been made to correct the existing anomalies. Moreover, the journey towards a more equitable criminal justice system is an ongoing process that requires continuous evaluation and refinement. As societal dynamics evolve and new challenges emerge, it is essential to remain adaptive and responsive, constantly seeking ways to enhance the effectiveness and fairness of the legal framework.

PICTALK

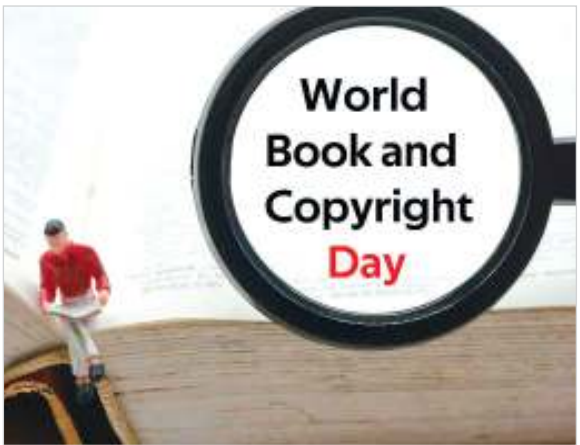


Students celebrate their success after the declaration of Uttar Pradesh Board 10th and 12th class results, in Noida PTI

Celebrating World Book and Copyright Day

From serving as conduits of wisdom and imagination to safeguarding cultural heritage, books play a vital role in shaping our collective consciousness

Books have long served as companions to humanity, bridging the present with the past and future through a rich tapestry of historical narratives and fiction. Each book, a product of its time, reflects the sociocultural nuances prevalent in the society of its era. They serve as invaluable archives, documenting the thoughts, experiences and ideas of past generations, offering us a well-spring of wisdom to draw from and learn. By delving into literature spanning different epochs, we glean insights into the beliefs, values and perspectives of our predecessors, acting as conduits for the transmission of ideas across generations and cultures. Moreover, books kindle the flames of imagination, inspiring us to envision and strive for the seemingly impossible. As repositories of knowledge, wisdom and creativity, books provide solace in solitude and guidance in uncertainty. A singularly remarkable tome possesses the power to transport us to distant realms, broadening our horizons and fueling our imaginations. They serve as windows to diverse societies and cultures,



offering immersive experiences that transcend geographical boundaries. Whether through captivating novels or enlightening travelogues, books possess the remarkable ability to transport us to unexplored territories, fostering empathy and understanding. In the realm of creativity and innovation, books serve as catalysts, igniting the flames of imagination and propelling us towards new frontiers. They enable us to visualise and conceptualise in ways that transcend the limitations of our physical reality. Moreover, in the preservation

of cultural heritage, books play an indispensable role, in safeguarding languages, traditions and values for posterity. By recording historical events, traditions and societal norms, they provide invaluable insights into the tapestry of human civilization, ensuring that our cultural legacy endures through the ages. Yet, as we navigate the digital age, the landscape of literature undergoes profound transformations. The advent of e-books and interactive digital formats ushers in new possibilities, offering enhanced reading experiences enriched with augmented reality, virtu-

al reality and artificial intelligence. However, amidst this digital revolution, the sanctity of copyright laws faces unprecedented challenges. Rampant piracy and unauthorised distribution of digital copies undermine the rights of authors and publishers, necessitating renewed efforts to uphold intellectual property rights. Hence, on April 23rd, World Book and Copyright Day, under the auspices of UNESCO, serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring power of books and the imperative to uphold copyright laws. This year's theme, "Read Your Way," encourages individuals to celebrate the joy of reading while fostering awareness about the importance of respecting intellectual property rights. As we commemorate this day, let us reaffirm our commitment to preserving the legacy of literature and honouring the contributions of literary luminaries past and present.

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



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

Iran-Israel: On the brink of war or hype

Iran's attack and Israel's retaliation threaten to reshape the established rules of engagement and have the potential to destabilise the region

Iran launched a significant assault on Israel during the night of April 13-14, deploying 300 drones and missiles from its territory towards Israeli territories, including Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the southern Negev. This bold action marks an unprecedented event since Israel's founding in 1948.

The attack on Israel by Iran was a direct response to an airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, on April 1, which Iran accuses Israel of carrying out. This assault resulted in the deaths of sixteen individuals, including two Revolutionary Guards generals. Iran's drone and missile assault on Israel, lasting several hours, has reshaped the established rules of engagement between the two nations and heightened tensions in the West Asia, potentially paving the way for a broader conflict with destabilising effects on the region. The strike on Damascus was viewed as a significant Israeli action against Iranian interests in Syria, surpassing previous incidents. Iran had been issuing warnings of retaliatory actions against Israel following an earlier airstrike that destroyed Iran's consulate in Syria, which was seen as a breach of diplomatic conventions.

Iran justified its actions by citing Article 51 of the UN Charter, following the Israeli attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. The drone attack was interpreted as a message from Tehran to Tel Aviv. Despite refraining from officially declaring it as an 'Act of War', Tehran's response aimed to prevent being dragged into a larger conflict while signalling a readiness to retaliate more forcefully to maintain regional deterrence. The targeted strikes on Israel aimed to re-establish Iranian deterrence and highlight a shift in Tehran's approach to risk. By setting new red lines in the conflict with Israel, Iran made it clear that it would take action if Israel's actions against Iran and its allies persisted. While some may perceive the attack as a failure due to Israel's successful interception of Iranian drones and missiles, a more severe strike using precision-guided ballistic missiles could have inflicted



greater harm on Israel with less time to react.

In simpler terms, if Iran truly intended to harm Israel, they would have kept their plans secret and employed more powerful weapons to catch Israel off guard. By providing advance notice and employing less effective tactics, it seems like Iran was issuing a warning rather than seeking to inflict serious damage. It's akin to saying, "If you cross the line, there will be serious consequences in the future."

In a similar fashion, Israel also retaliated with quadcopter strikes with little damage to Iran. A warning for warning if you like. Regarding India's stance, which maintains strategic relationships with both Iran and Israel, it finds itself walking a diplomatic tightrope due to its ties with both nations. India has a longstanding partnership with Iran, with Tehran being a major supplier of crude oil despite challenges from Western sanctions. The Chabahar Port serves as a crucial gateway for Indian goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, given Pakistan's restrictions on land transit. India also has robust defence and security ties with Israel, which supported India during the Kargil War and is a leading supplier of military equipment. Trade between India and Israel has grown to approximately \$7.5 billion.



THE GAZA CONFLICT IS IMPACTING BOTH BIDEN'S AND TRUMP'S POLITICAL PROSPECTS. BIDEN FACES CHALLENGES WITH VOTERS SYMPATHETIC TO PALESTINIANS, WHO HAVE EXPRESSED DISCONTENT WITH HIS GAZA POLICY BY VOTING 'UNCOMMITTED' IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

During Italy's presidency of the G7, leaders are expected to jointly urge Israel to show restraint following an unprecedented attack by Iran over the weekend, which involved numerous drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles aimed at the Jewish State.

The United States, Britain and several European Union nations have proposed expanding existing sanctions against Iran due to its involvement in Russia's conflict in Ukraine, with a focus on restricting drone and missile transfers to Iran.

The dividing line isn't merely between Iran and Israel or Ukraine and Russia; rather, it lies within the emerging power dynamics of these two central regions.

The Gaza conflict is impacting both Biden and Trump's political prospects. Biden faces challenges with voters sympathetic to Palestinians, who have expressed discontent with his Gaza policy by voting "uncommitted" in Democratic primaries, potentially leading to decreased voter turnout in the upcoming presidential election. Biden's stance on the conflict puts him in a difficult position, balancing support for Netanyahu to maintain pro-Israeli voter support while avoiding alienating progressive Democrats. If Trump returns to office, it could disrupt Western grand strategy, especially concerning support for

Netanyahu's Gaza approach and relations with European allies. The impact of the recent hostilities on the U.S. president's approach remains uncertain. Israel has shown mixed reactions, reopening a Gaza crossing and participating in ceasefire negotiations while also indicating intentions to invade areas like Rafah. Biden's success in brokering a peace deal would align with his grand strategy, but achieving a temporary ceasefire is just the initial step in a complex process. Prolonged conflict in the West Asia could significantly complicate broader Western geopolitical goals. Iran is one of the most heavily armed States in the area, boasting a sizable standing army of around 5,80,000 personnel and possessing an estimated stockpile of 3,000 ballistic missiles, as indicated by Western assessments. Despite this military capability, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has emphasized in the past six months during the Gaza conflict that Iran seeks to avoid being drawn into a broader confrontation. So, Iran is not willing to go to war, but it also remains prepared for any kind of conflict if provoked.

(The writer is an eminent expert on counter-terrorism in West Asia and advisor to cyber and aerospace Security; Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLIMATE'S CAPRICIOUS FURY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "India Battles Volatile and Unpredictable Weather", published on April 21, this is my response. The Indian Meteorological Department's promising forecast of above-normal monsoon rainfall offers a glimmer of hope for agriculture and water resources. However, amidst this optimism, lies the harsh reality of erratic weather wreaking havoc across the nation. India's climate resembles a rollercoaster ride, with unpredictable twists affecting lives from Uttar Pradesh to Kerala. The recent contrast of Delhi's moderate cold one day to record-breaking warmth the next epitomises the volatility of regional climates. Rambha Devi, an 80-year-old, reflects on humanity's disregard for nature. She witnesses nature's retaliation through extreme weather: scorching heat waves, torrential rains and unpredictable storms, disrupting lives and livelihoods. Farmers like Ramesh Tiwari and Priya share tales of crop destruction, leaving families struggling. Dr. Mrutyunjay Mohapatra warns of increased heavy rainfall events, exacerbating challenges. As the world faces climate extremes, proactive measures are crucial. Marginalised communities are particularly vulnerable, emphasising the urgent need for climate resilience. Vaibhav Chaturvedi underscores the necessity for immediate action to mitigate the compounded impacts of climate change.

