

INDIA CORNER

ATS arrests six with country-made weapons in Gujarat

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has arrested an arms supplier from Madhya Pradesh and five others with 25 country-made pistols and 90 cartridges, an official said on Friday.



Couple arrested with nearly 800 grams of heroin in Delhi's Tilak Nagar

A couple was arrested with nearly 800 grams of heroin, for allegedly selling it here, police said on Friday. The accused were identified as Rajesh Rana (44) and his wife Neelam Rana (43), residents of Tilak Nagar, they said.



Naresh Sethi gang's sharpshooter arrested in Delhi's Rohini

The Delhi police has arrested a 24-year-old sharpshooter of the Naresh Sethi gang, officials said on Friday. According to police, the accused, identified as Mohit was wanted in connection with a firing incident at a property dealer's office in Rohini for extortion.



'IT'S VOTE-BANK POLITICS'

Shah on why Rahul, Digvijay did not attend Ram temple event

PNS ■ RAJGARH (MP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday slammed senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Digvijaya Singh for declining invitation to attend the consecration of Ram Lalla's idol in Ayodhya, saying their move was guided purely by vote-bank politics.



Shah was addressing a campaign rally in Khilchipur town under the Rajgarh Lok Sabha seat where sitting BJP MP Rodmal Nagar is pitted against former chief minister Digvijaya Singh of the Congress.

high on the country's head (J&K). Shah maintained the Modi government ended terrorism and Naxalism by entering into their den ('ghar me ghuskar') and conducting a surgical strike inside Pakistan post-Pulwama terror attack.

CM's son slams Aaditya for remarks against father

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde has hit out at rival Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray for disparaging remarks against his father and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, saying it reflects the ex-minister's upbringing.

Envoy: US safe, cares deeply for well-being of Indian students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

United States is a safe country and it "cares deeply" for the well-being of Indian students, its Ambassador Eric Garcetti said here on Friday and assured their parents that "their children are our children" when they are in the US.



The US envoy underlined that students going to study in the US should know that there are campus securities, local law enforcements, and that "all these things sometimes students just don't know, since it is a new country."

Land sinks in J-K's Ramban; 50 houses, power infra damaged

PNS ■ BANIHAL/JAMMU

More than 50 houses, four electricity towers, a receiving station, and a main road were damaged in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district due to sinking of a road, officials said on Friday.



LS POLLS Ex-CM Baghel says his photos on EVMs unclear

PNS ■ RAJNANDGAON

Former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, who is Congress' candidate in Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat in the state, on Friday said he has received complaints that his photos on the Electronic Voting Machines are smaller and unclear as compared to those of his rivals.

'Vote for those backing secularism, Constitution'

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/KOCHI

Various church factions in Kerala on Friday urged the people to go and vote for those supporting secularism and democracy in the general elections in the southern state.

CHURCHES TO PEOPLE



others get hurt. I saw the situation in Manipur. I saw the situation faced by the people there. I have personally asked

the government and the union home minister to intervene in the matter," Thazhath told the media. He urged the people to vote for those who support secularism and democracy in the country.

told the media. All the political parties in the state were trying to cosy up to the church, which has a pretty much influential electorate in the state.

Bullock carts, wheelchairs and more, people reach booths to vote in LS polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three generations of a family and groom and brides lining up at polling stations and people reaching in bullock carts and centenarians in wheelchairs to vote. These were some of the snapshots of the Lok Sabha polls' second phase in 88 constituencies in 13 states and Union Territories.



** A polling booth at Sivni village in Chhattisgarh's Kanker parliamentary constituency was decorated like a 'mandap' and displayed traditional marriage rituals. Deeked-up in traditional attires, many brides and grooms reached polling sta-

tions in Kanker, Rajnandgaon and Mahasamund Lok Sabha constituencies to cast their votes. ** Women voters reached a polling station in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr on a bullock cart and playing the 'dholak'.