Aarav Patel | Mumbai

EDUCATION EVOLUTION

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Transformative trends in India's higher education", published on April 20, this is my response. India's higher education landscape is experiencing a significant evolution spurred by policy reforms and technological advancements. Initiatives like the New Education Policy and increased FDI signal a shift towards innovation and global competitiveness. The burgeoning market size, coupled with a vast network of institutions, underscores the sector's importance in shaping the country's future.

Political manoeuvrings



Apropos the news article, "Rahul Gandhi holds on to Wayanad despite speculation", published on April 20, this is my response. The dynamics of political alliances and rivalries in Kerala reveal a complex web of strategies and ambitions. Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad underscores the importance of securing a stronghold in the region, amidst shift-

ing allegiances and ideological battles. The CPI(M)'s resentment towards the Congress, softened by tactical considerations, reflects the pragmatic nature of politics. While public posturing may suggest discord, behind the scenes, strategic alliances are being nurtured to counter a common adversary—the BJP.

A K Antony's nuanced silence on CPI(M) candidacies speaks volumes about the intricate history of alliances and betrayals in Kerala politics. His past affiliations highlight the fluidity of loyalties, where former foes become temporary allies in pursuit of power. As Kerala gears up for future elections, the blurred lines between secularism and opportunism will continue to shape the political landscape, reminding us that in politics, alliances are often forged in the crucible of expediency.

Vikram Singh | Delhi

Digitalisation, accelerated by the pandemic, offers opportunities for wider access and skill development. The changing course preferences reflect a demand for interdisciplinary learning and industry-relevant skills. EdTech's rise democratises education but requires addressing digital disparities. Ensuring quality amidst diversification necessitates robust regulatory frameworks. The push for internationalisation promises to enrich educational practices and boost the economy. As India navigates these changes, smart scaling is imperative, ensuring not just expansion but also excellence and inclusivity. This journey towards a globally competitive education system holds the promise of empowering every student for a brighter tomorrow.

Rajiv Mishra | Lucknow

BURDENS AND LIBERATION

Madam —Apropos the news article, "Mind, the key to Hidden Fortune", published on April 20, this is my response. The story of the woman and her son, burdened by past debts and future anxieties, resonates deeply with the human struggle for liber-

ation. There is a narrative of hidden treasures, not just of material wealth but of profound lessons on the nature of existence. In their quest to protect their riches from creditors, they unwittingly ensnared themselves in a cycle of fear and secrecy, failing to embrace the present moment. The tragedy of their lives underscores a universal truth: true freedom lies in being untethered from the shackles of past regrets and future uncertainties. Through the lens of Buddhist wisdom, the narrative acquires a timeless relevance. The Zen Master's insight into the nature of the mind echoes the imperative of being anchored in the present. Similarly, the young monk's realisation that he is already where he seeks to be symbolises the attainment of true happiness through mindfulness. In essence, the story serves as a poignant reminder that true wealth lies not in external possessions but in the liberation of the mind from the constraints of time.

Rohan Desai | Ahmedabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FOMO

In the age of social media, the Fear Of Missing Out has become rampant



SHAINY SHARMA

Ever found individuals befuddling when they see photos or updates from parties, gatherings, or events they were not invited to or witness their colleagues or peers receiving accolades, promotions or career advancements... Well such situations may evoke FOMO in individuals who feel stagnant or unproductive in comparison. "FOMO," or the Fear of Missing Out, arises from a perceived discrepancy between one's own experiences and the experiences of others. Whether online or offline, the fear of missing out can exert a powerful influence on individuals emotions, behaviours and decision-making processes, thereby highlighting the need for self-awareness and coping mechanisms to navigate the pressures of modern life. Now a days it is a prevalent phenomenon among Generation Z (Gen Z) and other demographics. It can be a double-edged sword, driving ambition while fostering anxiety. There is no denying the fact that Gen Z have grown up in a digital age which is characterized by constant connectivity and instant access to information promoting products, experiences and lifestyles that appear glamorous and desirable. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and Facebook have become integral part of their daily lives, shaping their perceptions, behaviours and social interactions in profound ways. Various studies and research too have consistently shown a strong association between social media usage and FOMO among this generation, the consequences of which extends beyond mere discomfort and impact mental health, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. Individuals plagued by FOMO due to the constant exposure to curated content and the pressure to maintain a certain online image may experience increased stress, anxiety, depression and feeling of loneliness as they constantly compare their lives to others' highlight reels.



To mitigate the negative effects of FOMO on Gen Z, it becomes utmost important to promote digital literacy, encourage healthy social media habits and foster offline connections and experiences. Now this can include multiple practices such as practicing mindfulness or journaling that promote gratitude and positive thinking. Setting boundaries for screen time and cultivating meaningful relationships and activities that are not dependent on social media validation. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive online community can help alleviate feelings of FOMO by emphasizing authenticity, empathy and acceptance. Not only this but practicing the art of Digital Detox will allow individuals to reconnect with themselves and prioritize meaningful offline interactions and relationships. This will result in emphasizing the importance of quality over quantity when it comes to social connections and encourage face-to-face communication, genuine conversations and shared experiences with their friends and loved ones. Also, encouraging them to engage in activities such as sports, art, music or dance will not only provide opportunities for personal growth and development but also reduces dependence on social media for validation and self-worth. Practicing such activities will encourage the Generation Z to seek support from trusted friends, family members or mental health professionals if they're struggling with feelings of FOMO or its effects on their well-being. Remember, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) raises stress hormones, inflammation and dysregulates an individual's nervous system. One needs to learn to self-love and be protective of their time and energy. In the hyper connected world, it does take courage to be with own thoughts so, try to be one...

(The write is an educator; views are personal)

With power freebies, debt comes calling



UTTAM GUPTA

The core dilemma persists: How to prevent debt while ensuring universal electricity access? This issue entails policy intricacies and power sector reforms



“

CURRENTLY, ALMOST 95 PER CENT OF POWER CONSUMERS IN PUNJAB AVAIL OF SUBSIDIES. A MAJOR PORTION OF WHICH ISN'T EVEN REIMBURSED TO DISCOMS

In an interview, Union Power Minister RK Singh revealed he has been telling States that electricity is not free. "If any State wants to give free power to any category of people, they can go ahead and do so, but you have to pay for it". Singh's exhortation to the States assumes significance in the backdrop of a spate of announcements by the latter to give free electricity to certain consumers which affect the viability of power distribution companies or discoms (they buy power from generating companies or gencos and supply to the consumers). He argues "like any other commodity, generation and distribution of electricity involves cost and if a State is to provide it for free to a section of consumers, it also needs to have finances to pay the genco. If the genco isn't paid, electricity will not be produced in the first place". But, there can't be any compromise on the generation of electricity as any shortfall could lead to a stoppage of economic activity. To meet the surge in demand (due to the impending summer), the Union Government has invoked the provisions of the Electricity Act (2003) under Section 11 asking gas-based gencos and thermal plants based on imported coal to increase generation even if it entails extra cost. That is the reaction to meeting incremental demand. How could it tolerate massive cuts in generation inevitable when gencos are not paid? So, States must ensure that they are paid. When pressurized, the concerned States borrow money to pay the gencos resulting in a debt trap. For instance, in the first two years of the AAP Government, Punjab borrowed as much as Rs 47,000 crore adding to the already high debt of the State. How can the States avoid debt trap? The Electricity Act (2003) and the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Power require the discoms to fix the charge (or tariff) on electricity supplied to consumers in a manner such that the average revenue realization (ARR) from its sale is equal to the average cost of supply (it includes the cost of purchase, transmission and distribution), or ACS. The discoms are free to decide the modalities of how this is to be ensured subject to approval by the concerned State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs). Ideally, the discoms should charge from 'all' consumers a tariff equal to the total cost of supply say Rs 'X' crore divided by the number of units. But, they don't follow this principle. They charge less from certain consumers especially households (HHs) and farmers. For instance, in Delhi, the tariff applicable to HHs consuming 200 units a month is Rs 3 per unit which is about half of the ACS. Including a plethora of levies adding to 44.6 per cent, the shortfall comes to Rs 4.3 per unit. For HHs consuming between 201 and 400 units, the tariff is Rs 4.5 per unit implying an under-recovery of Rs 1.5 per unit. Including the levies, this comes to Rs 2.2 per unit. These under-recoveries are cross-subsidized by charging more from industries and business establishments for which the tariff can go up to a high of Rs 16 per unit. The low tariff charged from the target consumers (read: HHs consuming up to 400 units a month) is nothing but a freebie given by political parties. But, it goes unnoticed as the State exchequer doesn't have to pay for these under-recoveries. The industries that are made to foot the bill can't even murmur as discom being the sole supplier of electricity, they have no other option. But, political parties don't want the target HHs to even pay this small tariff. In Delhi, the AAP Government tells discoms not to raise any bill on HHs consuming up to 200 units. Likewise, in Punjab, consumption of up to 300 units a month by an HH is free. This extra under-recovery of Rs 4.3 per unit in Delhi (applicable tariff Rs 3 per unit plus 44.6 per cent levies) has to be reimbursed by the State to the discom. But, most States don't reimburse or do it partially and after considerable delay. This leads to losses of discoms. The availability of free power also drives people to manipulate their reported consumption. For instance, in Punjab, an HH consuming 900 units a month, gets three meters installed to keep consumption of each under 300 units thereby ensuring zero bills. Reportedly, more than 100,000 meters have been bifurcated or trifurcated enabling even high-end consumers to avail of the free bonanza. As for farmers who are eligible for free power in the State, they report even consumption for running multiple ACs in their homes under farming head thereby avoiding any payment. As a consequence, currently, almost over 95 per cent of power consumers in Punjab avail of subsidies, a major portion of which isn't even reimbursed to discoms. Discoms' losses also increase due to AT&C (aggregate technical and commercial) losses - a sophisticated nomenclature for power theft. According to Singh, AT&C's losses used to be high at 27 per cent. In Punjab, reportedly, an overwhelming share of electricity that leaves the generating stations/power dispatch centres remains unaccounted for. The discoms have funded these losses by borrowings from banks and other financial institutions (FIs) apart from keeping bills pending. At the end of FY 2021-22, their total debt was Rs 620,000 crore. In June 2022, they owed about Rs 1,40,000 crore to Gencos and transmission companies (transcos). The Center has taken several measures to force discoms to clear their dues. The late payment surcharge (LPS) Rules, implemented in 2022 made it mandatory for discoms to clear their legacy dues as existing on June 3, 2022, in a time-bound manner in 12 EMIs with the benefit of non-applicability of the LPS after its implementation date. The rules are also provided for time-bound clearance of current dues failing, which will attract a power supply cut. This has resulted in legacy dues decreasing from Rs 1,40,000 crore in June 2022 to around Rs 70,000 crore in July 2023 and further down to Rs 40,000 crore currently. Under the 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD) launched in July 2021, the Centre has undertaken a massive investment of Rs 300,000 crore to improve the reliability and quality of the power supply and enhance the efficiency of discoms. It has compulsory pre-paid and smart metering components to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 250 million households. As a result, AT&C losses decreased from 22.32 per cent during 2020-21 to 13.5 per cent during 2022-23. However, according to the Minister, today power pilferage is 15 per cent. On this much electricity, discoms get 'nil' revenue. On a much larger percentage of power used by target HHs and farmers, the States promise to pay on their behalf. But, they don't pay in full and whatever payment comes, it is delayed. Even for making payments, the States borrow money. And, the vicious cycle continues. It won't end unless discoms are unshackled from State controls and given the freedom to decide their pricing and distribution policies. If, States want certain HHs and farmers to get power free, let them give the money directly to them. This reform will also pave the way for the deregulation of electricity distribution, more options for consumers to source their needs and a reduction in tariffs.

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

Govt schemes are transforming lives in rural Rajasthan

Loyara village serves as a microcosm of resilience and progress, fuelled by education and community empowerment

We typically receive our ration between the 1st and 3rd of each month. If it's ever delayed, my grandchildren inquire why we haven't received it from the ration dealer. The younger generation in my household is quite aware. They've made sure that all the necessary ration-related documents are in order, ensuring a seamless supply. Also, my pension now arrives punctually. Thanks to various Government schemes, these youngsters are reaping benefits. They educate themselves about these schemes and then proactively apply for them at the Panchayat office," shares 76-year-old Amba Bai, residing in Loyara village within Udaipur district, Rajasthan. Situated just 8 km from Udaipur, this village falls within the Badgaon tehsil. With a population of approximately 2500, the majority belong to the Scheduled Tribe community. Alongside the OBC Dangi community, there are various other castes. The village reflects the influence of its proximity to Udaipur city,

evident in the transition of most houses to concrete structures. However, economically, the village still grapples with challenges. While individuals from OBC and general castes are involved in agriculture, trade, and animal husbandry, the majority of male members from the Scheduled Tribes work as labourers in marble factories surrounding Udaipur city. Some also engage in daily wage labour. Meanwhile, women in these households contribute to the family's income by working as domestic helpers in affluent homes within the city. Economically, Loyara village may face challenges, but socially and educationally, it has seen significant development. Consequently, awareness about Government schemes has risen among the villagers, leading to increased benefits. The younger generation in the village has embraced education, with even Scheduled Tribe boys and girls pursuing studies up to the 12th grade. This educational advancement has also fostered greater awareness within the community. For instance, the Public Distribution System (PDS), part of the Food Security scheme, has been embraced in the village. Shiv Lal, aged 45, attests to this positive change. Despite working in a marble factory in Bengaluru after completing his 12th grade, he remains well-informed about



my children handle these matters diligently, ensuring the timely arrival of our ration." Taru Bai, a respected elder at 70, sheds light on the changing face of education and Government support in Loyara village. "Back in my day, girls rarely pursued education," she recalls. "But now, over half of the girls in our community are completing high school, and they're bringing back valuable information about Government programs. Their schooling has even helped smooth out the process for my pension, as they handle all the paperwork." Looking back, Taru Bai remembers, "We used to hear about Government schemes, but getting clear

information was a challenge, even after asking around at the Panchayat. But things are different now; the younger generation knows exactly how to navigate these programs and fill out the necessary forms." However, amidst these educational strides, economic challenges persist. "The majority of the Scheduled Tribe families in the village are economically very weak. Most families do not have enough money to start a business, nor do they have enough land to do farming or vegetable production. Although the new generation has started studying, only a few people from this community are in Government jobs. But I think as the trend of educa-

tion and awareness has increased among children, they will also soon start getting recruited in Government jobs." In the same village, there is also the family of Mangi Lal and Tulsiram, who are deprived of the benefits of the PDS. Last year, the ration status of Mangi Lal's family which consists of seven members, was changed from BPL to APL. As a result, they stopped receiving ration. Similarly, Tulsiram mentions that due to missing documents, their family is unable to access ration benefits. For this, they've been in constant communication with the e-Mitra.

(The author is a social worker from Rajasthan; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Hero MotoCorp inaugurates assembly unit in Nepal

Two-wheeler major Hero Motocorp on Sunday said it has opened an assembly facility in Nepal in partnership with its distributor CG Motors. The facility will have a capacity of 75,000 units per annum and will bring new investments and create job opportunities in the region, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement. Four products -- Xpulse 200 4V, Super Splendor, Splendor+ motorcycles and Xoom 110 scooter -- which have been launched in the country -- will be assembled locally at the new assembly facility located in CG Industrial Park in Nawalparasi, it added. "This is an exciting development for us, CG Motors and for Nepal. The state-of-the-art assembly unit will ensure that our world-class products will now be made in Nepal and available to customers across the country," Hero Motocorp Chief Business Officer - Global Business Unit, Sanjay Bhan said. He further said, "The rapid expansion of the sales and service network will enable us to entrench the market with our world-class products and services."



'Coal-based thermal power project to be operational soon'

State-owned THDC India Ltd aims to make its coal-based power plant operational by September 2024, marking an entry into the domestic thermal energy sector, a top company official said. THDC India Ltd (THDCIL) is setting up a 1,320 megawatt (2X660 MW) Super Thermal Power Project (STPP) at Bulandshahr district in Uttar Pradesh (UP), the official said in reply to a query about the company's plans of setting up coal-based capacities. At present, the Uttarakhand-based entity has an installed power generation capacity of around 1,587 MW, of which 1,424 MW is hydro, 113 MW wind and 50 MW solar. When asked about the timeline of the project, the official said "The work is going on in full swing. We are confident of making the first unit of 660 MW operational by September this year and the second unit operational by March 2025. It is a project of around Rs 12,000 crore."



USFDA pulls up Natco Pharma for manufacturing lapses

Natco Pharma failed to maintain cleanliness, sterilise equipment and utensils at appropriate intervals at its Telangana-based plant, as per the US health regulator. In the warning letter to the company, US Food and Drug Administration said its investigators observed various violations at the finished pharmaceuticals plant located at Kothur Village in Telangana. The USFDA inspected the facility from October 9 to 18, 2023. "Your firm failed to clean, maintain, and, as appropriate for the nature of the drug, sanitize and/or sterilise equipment and utensils at appropriate intervals to prevent malfunctions or contamination that would alter the safety, identity, strength, quality, or purity of the drug product beyond the official or other established requirements," the US health regulator noted. It further said: "Your cleaning procedure for your non-dedicated equipment is inadequate."



Earnings, global trends major triggers for markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Worries related to the Iran-Israel conflict, quarterly earnings and foreign investors' trading activity are the key factors that would dictate stock markets this week, analysts said.

Besides, trends in Brent crude oil and movement of the rupee against the dollar will also be crucial factors.

This week will be crucial for the market amid ongoing worries about the conflict between Iran and Israel, said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

"If tensions escalate significantly, there's a risk of panic selling and increased volatility across global stock markets. Moreover, the market will be keeping a close eye on fluctuations in crude oil prices, as geopolitical events frequently impact them."

Investors will also be watching for important earnings of Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance,



"If tensions escalate significantly, there's a risk of panic selling and increased volatility across global stock markets. Moreover, the market will be keeping a close eye on fluctuations in crude oil prices, as geopolitical events frequently impact them."

Nestle, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies and Maruti," Gour said.

HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 2.11 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to Rs 17,622.38 crore for the March 2024 quarter against Rs

17,257.87 crore in the preceding December quarter.