Board exams twice a year from 2025: MoE asks CBSE to work out logistics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education has asked the CBSE to work out logistics for conducting board exams twice a year from the 2025-26 academic session, however, it has been pushed back by a year. The new national curriculum framework (NCF), prepared by the Union government-appointed national steering committee which was led by former ISRO chairman K

However, there is no plan to implement the semester system," the source added. The ministry's initial plan was to introduce biannual board exams from the 2024-25 academic session, however, it has been pushed back by a year. The new national curriculum framework (NCF), prepared by the Union government-appointed national steering committee which was led by former ISRO chairman K

SC seeks EC reply on PIL for fresh poll in constituency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development amid the ongoing general elections, the Supreme Court on Friday asked for a response from the poll panel on a PIL seeking framing of rules to nullify an election and order fresh one if NOTA (none of the above) option gets majority over other candidates.

in pursuance of the 2013 apex court verdict. The top court, in its 2013 judgement, had held that "a provision of negative voting would be in the interest of promoting democracy as it would send clear signals to political parties and their candidates as to what the electorate thinks about them" and directed the Election Commission to provide the option of NOTA in all EVMs.



Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Khera, and issued the notice. Initially, the bench was reluctant to consider the PIL, saying

it was for the "executive to decide". "We will issue a notice. This is about the electoral process also. Let us see what the Election Commission has to say..." the CJ said. The senior advocate said that present plea was important keeping in mind the development at Surat in Gujarat where a BJP nominee was declared winner before polling as some nomination papers were rejected and few withdrew from the race.

ing the Election Commission to frame rules to the effect that if NOTA gets a majority, the election held in the particular constituency shall be declared null and void and a fresh election shall be conducted to the constituency," it said. The PIL also sought a direction to the poll panel to frame rules stating that the candidates who poll fewer votes than NOTA shall stand debarred from contesting all elections for a period of five years.

The plea referred to the apex court judgement and the report of the Law Commission on the issue in its support. Buttressing the plea for re-election if NOTA wins and barring the candidates from poll process if they poll less than NOTA, the PIL said, "since 2013, the implementation of NOTA has not fulfilled the very purpose that it was supposed to".



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PAPER WITH PASSION

All is well

India shows the mirror to the US, rejects its report on rights violations in Manipur as ‘deeply biased’

Soon after the US pointed the finger at India for alleged incidents of human rights violations, particularly in Manipur, India has vehemently criticised the State Department report. The Indian Government has denounced the report as “deeply biased” and asserted that it reflects a “significant misunderstanding of the ground realities”. Seeking to show the mirror to the US instead, it questioned the US administration’s response to the recent killing of Indian students on its soil. The MEA emphasised the “deeply biased” nature of the report, saying the report misrepresents the situation in Manipur and demonstrates a “lack of comprehension” regarding India’s efforts to address human rights issues within its borders. The report, which is not limited only to Manipur, talks about other issues too that have apparently undermined Indian democracy in the recent past. One of the key points raised in the State Department’s report pertains to the raids conducted by the Indian Income Tax authorities on the offices of the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, alleging that the raids extended to journalists not involved in the organisation’s financial affairs. Furthermore, the US report claims that the Indian Government used emergency powers to ban the screening of a *BBC*-produced documentary. The report highlights the concerns of local human rights organisations, minority political parties and affected communities regarding the Government’s alleged “delayed response” to violence and its failure to provide adequate humanitarian assistance in Manipur.



It also cites instances of disinformation tactics being employed against civil society organisations, religious minorities such as Sikhs and Muslims, and political opposition groups. The Indian reaction to the US report is laudable as it defends and protects the boundaries of Indian sovereignty and sends across the message that no country has any business to meddle in India’s domestic affairs. The Government must also ensure that foreign powers do not get a chance to sermonise India on human rights. It is an established maxim that human rights issues transcend political boundaries. Besides, the Government should be mindful of criticism by the Indian civil society, which has been airing similar sentiments. They should not be summarily rejected and branded as anti-national and harassed, a routine thing in autocratic systems. Indeed, India’s reaction to the State Department’s report underscores its commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and ensuring that international assessments accurately reflect the country’s efforts to uphold human rights. India has consistently maintained that it is committed to addressing any legitimate concerns regarding human rights violations through its robust legal framework and democratic processes. In light of these developments, it is imperative for the international stakeholders to engage with India in a constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding.

PICTALK



A man bathes an elephant at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan and Zoo, in Mumbai

Role of AI in Lok Sabha elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

From personalised voter outreach to the menacing potential of deepfake videos, Artificial Intelligence’s influence is palpable, promising both innovation and ethical dilemmas

Artificial Intelligence, a game-changer in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, has revolutionised traditional campaign strategies. The era of candidates personally visiting voters’ homes and engaging in conversations over tea, even after a five-year hiatus, has given way to a more technologically advanced approach. Social media played a pivotal role in the 2014 election. However, the advent of AI and the potential use of deepfake videos in India’s 2024 elections could be game-changers. These videos, capable of blurring the lines between truth and falsehood, have the potential to significantly impact the trust and integrity of the electoral process.