Among global events, the Bank of Japan will announce its interest rate decision on April 26, 2024, he added.

"Movement in US bond yields and the dollar index will

be important factors influencing market sentiment," Gour said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55% and the Nifty dipped 372.4 points or 1.65%.

This week focus will remain on earnings season along with global cues, said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

"Index heavyweights like Hindustan Unilever, Maruti, and Bajaj Finance will announce their results. Investors would also track economic data points like manufacturing & services PMI data of the US, US Q1 GDP number, and Japan's policy statement," Khemka said.

Markets edged lower amid excessive volatility and lost over one and a half per cent, tracking feeble global cues, said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Direct tax collections exceed estimates; jump to Rs 19.58 L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's net direct tax collections surged by a massive 17.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 19.58 crore in the fiscal year ended March 2024, surpassing even revised estimates by a wide margin, the tax department said on Sunday.

Net collections of income and corporate taxes, which make up for most of the direct taxes, in 2023-24 financial year exceeded the Budget estimates by Rs 1.35 lakh crore (7.40 per cent) and the revised estimates by Rs 13,000 crore.

The government had raised the target for direct tax collection in FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024) to Rs 19.45 lakh crore in the interim Budget presented on February 1.

With this, the gross tax collection target as per the revised estimate stood at Rs 34.37 lakh crore for FY24.

While gross direct tax collections (provisional) for the FY 2023-24 rose 18.48 per cent to Rs 23.37 lakh crore, net proceeds (after accounting for

refunds) surged 17.7 per cent to Rs 19.58 lakh crore, reflecting buoyancy in the economy and rise in income levels of individuals and corporates.

Refunds aggregating to Rs 3.79 lakh crore have been issued in FY 2023-24, the CBDT said in a statement.

"The provisional figures of Direct Tax collections for the financial year (FY) 2023-24



show that net collections are at Rs 19.58 lakh crore, compared to Rs 16.64 lakh crore in the preceding financial year i.e. FY 2022-23," it said, adding the Budget for 2023-24 fiscal had pegged the collections for the year at Rs 18.23 lakh crore, which were revised to Rs 19.45 lakh crore later.

"The provisional Direct Tax collections (net of the refunds)

have exceeded the Budget Estimate by 7.40 per cent and Revised Estimates by 0.67 per cent," it said.

The gross collection (provisional) of Direct Taxes (before adjusting for refunds) for the FY 2023-24 stood at Rs 23.37 lakh crore, showing a growth of 18.48 per cent over the gross collection of Rs 19.72 lakh crore in FY 2022-23.

The gross corporate tax collection (provisional) in FY 2023-24 was up 13.06 per cent to Rs 11.32 lakh crore as compared to the gross corporate tax collection of Rs 10 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Net Corporate Tax collection (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 9.11 lakh crore showed a growth of 10.26 per cent over the net corporate tax collection of Rs 8.26 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Gross Personal Income Tax collection including Securities Transaction Tax (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 12.01 lakh crore was up 24.26 per cent over previous year's collection of Rs 9.67 L cr.



'Apple may employ 5 lakh people in India in 3 years'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

iPhone maker Apple through its vendors is expected to employ over 5 lakh people in India over the next three years, according to government sources.

At present Apple's vendors and suppliers employ 1.5 lakh people in India. Tata Electronics, which runs two plants for Apple, is the biggest job generator.

"Apple is accelerating hiring in India. At a conservative estimate, it is going to employ five lakh people in the next three years through its vendors and components suppliers," a senior government officer said.

When contacted, Apple declined to comment on the projection.

Apple has plans to scale up production in India by over five-fold to around USD 40 billion (about 3.32 lakh crore) in the next 4-5 years.

According to market research firm Counterpoint Research, Apple led the India market with the highest revenue in 2023 for the first time, while Samsung topped the chart in terms of volume sales.

The firm in its recent report said Apple surpassed the 10-million-unit mark in shipments and captured the top position in revenue in a calendar year for the first time.

Six of top 10 valued firms take Rs 1.40 lakh cr hit in mcap

TCS, Infosys biggest laggards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of six of the top 10 valued firms eroded by Rs 1,40,478.38 crore in a holiday-shortened week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the maximum hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55 per cent. Stock markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Ram Navami.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the gainers from the top-10 pack, TCS, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, ITC and Hindustan Unilever suffered erosion in their valuation.

The market valuation of TCS tanked by Rs 62,538.64 crore to Rs 13,84,804.91 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

Infosys faced an erosion of Rs 30,488.12 crore from its val-

uation which stood at Rs 5,85,936.45 crore.

Shares of Infosys on Friday ended nearly 1 per cent lower after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank diminished by Rs 26,423.74 crore to Rs 7,49,023.89 crore and that of State Bank of India declined by Rs 14,234.76 crore to Rs 6,70,059.86 crore.

Hybrid mutual funds stage comeback

See Rs 1.45 lakh crore inflows

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hybrid mutual fund schemes have seen a resurgence in 2023-24, garnering Rs 1.45 lakh crore in investments, driven by substantial inflows into the arbitrage category, following withdrawals in the previous fiscal year.

The surge in assets was complemented by an increase in the number of investors, with the number of folios reaching 1.35 crore in March 2024 from 1.21 crore a year earlier, adding an investor base of 14 lakh. This shows investors' inclination for hybrid funds.

Hybrid funds are mutual



fund schemes that typically invest in a combination of equity and debt securities and sometimes in other asset categories such as gold.

The category has been attracting regular inflows since the beginning of financial year

2023-24 in April after a change in taxation for debt funds that kicked off in the same month. Before that, the segment saw a net withdrawal of Rs 12,372 crore in March.

Overall, the hybrid category saw net inflows of Rs 1.45

lakh crore in FY24, compared to an outflow of Rs 18,813 crore in FY23, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

"Anticipating a reversal in the interest rate hike cycle in FY24, market participants strategically allocated funds to capitalize on higher rates, while continuing a favourable stance towards equities, real estate, and gold."

However, the rate cuts never materialized and bond yields continue to be higher, retaining the interest of investors," Gopal Kavalireddi, Vice President - Research at FYERS, said.

'Expect rural sales contribution at record levels'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India expects sales contribution from rural areas to remain at record levels in the current fiscal as well on account of various factors including anticipation of a favourable monsoon, according to a senior company executive.

The country's second-largest automaker, which sells models like Creta and Venue, reported 11 per cent growth in rural areas last fiscal as compared to 4 per cent in urban centres.

"We are confident that the contribution from rural markets to our total sales will grow further to around 20 per cent this financial year," Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg told PTI.

The automaker plans to further expand its presence in smaller towns as it firmly believes that for the nation to prosper, both rural and urban regions must progress in tandem, he added.

Garg noted that rural sales accounted for an all-time high of 19 per cent of the company's total sales in FY23.



UltraTech Cement acquires grinding unit from India Cements; announces expansion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla group company UltraTech Cement has announced the acquisition of a grinding unit from India Cements for Rs 315 crore and said it will invest an additional Rs 504 crore to expand the capacity of two units.

In a stock exchange filing, UltraTech said its board has approved acquisition "of a grinding unit having installed capacity of 1.1 million tonnes per annum in addition to a captive railway siding at Parli, Maharashtra from The India Cements Limited... for a con-

sideration of Rs 315 crores".

The company said it has entered into an Asset Purchase Agreement with the seller. "This purchase will help the Company to strengthen its presence in the rapidly growing Maharashtra markets."

Making a similar regulatory filing, The India Cements said out of the total consideration of Rs 315 crore (exclusive of taxes and levies), "Rs 307 crore will be received by the company short-

ly and the balance Rs 8 crore within nine months from the date of the agreement."

The unit being sold had a turnover of Rs 250.66 crore in the fiscal year ended March 31 2023 and net asset value of Rs 75.10 crore.

In a separate filing, UltraTech said its board has also approved brownfield capacity expansion -- 1.2 million tonnes per annum at Parli at a cost of Rs 166.4 crore post acquisition of the grinding



TWEAKS IN TAX TREATY WITH MAURITIUS

FPIs withdraw over Rs 5,200 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors dumped domestic equities worth over Rs 5,200 crore in April so far on concerns over tweaks in India's tax treaty with Mauritius, which would now impose higher scrutiny on investments made here via the island nation.

This came following a staggering net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February, data with the depositories showed.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign

Portfolio Investors (FPIs) made a net outflow of Rs 5,254 crore in Indian equities this month (till April 19).

The major trigger for FPI selling was the tweak in India's tax

treaty with Mauritius, which would now impose higher scrutiny on investments made in India via the island nation, Himanshu

Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

The two nations have reached a consensus on a protocol amending a double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA).



'Cost, speed top priority for logistics sector'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cost and speed have now become the top priority of the firms engaged in logistics business for the last-mile delivery of goods and growth of the sector, a report has said.

According to the Last-Mile Trends Report 2024, earlier the top priority was cost and satisfaction.

"In last-mile delivery now top priority is cost and speed. The needle has shifted from cost and satisfaction to cost and speed," it said.

The report was unveiled during 'The Last Mile Leaders



Event" organised by technology platform FarEye in collaboration with Microsoft this week.

Kushal Nahata, Co-founder and CEO of FarEye, said that within the next five years, autonomous drones will han-

dle 30 per cent of urban deliveries, reducing delivery times and costs dramatically.

The report was based on insights gathered from over 300 leaders across five continents, representing companies with a

combined revenue exceeding USD 100 billion.

Out of 300 participants, over 50 per cent stated that they deliver the goods same day/next day.

The report also said that 80 per cent of supply chain leaders believe measuring the cost of delivery is a top priority.

FarEye has also launched an initiative, 'last-mile innovation nexus', to help startups raise funds and receive mentoring from global experts in the logistics sector.

Gautam Kumar, COO & Co-founder, FarEye, said: "The initiative is a launch pad for

startups to secure transformative partnerships. It is exciting to see the surge in the adoption of AI, robotics, and embedded data analytics, all geared toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of logistics operations."

Over 40 supply chain experts from more than 20 countries, representing diverse industries including retail, logistics, postal, consumer packaged goods (CPG), and pharmaceuticals, came together at the event to explore the transformative potential of technology in driving cost reduction in the logistics sector.

IRDAI abolishes age restriction on health insurance product

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With a view to widen the market and foster adequate protection from healthcare expenses, insurance regulator IRDAI has removed the age limit of 65 years for individuals buying health insurance policies.

This marks a significant departure from the conventional constraints that limited individuals in securing comprehensive coverage.



By abolishing the maximum age restriction on purchasing health insurance plans, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of

India (IRDAI) aims to foster a more inclusive and accessible healthcare ecosystem, ensuring adequate protection against unforeseen medical expenses.

As per the earlier guidelines, individuals were allowed to purchase a new insurance policy only till the age of 65. However, with the recent amendment, which has been effective from April 1, anyone, regardless of age, is eligible to buy a new health insurance policy.

Actor Manoj Bajpayee, who is currently enjoying the love he has received for his recent projects, *Secrets of Buddha Relics* and *Silence 2*, is very excited about the release of *Bhaiyyaji*. The actor gets candid with *The Pioneer* for an exclusive chat, sharing his overwhelming feelings for documentary, his craft, and deets about his next release.

A ecstatic Manoj Bajpayee further continues his excitement: "It also shows that if a documentary is told in an interesting manner and with all the proper research, there is an audience ready for it to consume it. Having said that, there is a bright future for this segment and format, and the filmmakers of the documentary should really be excited about it. I was completely surprised. I must not lie. I never thought a docu-series

Having played different genres and char-

He is someone who likes to read a script like a reader, and if he finds it of great quality and something that he hasn't done before, "When I say character, I mean it may be a policeman, which I have done in the past. But I am talking about the character of the police. If the character has a new sense, that attracts me. And the script

Now, on the work front, after immense appreciation for the docu-series and his recent *Silence 2*, he is all excited to begin the promotions of *Bhaiyyaji*, which is going to start in a few days. With the film releasing on May 24th, he goes on to share some exclusive details on the concluding note: “*Bhaiyyaji* is an action entertainer. This is the first action film for me. In my entire career. It’s a hard-core mainstream film. The story is rooted in our culture. You will see me in a character that you have not seen before. You will see a part of a film like this that has never been made before. In fact, this being my first action film, I was also injured because of all the actions. I always jokingly said, ‘Yaar yeh sab action jag mein apne 20s mein tha, 30s mein tha tab kisine nahi karaya, ab saare haddi todh rahe hai meri’ (Man, no one offered me these action roles when I was in my 20s and 30s; now everyone wants to break my bone.) So, I am very excited to present the trailer and also the anthem of the film. So that is keeping me quite busy. And *Silence*, too, is released. Focus would be on the promotion of *Bhaiyyaji*.”

She further adds, "When modulating my voice for a song, I strive to remain true to myself, ensuring that my authentic self shines through. Fortunately, maintaining authenticity hasn't posed challenges, as directors have embraced my unique style, fostering fruitful collaborations based on mutual respect and appreciation. Being the first Indian at *Coke Studio Pakistan* stands out as a heartfelt moment of joy in my career." Sharmistha Chatterjee is all set for her upcoming ventures into exciting collaborations and independent music projects. Alongside this, she is also nurturing a dedicated fan base through her independent music endeavours. "With a band by my side, we're striving to infuse our performances with a unique fusion of traditional and modern sounds, captivating audiences with our distinctive style." She signs off on a bright note!

The aforementioned research, “DappRadar x BGA Games Report—Q1,” states that over 1.22 million unique active wallets (UAW) were drawn to blockchain games, accounting for 52% of all activity within the ecosystem. The concept of storing significant in-game assets on the blockchain is captivating people. These assets can be exchanged for cash after they are obtained by players, and game app development companies can establish long-lasting frameworks that can be expanded upon by other developers. Though this industry is still in its infancy and presents unique challenges, these concepts do look very fascinating.





Surabhi Bhojania



Chitra Modi



Soniya Singh



Kruti Modi



Shruthi



Saroj Fabrics expands its presence in South India by opening its largest designer fabrics store. Inauguration by actress Soniya Singh, in the heart of the city at Shyam Kripa, road no. 11, Banjara Hills. This Mumbai fabric brand is going to uplift the whole designer market of South India. The store's wide variety of fabrics from India and abroad can be mix match to create beautiful outfits customised to one's choice and style.

Movement disorder specialists of Citi Neuro Centre and Parkinson's Society Hyderabad conducted an awareness program for Parkinson's disease patients and their caregivers at Citi Neuro Centre, Banjara Hills. The 4 hour program was conducted by Prof. Rupam Borgohain, Dr. Rukmini Mridula K, Dr. Rajesh Alugolu, Dr. VVSRK Prasad, Dr. Sruthi Reddy, Dr. SaiDeepak and Dr. Sandip from the Banjara Hills, Miyapur and Uppal branches, along with Pushpavalli - speech pathologist and Brahmī Sridevi - yoga teacher.

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



Megastar Chiranjeevi graced the inauguration ceremony of Yoda Diagnostics' latest branch in Madhapur. The event, marked by enthusiasm and goodwill, highlighted the ongoing commitment of Chiranjeevi towards healthcare accessibility for all communities. During the ceremony, Chiranjeevi reminisced about his previous involvement with Yoda Diagnostics, noting that his initial encounter with Kancharla Sudhakar, the head of Yoda Diagnostics, had left a lasting impression. Reflecting on their shared vision of extending healthcare support to economically disadvantaged individuals, Chiranjeevi expressed his satisfaction at witnessing the fruition of their collaboration.



The Giggle Fest witnessed a great response this summer season. Over 180 brands participated in "The Giggle Fest" - featuring shopping, food, pet arena, pet zoo, musica concert, and a lot more. Vamshi Krishna, Mr.Srinivas Gunishetty from the fest along with the team, welcomed the guests at Hitex Exhibition Centre, Hitech City in Hyderabad on Sunday.









H & R. Johnson (India) unveiled its latest collection of tiling solutions at a grand launch event that was hosted in Hyderabad. The event showcased over 3,000 new tile collection. The celebration was attended by the company's leadership team, including Vijay Aggarwal, Managing Director of Prism Johnson Limited, Sarat Chandak, Executive Director & CEO of HRJ Division, Vijay Mishra, President - Tiles Business of HRJ Division among others.

FUN


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



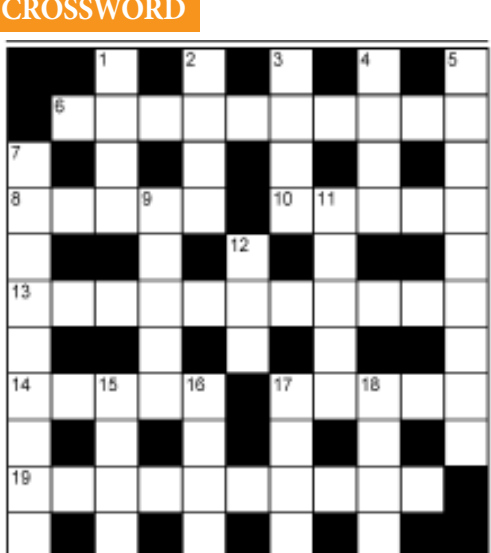
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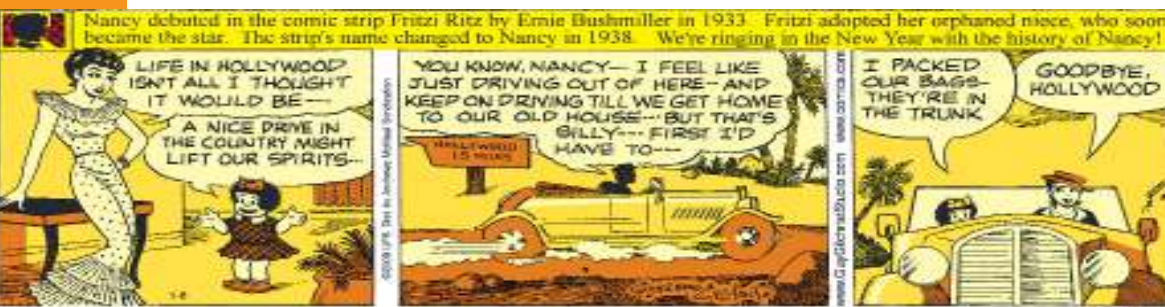
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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	3		1			8	9
6			9				1


Yesterday's solution

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

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.