Political parties and candidates have understood the power of AI in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. They use AI to analyse voter data, enabling them to develop effective campaign strategies. Additionally, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have been deployed to engage with voters on social media, providing real-time responses to their queries and concerns. The use of AI technology can help with election processes in several ways: AI can predict election outcomes. AI chatbots and virtual assistants can communicate with virtual media. AI can prevent election fraud and regulate political advertising campaign finance violations. Political parties can now customise their calls to individual voters, potentially harming their opponents’ reputations. In India, more than 50% of the population uses the internet, which may increase to 900 million by 2025. The upcoming election in India is expected to generate a market worth Rs 500 crore. Political parties are using AI to reach voters via social media. Congress and BJP used AI in last year’s State elections, the first time false videos and parodies were used in political campaigning. Parties like BJP, Congress, AAP, DMK and AIADMK use AI technology to engage with their supporters. For example, the BJP uses AI to translate PM Modi’s speech-

es into eight regional languages. However, some campaigners misuse AI-generated videos, including deepfakes, to spread misinformation. These videos are targeted at the 18-25 age group and are being shared on platforms like WhatsApp. Parties in India use various tools to influence voters. They share fake images and videos on social media platforms. For example, the Congress party shared a phony photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At the same time, the BJP posted a false video of Rahul Gandhi on Instagram. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK and AIADMK parties used recordings of their deceased leaders for voter support in this election. The Communist parties have also employed AI technology in their campaigns. One video shows Asaduddin Owaisi, the leader of the AIMIM party, singing Hindu devotional songs. Regional leaders like Akhilesh Yadav, Naveen Patnaik and Mamata Banerjee also applied similar tools to influence voters. The use of AI for malicious purposes is a significant concern. With advanced AI, it has become possible to impersonate anyone, including voters or candidates, which can lead to identity theft and manipulation of the electoral process. This underscores the



POLITICAL PARTIES ARE USING AI TO REACH VOTERS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA. THE CONGRESS AND THE BJP USED AI IN LAST YEAR’S STATE ELECTIONS

need for clear regulations to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process, making the audience more aware of the potential risks and the importance of addressing them, fostering a sense of vigilance. The use of AI in political campaigns raises valid concerns about privacy and the potential for unfair competition and misinformation. Therefore, it’s imperative that clear regulations are implemented to ensure a transparent electoral process. Governments must take the lead in regulating AI use to promote fairness. The IT Minister has already issued warnings to social media companies, instilling confidence in the audience about the security and integrity of the electoral process. The Election Commission must issue clear guidelines to regulate AI-generated information for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. These guidelines should address ethical AI use in campaigns and voter data analysis. Strict rules are necessary to maintain the integrity of the electoral process, protect voters’ rights and ensure fairness and transparency. Without these regulations, there could be doubts about the legitimacy of the election results. While there are valid concerns about AI, it’s crucial to recognise its potential for positive change. Certain AI-generated technologies have the power to revolutionise how we conduct free and fair elections. As these technologies gain wider acceptance, they could pave the way for e-elections, a future where elections are conducted online, ensuring a more transparent and accountable electoral process. This potential for positive change should inspire optimism and hope, reassuring the audience about the future of elections. During the Bihar elections, the Election Commission used an AI-powered system to ensure transparency and prevent manipulation. The system detected and flagged misinformation and hate speech cases, expediting the counting process and curbing hate speech during the election. This demonstrates how AI can be used effectively and instils confidence in the electorate. Presidents, prime ministers, or legislators could win or lose based mainly on the success or failure of their AI campaign. Gullible voters can be fooled easily. Technological advancements can bring about significant changes and AI is no exception. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

Robotics: Predictable and optimal surgical success



FORQAN BABU SHAIKH

Today, India is leading globally with advancements in robotic surgery and making a difference in critical surgical procedures

Robotic surgery, also known as robot-assisted surgery, has revolutionised the field of surgical procedures by offering increased precision, flexibility and control compared to conventional techniques. Typically associated with minimally invasive surgery, robotic surgery utilises a system consisting of a camera arm and mechanical arms with surgical instruments attached, all controlled by the surgeon seated at a computer console. This setup provides high-definition, magnified, 3D views of the surgical site, enhancing the surgeon’s ability to perform delicate and complex procedures. Minimally invasive surgery is now the standard of care across various surgical specialities. Introduced four decades ago, Laparoscopy changed our approach and outcome in surgical patients. Robotic surgery introduced two decades ago, was the next step in the evolution of minimally invasive surgery. Now, the time has come when a surgeon avoids leaving anything on chance. Advanced, stable and predictable robotic surgery can ensure success



in each case. The primary motivation for opting for robotic surgery is the enhanced precision, flexibility and control it offers to surgeons during operations. The precision and minimally invasive nature of robotic procedures contribute to a lower risk of infection and other complications. In India, the Da Vinci system is commonly used for robotic surgery across various specialities, including urology, gynaecology, cardiothoracic and general surgery. In urology, robotic surgery has emerged as a significant advancement, offering several advantages over open or laparoscopic procedures. These advantages include reduced blood loss, decreased patient discomfort, minimised use of painkillers, shorter hospital stays and faster healing times. Urological surgeries com-

monly performed using robotic technology include robotic prostatectomy, robotic cystectomy, robotic partial nephrectomy, robotic pyeloplasty and other procedures such as nephroureterectomy, adrenalectomy, ureteric reimplantation and kidney transplantation. Even in the case of frequently performed non-cancerous gastrointestinal surgery like cholecystectomy gall bladder removal or hernia, innumerable challenges can be countered including some very serious injuries, which may result in longer hospital stays or life-threatening situations. Robotic surgery filters out the struggle happening at the surgeon’s end while ensuring smooth outcomes with ultimate safety for the patients. Our understanding of robotic surgery benefits originated from cancer patients in uro-surgery and onco-surgery. Today non-cancerous surgeries deserve and demand equal precision and safety. Prevention of complications and quick recovery are the new points. Due to the sheer number, improvement of outcomes in benign surgeries would translate into a large

number of healthier and happier patients. While technology remains premium, the health insurance companies do understand and approve of such advanced technology. For instance, Narayana Health offers robotic-assisted procedures for various gastrointestinal conditions. The robotic surgery program has an experienced team specialising in using the da Vinci surgical system for minimally invasive general surgeries. With the surgeon controlling robotic arms from a console while watching the operative field through a video camera, patients experience shorter recovery times, with most returning to normal activities within two to three weeks instead of the six to eight weeks typically associated with standard open surgery. Indeed, constant innovation and development in the field of robotic surgery will result in lowering the cost with wider applications. (The writer is a consultant-general, Robotic and Renal Transplant Surgery at Narayana Hospital - RN Tagore Hospital, Mukundapur, Kolkata; views are personal)

REVIVAL OF EDUCATION IN BIHAR

Madam — Apropos the news article, “Bihar’s educational reforms cock a snook at private players”, published on April 26, this is my response. The narrative underscores Bihar’s struggle with governance failures, notably in areas like liquor laws and rural migration. However, amidst this backdrop of challenges, the Government’s focus on education emerges as a beacon of hope. In a landscape where education is increasingly commodified, Bihar’s commitment to public education stands out as a bold counterforce to market forces.

By prioritising education, the Government aims to address deep-rooted social and economic inequalities. The recruitment of teachers and infrastructural improvements demonstrate tangible progress. Yet, sustaining these reforms remains a concern, particularly regarding the absence of a robust mechanism. Additionally, while efforts to combat corruption and enhance accountability are commendable, ensuring the continuity of initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal program is crucial. Ultimately, Bihar’s journey towards educational reform signifies a vital step towards empowering marginalised communities and challenging the dominance of private institutions driven by profit motives. Rajiv Mishra | Lucknow

PERSPECTIVES ON CONSCIOUSNESS

Madam — Apropos the news article, “The Essence of Consciousness”, published on April 26, this is my response. The journey of understanding consciousness is a profound one, intricately woven with the fabric of human existence. In the hustle of modern life, terms like consciousness often float around without genuine comprehension. Yet, beneath this veneer lies a profound truth: consciousness is the essence of our being, the awareness that shapes our reality. In a world bombarded with information, it’s easy to overlook the depth of our existence. From the wisdom of Buddha to the revelations of quantum physics, consciousness permeates every aspect of our lives. Like Arjuna on the bat-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ensure representation of the disabled