GINGER MEGGS



ACROSS

6 Broken down; not working properly (3,2,5)

8 A word for a taxi driver

10 A sung musical drama

13 Saying you are sorry

14 Light soft modelling wood

17 Part of a poem or song

19 Follows seventeenth

DOWN

9 These ring at churches

11 Stick wallpaper on with this

12 The number of years someone has lived

15 Use these when running


16 Small busy insects

17 An opinion

18 Animals like large mice

SOLUTION 722

S	T	A	R	T	S	I	D	O	L
I	D	O	S	E	I				
C	A	G	E	S	H	O	U	T	S
K	U	N	A	M	E				
I	S	R	A	E	L	I			
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X	I	G	N	O	R	E	D		
Y	M	H	W	P	C				
G	U	E	S	T	S	H	A	L	L
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THIRUVEER ENTERS WEDLOCK!

Tollywood actor Thiruveer, who is known for films like *Masooda*, and *Pareshan*, among the rest, enters the wedlock. In a surprising update, the actor shared the exciting news on Sunday evening. The actor tied the knot with entrepreneur Kalpana Rao. In the post, he mentioned, "A new beginning". As the actor shared the pictures from his intimate wedding, the post was bombarded with warm wishes and blessings for the couple. Meanwhile, on the work front, the versatile actor, who has gained fame with phenomenal performances and selecting diverse concepts, has revealed his next project. RES Entertainment and Star Pictures' *Production No. 7* was announced on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami.

EXPLORING PRATHINIDHI 2: A CINEMATIC JOURNEY WITH DIRECTOR MURTHY DEVAGUPTA

Prathinidhi 2 is all set to hit theaters on April 25. Ahead of the film's release, director Murthy Devagupta shares some insights on the film's underlying agenda, the creative process, and more.

PNS | HYDERABAD

As Nara Rohit gears up for his cinematic comeback with *Prathinidhi 2*, director Murthy Devagupta sheds light on the film's underlying agenda and the creative process behind this highly anticipated project. Produced by Kumar Raja Battula, Anjaneyu Sri Thota, and Surendranath Bollinei under Vanara Entertainments and Rana Arts banners, *Prathinidhi 2* is poised to captivate audiences with its thrilling narrative and thought-provoking themes. Murthy Devagupta sets the stage by emphasising that *Prathinidhi 2* questions the prevailing agenda system without targeting specific political entities. Drawing parallels with impactful films like *Tagore*, *Lucifer*, *Bhartiyadudu*, and *Leader*, Murthy underscores that the movie aims to prompt critical reflection among movie enthusiasts.

He explains, "*Prathinidhi 2*, much like its predecessors, delves into the system without singling out any party. It's a pure commercial thriller that resonates with movie lovers. "In *Prathinidhi 2*, every journalist assumes a heroic role, reflecting a deep sense of societal responsibility. Murthy underscores the film's tribute to journalists who courageously uphold journalistic integrity, often at great personal risk. He

remarks, "The hero of *Prathinidhi 2* embodies the spirit of responsible journalism, dedicated to the truth. This character is a homage to heroes and warriors who pursue truth relentlessly." Reflecting on the inception of *Prathinidhi 2*, Murthy reveals that the story was not initially intended for the franchise. His passion for storytelling, cultivated through writing under a pseudonym and his foray into filmmaking, fueled the transformation of the narrative into a cinematic venture.

Murthy recalls, "I first shared the story with Nara Rohit, envisioning him as the perfect fit for this compelling narrative. Rohit's nuanced portrayal enriches the story, making it resonate with audiences." Murthy delves into the film's thematic depth, highlighting the hero's trajectory from questioning the system to initiating transformative change. He emphasises that *Prathinidhi 2* transcends partisan narratives, offering a politically charged yet unbiased exploration of societal issues. Murthy affirms, "This is not a propaganda film. *Prathinidhi 2* navigates critical issues within a thrilling narrative, devoid of partisan agendas." Before venturing into filmmaking, Murthy conducted extensive research, leveraging modern tools like AI to enhance his directorial acumen. He acknowledges the invaluable support of the production team, emphasising their collective effort in realising his creative vision. Murthy remarks, "We embarked on this filmmaking journey fully prepared, collaborating with talented professionals to bring our vision to life within budgetary constraints." Murthy underscores the film's broader message, urging audiences to reflect on civic engagement and political ideologies. He calls attention to the voting apathy prevalent in society,

emphasising the film's role in stimulating critical discourse. Murthy states, "Through *Prathinidhi 2*, we invite viewers to contemplate their societal roles and political engagement. The film's content sparks introspection on contemporary politics and societal ideologies." Murthy commends Nara Rohit's meticulous preparation for the film, underscoring Rohit's dedication to mastering the journalist's persona. He applauds Rohit's return to the screen after a hiatus, highlighting the actor's nuanced portrayal. Murthy states, "Rohit's diligent preparation and commitment to the role elevate the film's authenticity, capturing the essence of the protagonist." Looking ahead, Murthy reveals plans for future projects, expressing his passion for cinema. With multiple stories in his repertoire, Murthy aims to collaborate on diverse cinematic ventures, driven by a steadfast commitment to his artistic vision.

He shares, "I am excited to explore new narratives and continue my cinematic journey. With the support of my colleagues, I look forward to translating my passion for storytelling into compelling cinematic experiences."



'VARALAXMI IS THE DRIVING FORCE IN SABARI'

PNS | HYDERABAD

As anticipation builds for the release of the female-driven film *Sabari* on May 3, all eyes are on Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, who takes center stage as the leading lady. Behind the scenes, producer Mahendra Nath Kondla reflects on the journey that led to this compelling project and sheds light on Varalaxmi's pivotal role in its realisation. Hailing from Guntur and with a background in consultancy and business ventures in the USA, Mahendra Nath Kondla's foray into filmmaking marks a deeply cherished ambition come to life. Speaking about the genesis of *Sabari*, he shares, "The main reason we embarked on this film was Varalaxmi Sarathkumar. After hearing the script from the director, we immediately approached her, and her enthusiasm and belief in the project have been instrumental from the outset. "Varalaxmi's professionalism left an indelible impression on Mahendra, who describes her as not just a talented artist but also a consummate professional. "She has been the backbone of our film right from the start," he emphasised, adding, "Varalaxmi ensured that the production remained efficient and within budget, a testament to her dedication and support for safeguarding the producer's interests." *Sabari* delves into powerful themes of mother-daughter relationships, anchored by a poignant emotional core. For Mahendra, this resonant narrative was irresistible, embodying vast potential

waiting to be realised. He shared, "The emotional depth of the story compelled us. We endeavored to enhance every aspect of the film, ensuring that its impact on the audience is profound and enduring."

Navigating the production journey of *Sabari* involved calculated risks and unwavering determination. But the producer's bold approach underscores his belief in pushing boundaries and delivering excellence. "I've always embraced a risk-taking attitude. Our intention was to create a film that resonates authentically with audiences, and we spared no effort in bringing this vision to fruition," he affirmed. Looking ahead, Mahendra reveals ambitious plans, including upcoming projects with actors Varun Sandesh and *Bigg Boss* contestant Amardeep. These ventures promise to further showcase the producer's penchant for engaging storytelling and dynamic filmmaking. As for his own screen presence, he remains focused on producing, with a steadfast commitment to his newfound role. "While I may consider

Making waves after the release of its trailer, the Varalakshmi Sarathkumar-starrer *Sabari* has built immense anticipation. Producer Mahendra Nath Kondla sits down with the media here, reflecting on the journey leading to the project, the leading lady's role, and more.

brief appearances if requested by the director, my primary focus is on producing," he asserts, underscoring his dedication to nurturing compelling narratives and shaping memorable cinematic experiences.

Malayalam supremo Siddique joins Vikram's Veera Dheera Sooran

Talented Malayalam actor Siddique has joined the cast of Chiyaan Vikram's highly anticipated action thriller, *Veera Dheera Sooran*. Directed by SU Arun Kumar, this film has been generating a significant buzz among fans of intense cinema. The announcement of Siddique's involvement adds an exciting dimension to the project, accompanied by a revealing first look that showcases his compelling presence. Siddique, known for his remarkable performances in Telugu cinema with roles like Raju in *Anthima Theerpu*, Srinivas in *Naa Bangaru Thalli*, and Balaram Varma in *Agninakshatram*, brings a wealth of talent and experience to *Veera Dheera Sooran*. His addition further enhances the film's allure alongside a captivating teaser that was

unveiled on Vikram's birthday, captivating audiences with glimpses of his character, Kaali. Produced under the HR Pictures banner, *Veera Dheera Sooran* boasts an impressive creative team, with GV Prakash Kumar composing the music and Theni Eshwar handling the cinematography. Alongside Vikram, the film also stars SJ Suryah and Dushara Vijayan, whose involvement adds depth and excitement to this upcoming cinematic spectacle. Dushara Vijayan, in particular, has drawn attention for her realistic and charismatic performances, making her role as the female lead in *Veera Dheera Sooran* a focal point of anticipation among movie enthusiasts. As filming progresses and more details emerge, expectations continue to soar for this action-packed venture helmed by SU Arun Kumar.

Confirmed! Maruthi's next production is Beauty



Renowned writer and director Maruthi, known for his work on various small and medium-budget films, is returning with an exciting new project titled *Beauty*. After encountering setbacks in his career, Maruthi has refocused his efforts on directing, aiming to deliver a fresh and intriguing concept through this upcoming venture. *Beauty*, set to be directed by RV Subramanyam, will mark Maruthi's collaboration with producers A Vijaypal

Reddy and Zee Studios. The film is slated to officially launch on April 22 in Hyderabad, with further details to be disclosed by the makers during the launch event. Featuring a cast of new faces, *Beauty* promises to be a youthful film infused with family-centric emotions. Vijay Bulganin, renowned for his work on the successful film *Baby*, will compose the music and background score for this project. Maruthi was also involved in the production of *Baby*, which achieved widespread acclaim and success. In addition to *Beauty*, Maruthi is currently occupied with the filming of *Raja Saab*, starring Prabhas. Produced by People Media Factory, *Raja Saab* is being shot in Hyderabad and is scheduled for release during Sankranti 2025. Maruthi's ambitious projects reflect his dedication to delivering engaging and diverse content to audiences.

Big B's 'experience like no other' in Kalki 2898 AD

Kalki 2898 AD is one of the most anticipated and biggest films of Indian cinema, as it stars some of the finest actors of Indian cinema, including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani, among others.

While Prabhas and Deepika will play lead roles, all other characters in this movie directed by Nag Ashwin will have important stories to convey, adding more depth to the film's story. The movie has been in the making for a long time, and fans have been eagerly waiting for its release or at least some updates about the film.

Ever since it was announced on Saturday that Megastar Amitabh Bachchan's first look from the film would be revealed on Star Sports on Sunday, netizens have gone frenzy over the update. Here we bring to you the look of legendary Amitabh Bachchan from the film!

Clad in all-white attire, Amitabh Bachchan can be seen sitting inside a temple, looking mysteriously towards a bright ray of light. Building anticipation for a big announcement soon, the poster reads, "*Samay Aa Gaya Hai*," leaving audiences all the more excited for the magnum opus.

Bankrolled lavishly by Vyjayanthi Movies, *Kalki 2898 AD*, a mythology-inspired sci-fi spectacle set in the future, will be released in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam languages worldwide soon.



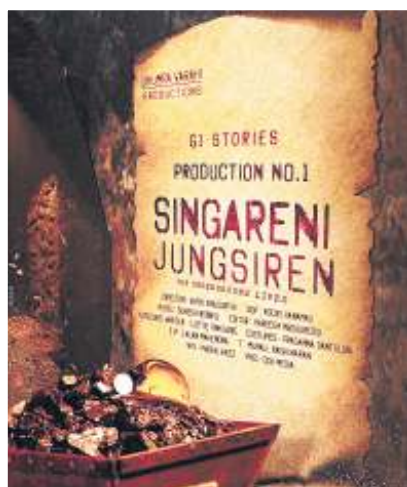
Ajay Ghosh's Music Shop Murthy teaser adds a touch of humour

In a refreshing departure from star-studded productions, *Music Shop Murthy* promises to captivate audiences with its compelling content and engaging narrative. Directed by Siva Paladugu and produced by Harsha Garapati and Ranga Rao Garapati under Fly High Cinemas, this emotional drama features Ajay Ghosh in the titular role alongside Chandini Chowdary, Amani, Amit Sharma, Bhanu Chandar, and Dayanandh Reddy in pivotal roles. The film's teaser unveils the story of *Music Shop Murthy*, a dreamer with a passion for music, portrayed by Ajay Ghosh. Despite his advancing age, Murthy's ambition to become a music artist remains unwavering. His aspirations find renewed hope through Chandini Chowdary's character as a DJ, but he faces opposition from his own family. Determined to

pursue his dreams, Murthy embarks on a journey from his village to Hyderabad, defying familial expectations. Siva Paladugu's storytelling prowess shines through, crafting a narrative that resonates with genuine emotions and a touch of humor. Sreenivas Bejagam's cinematography beautifully captures the essence of the tale, complemented by Pavan's evocative background score. The teaser has garnered an enthusiastic response, heightening anticipation for the film's theatrical release. Stay tuned as the makers will announce the official release date soon.

Jeevan Reddy announces film inspired by true events

Singareni Jungsiren, a forthcoming film penned by director Jeevan Reddy of *George Reddy* fame, is poised to bring a true story to life on the silver screen. The movie, produced by debutant Vivek Inugurti under the banner of Dhumra Varahi, is inspired by real events that unfolded in Singareni back in 1999. With the tagline "The Underground Lives", the film promises to delve into compelling narratives. Pre-production for this gripping survival drama has been finalised, paving the way for filming to commence shortly. The official cast and further details will be disclosed on May Day, coinciding with International Labor Day. Against the backdrop of Telangana's burgeoning cinema scene, *Singareni Jungsiren* seeks to authentically capture the essence of the region's indigenous culture. As anticipation mounts for this intriguing project, audiences eagerly await the unveiling of its cinematic ensemble and narrative scope. Stay tuned for more updates as *Singareni Jungsiren* gears up to make its mark in the realm of true-to-life storytelling.



Mi eye revenge against RR in reverse fixture

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Resurgent Mumbai Indians will need to address their bowling woes as they look to exact revenge on table-toppers Rajasthan Royals in their reverse fixture of the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

With three wins in last four games, MI have hit the recovery road to reach sixth spot in the points table after a poor start this season, while RR are on a rampaging run as they occupy the top spot with 12 points.

The five-time champions survived a late onslaught from Ashutosh Sharma to eke out a nine-run win over Punjab Kings in the last game.

It was once again Jasprit Bumrah, who was left to do the heavy lifting as he stood out with his three wickets. The star India pacer shone with the new ball and then returned to produce a breakthrough, and he did all

this without conceding much. With 13 scalps, Bumrah tops the list of the most wickets this IPL. He also has the second-best economy of just under six runs but while he has been on the mark, his bowling colleagues have struggled.

Gerald Coetzee, too, has made an impact with 12 wickets but has gone for runs. But Akash Madhwal and skipper Hardik Pandya have been inconsistent.

While Shreyas Gopal has taken a wicket each in the three games he has played so far, MI also need to use the experience of veteran Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammed Nabi as a bowler. In batting, former skipper Rohit Sharma's scintillating century, albeit in a losing cause, has been the highlight, while Ishan Kishan has been inconsistent. Hardik, too, hasn't made much of an impact so far, while Tilak Verma has done moderately well.



A huge positive for MI is Suryakumar Yadav's return to form. His 53-ball 78 against PBKS was the cornerstone of MI innings and on his day he can destroy any attack.

The last time MI faced the RR bowling unit, they looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights, as Trent Boult removed three of their top-order batters for naught and

the veteran left-arm pacer will again be a massive threat. Avesh Khan has been entrusted with the responsibility of bowling at the death and he has done

well. Kuldeep Sen, too, showed his skills but he needs to work on his economy. With 12 wickets, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has been

RR's most valuable player in the bowling department, though off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has struggled.

For RR, Riyan Parag has been the batter of the season. The young Assam batter has reinvented himself and his 318 runs is one of the reasons why RR find themselves at the top of the pecking order.

While the batting has revolved around him, skipper Sanju Samson too has produced some fine knocks for the team, aggregating 276 runs so far.

England's Jos Buttler single-handedly chased down a 200-plus total to win RR their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders but the form of fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has been a matter of concern as he has failed to capitalise on his starts.

Shimron Hetmyer has also hit top gear when needed, rescuing the team against PBKS the other day.

TEAMS

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

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, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.

You cannot always rely on Kohli: Varun to RCB

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It's high time India's domestic players step up for Royal Challengers Bengaluru this IPL season and reduce the dependence on Virat Kohli, former India pacer Varun Aaron said on Sunday.

Kohli has been the standout performer for RCB this IPL season and is the current Orange Cap holder with 361 runs in 7 innings. His strike rate is 147.34, with the highest score being 113 not out.

Speaking to Star Sports, Aaron said, "It's just that RCB are not finding the rhythm, the domestic players are just not stepping up."

The 34-year-old Aaron, who announced his retirement from first-class cricket earlier this year, added, "If you have to be anywhere at the top of the table or the middle of the table at this point of the table, you have to have domestic players who are firing and you cannot always rely on Virat Kohli."

"The other guys have to step up and also all their money, is sitting in the dug-out. You can't spend that much cash on players and not have them play."

In 2014, Aaron was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 2 crore, and was retained by the franchise ahead of the 2016 auction. Australia's former skipper in



the limited overs formats, Aaron Finch feels RCB needs an explosive middle-order batter who can complement Kohli.

"He's (Kohli) scored a lot of runs everywhere. He's a modern day great. And I think the fact that he's getting runs and RCB are still not making it is a positive sign in one degree."

"It's that when Virat is playing well, that genuinely carries the rest of the players with him."

"They just need to find a partnership with him, they need to find an explosive middle order player who is in form, Lomror has been in and out, so it's got all the makings of an epic game," Finch said.

RCB are playing Kolkata

Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Sunday.

Speaking of Travis Head's blazing 89-run knock for Sunrisers Hyderabad against Delhi Capitals in Delhi on Saturday, Finch said the left-handed opener has taken the "fear of failure out of his mind."

"It's always been in him, the ability to play like this. I guess the freedom to express himself and be able to deal with the ups and downs of playing such an aggressive and high-risk brand of cricket, I think has just released him to a new level."

"And I think if you look back at the World Cup final, he kept playing his shots even when there was wickets falling around him, the ball was moving. Because he's

taken the fear of failure out of his mind.

"If he misses out five or six times in a row, it doesn't bother him because he knows he's one shot away. He's the type of player that needs one ball in the middle. And that's all it will take for him to get going again," Finch said.

In a match that saw over 460 runs being scored, seamer T Natarajan finished with excellent figures of 4/19, and Finch believed the bowler getting all his wickets in the death when the game was as good as over, prevented him from getting the Man-of-the-Match Award.

"When 460 runs are scored in a game and a guy gets 4 for 19, that's a special performance. I think the thing that didn't give him the man of the match is the 4 wickets were right at the death when the game was done and dusted."

Set an imposing target of 267, DC were stopped at 199. "I think the ability of Delhi to get that run rate under 12 an over was extraordinary and at that stage of the innings, they were in the box seat to win it."

"The wicket slowed up a bit just like Pat Cummins talked about it and the ball got a little softer and made it easier for the slower bowlers to grip. It was just one of those things where they couldn't sustain it," Finch said.

Watched a lot of Kuldeep videos, did simulation: Abhishek

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Thoroughly dissecting Kuldeep Yadav's bowling videos and doing match simulation by facing left-arm wrist spinners in the nets went a long way in helping Abhishek Sharma annihilate the India international during Sunrisers Hyderabad's 67-run victory over Delhi Capitals in an IPL game here.

Abhishek smashed 46 off just 12 balls with half a dozen of sixes and four of them came off Kuldeep's deliveries.

Kuldeep has been DC's most consistent bowler with his guile and variations troubling the batters, but Abhishek

went back and forth to disturb his length and forced him to go flatter.

So what was his preparation like for Kuldeep?

"Personally, I always try to plan really well for the spinners and the main bowlers of the other team and this year... This match also, I was very careful with Kuldeep because I know he is their main bowler and I've been watching his videos," the Punjab state team skipper said after the match.

"I try to play similar bowlers a day before, net bowlers and local bowlers, and that helps me a lot. I try to just make sure that they are pretty much



similar to the bowlers that I'm going to face. So that helps me a lot," Abhishek explained.

Not bowling because of Impact Player Rule

While he is primarily a batter, Abhishek also bowls handy left-arm spin but hasn't been summoned a lot to bowl in

this edition, thanks to the Impact Player rule.

Does he think it can affect his selection or chances of showcasing his other facet of the game?

"No, I think everybody knows that I can bowl, but obviously, there's because of this impact player, there's always an extra bowler or a better, so probably with every all-rounders, this is going to happen. Even this happened last year."

"For me, especially, I believe that I should be ready whenever I'm called. Just get the chance because I know somehow I will get the chance and I should be ready for that."

We are not getting too far ahead of ourselves: Head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on explosive starts, Sunrisers Hyderabad may have won four games on the bounce this IPL season, but their swashbuckling opener Travis Head says "we are not getting too far ahead of ourselves."

SRH crushed Delhi Capitals by 67 runs in their most recent match here on Saturday, following sensational knocks from their in-form openers Travis Head (89) and Abhishek Sharma (46).

SRH have made a habit of posting big totals this season, going past 260 for the third time on Saturday.



"It is very enjoyable. It is nice to be here and play well, and it is hard not to smile and enjoy yourself with the batting order that we have got, and the order is working well through the first seven, so it is very enjoyable," Head told JioCinema.

Batting first, Hyderabad

scored their fourth 200+ innings this edition by scoring 266 runs, while Delhi were bowled out for 199 runs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. This was SRH's fifth win of the season.

Head also spoke on SRH's momentum and positive energy around the team.

"We will take it easy for a minute. I think it was Murali's (Muttiah Muralitharan) birthday a couple of days ago, so we have a party for him tomorrow night, so that will be enjoyable."

"I think it's a nice group, we are not getting too far ahead of ourselves. Obviously, we are excited. We have got four wins on the bounce now, we

are playing well, and the energy is always better when you are winning."

"The environment is really good. That's what Dan (Daniel Vettori) and Pat Cummins are going to bring. If there is a loss here or there, a couple of poor performances, that's okay. We are showing how good we can be."

"As long as we can keep instilling that confidence around how well we are playing, I guess the ceiling is as high as it wants to be," Head said.

Former India pacer Zaheer Khan praised Jake Fraser-McGurk (65 runs) and T Natarajan (4/19).

OTHER SPORTS

HI names 28 members core probable group for men camp ahead of Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Sunday announced a 28-member core probable group for the men's national coaching camp to iron out the flaws ahead of the Paris Olympics.

The camp commenced on Sunday and will last till May 13 at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru.

The team returns to camp after suffering a 0-5 loss in a five-match Test series in Australia.

After this camp, the team will travel to Belgium and London for their next two legs of the FIH Pro League, where they will be up against Argentina, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain.

"We are looking to train an important block of training in this camp, and we need to make sure that we are in the best shape possible ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympics. We have an exciting group of experienced players along with some young players," chief coach Craig Fulton said in a HI release.

"The tour to Australia has helped us in realising where we need to work on and I always believe that we can work on our shortcomings and look to set things straight well before



the final leg of the Pro League and the Paris 2024 Olympics."

The core group of the national coaching camp includes goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak, PR Sreejesh, Suraj Karkera and defenders Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Sagar Prasad, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem, Shamsher Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Rajkumar Pal, Vishnukant Singh.

While the list of forwards comprises Akashdeep Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Abhishek, Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Mohammed Raheel Mousen, Bobby Singh Dhani, and Araijeet Singh Hundal.

El Gouna squash Ramit stuns world number 11 Crouin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Ramit Tandon notched up a stunning 3-1 win over French world No 11 Victor Crouin in the second round of the El Gouna International Open, a USD 198,000 prize money PSA Platinum squash event, in El Gouna, Egypt.

The world No 40 Tandon, who has a direct entry to the World Championships to be played in Egypt next month, won 11-9, 12-10, 8-11, 11-5 in 52 minutes for his second victory in five meetings over the Frenchman. Tandon will meet Peruvian World No 3 Diego Elias in the third round.

Elias has won both his previous meetings against the Indian. Tandon had beaten Egyptian world No 62 Aly Hussein 11-6, 11-9, 11-5 in the first round of the 48-player draw.

Messi scores twice, Inter Miami beats Nashville SC 3-1

Fort Lauderdale (US), Apr 21 (AP) Lionel Messi scored twice to increase his Major League Soccer-leading total to seven and also had an assist to lead Inter Miami over Nashville SC 3-1.

Messi had his second two-goal game in MLS after scoring two against Orlando on March 2. He has a goal or assist in each of the six league matches he's played, missing four because of



injury.

Sergio Busquets scored his first goal with Miami since joining former Barcelona teammate Messi last summer. Luis Suárez, another ex-Barcelona teammate, assisted on Messi's first goal. "Very happy that the goal helped the team win the match," Busquets said in Spanish.

"What matters is the team and the victory. Today, I managed to score but the ultimate accomplishments are the positive results for our team."

Miami (5-2-3, 21 points) is unbeaten in five matches against Nashville since Messi's arrival. Miami also remained in first place in the Eastern Conference.

"We became very familiar with

their style of play and that helped us today," Miami defender Tomás Avilés said.

For the second consecutive week, Miami allowed a goal in the opening minutes when an own goal by Miami defender Franco Neri put Nashville ahead. Neri deflected Daniel Lovitz's corner kick into the Miami net in the second minute. That was the only goal for Nashville (1-6-1, 4).

Miami erased the early deficit with goals from Messi and Busquets in the 11th and 39th minutes.

Nashville goalkeeper Elliot Panico deflected Messi's 12-yard shot to an open Suárez, who immediately tapped it to Messi. With Panico out of position, Messi converted a

sliding shot inside the 6-yard box for the equalizer.

"We didn't play good football during the first 10 minutes but that changed after Leo's goal," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said.

"We started finding our space and created opportunities."

Busquets scored the tiebreaker as he headed Messi's corner kick to the near post past Panico. It was Busquets' first goal since 2022, when he was with Barcelona.

Goalkeeper Drake Callender kept Miami ahead when he made a diving deflection of Hany Mukhtar's 35-yard blast in the 55th minute.

Messi gave Miami a two-goal cushion, converting on a penalty kick in the 81st minute.

Nashville's Josh Bauer fouled Leo Alfonso on the edge of the penalty area then Messi beat reserve goalkeeper Joe Willis inside the right post.

Messi's former Barcelona teammate Jordi Alba didn't play because of a hamstring injury. Diego Gomez also exited after he sustained an ankle injury late in the first half. Martino said Gomez will undergo additional tests to determine the severity of the injury.

Miami will visit New England next Saturday, while Nashville hosts San Jose.

Garbiñe retires from tennis

AP ■ MADRID

Two-time major champion Garbiñe Muguruza announced she's retiring from professional tennis at age 30



after an extended time away from the court.

"I feel that it is time to retire and open up a new chapter in my life," the former world No. 1 told a news conference in Madrid on Saturday.

Muguruza beat Serena Williams in the 2016 French Open final and Venus Williams in the 2017 Wimbledon final, making her the only player to defeat each Williams sister in a Grand Slam title match.

The Spanish player earned 10 career titles and was also the runner-up at 2015 Wimbledon and the 2020 Australian Open. She earned nearly \$25 million in prize money - 13th on the all-time list - and finished with a win-loss record of 449-238.

Her last important victory was the 2021 ATP Finals.

"The word retirement' sounds very harsh to be because I am only 30 years old, but I have achieved so much since I started playing 25 years ago," she said. "I am proud of what I have achieved, for having stuck to reaching my goals even through the tough times."

Muguruza has not played since January 2023. In April that year, she announced she was extending her hiatus from playing and said, "Spending time with my family and friends (has) really been healthy and amazing."

Born in Caracas to a Spanish father and Venezuelan mother, Muguruza moved to Barcelona when she was a child to continue her tennis training. She became the first Spanish woman to lift a Grand Slam trophy since Arantxa Sánchez Vicario at the 1998 French Open.