Apropos the news article, “The marginalisation of disabled in politics”, published on April 26, this is my response. The stark absence of political representation for persons with disabilities in India’s democratic landscape is a glaring issue. Despite a substantial population, their needs are sidelined, reflecting a systemic failure. Political parties overlook their demands, perpetuating exclusion and reinforcing stereotypes. Aarav Patel | Mumbai

Physical barriers at polling stations compound their challenges, stripping away dignity and agency. Anitha’s experience exemplifies this neglect. Moreover, those with lesser-known disabilities face additional hurdles, such as a lack of sign language interpreters during campaigns. The dearth of accurate data further complicates policy formulation and budget allocations. However, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity for transformation. A shift towards a rights-based approach is imperative, with persons with disabilities actively involved in policy development. Integration across governance facets is essential for true inclusivity. Respecting their fundamental rights and ensuring their participation in civil and political systems is crucial as India celebrates 75 years of independence. Only then can the nation progress towards its economic aspirations while truly embracing diversity in a democracy. Aarav Patel | Mumbai

tlefield or King Janaka in his kingdom, we grapple with doubts and fears until a moment of awakening shifts our perception. True consciousness is not merely being awake but being truly alive, attuned to both internal thoughts and external surroundings. It’s the clarity that arises when we shed the layers of ignorance and embrace the purity of our being. In this journey towards enlightenment, let us not merely skim the surface but dive deep into the ocean of consciousness, where every wave carries the promise of a profound revelation. Vikram Singh | Delhi

THE INDIAN PARADOX

Madam — Apropos the news article, “Why do Indians excel abroad and fail back home?”, published on April 26, this is my response. India’s global footprint shines brightly across diverse fields, yet a puzzling paradox persists: why do Indians thrive abroad while facing challenges at home? This conundrum demands urgent attention and a deep dive into the complexities

at play. The link between India’s international success and domestic hurdles lies largely in the shortcomings of the public education system. Insightful analyses pinpoint the dire State of education as the root cause, a truth echoed by credible sources. Education stands as the linchpin connecting governance, socio-economic stability and prosperity. The nation’s future hinges on the quality of primary and secondary education, a reality starkly revealed by surveys. Moreover, the disconnect between higher education and employability exacerbates the brain drain dilemma. To reverse this trend, India must foster an environment that retains talent and promotes innovation. Embracing change is paramount. Reimagining education to nurture creativity and entrepreneurship can steer India towards global competitiveness. It’s time to forge a path towards a brighter, more inclusive future. Nandini Rao | Bengaluru

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It is time to let go of the regulatory bottlenecks to make a mark

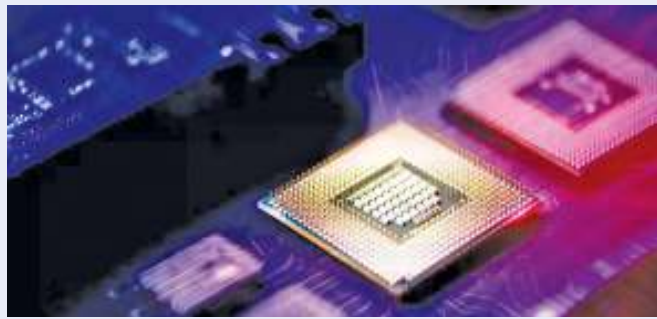


KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

One of the most common reasons cited by foreign investors, against investing in India is too complex regulatory processes and multiplicity of overlapping compliances. The latest to join the bandwagon is Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. The minister was responding to questions from a journalist on the reason for Taiwanese companies not warming up to India's constant welcome mat for attracting investments in the new age technology, building block and semi-conductors space.

To be sure Taiwan is home to the largest chip manufacturing facilities in the world, a key component of the digital economy, ranging from mobile phones to satellites. Wu during his interaction with the journalist quoted "India is cumbersome in its administrative structure and it would require for Indian Government to look at that too, to streamline all kinds of laws and regulations to help semiconductor investors coming to the country". He has further in the same interview talked about the lack of skilled engineers to work in the chip-making factories, even though India doesn't fall short of chip-designing talent.

What Mr Wu highlighted, isn't something new, as it is a similar caution from many other potential investors interested in India. This author spoke with several high-ranking officials in several new and emerging technology manufacturing companies, who complained about complex time-consuming administrative processes in India and echoed that, when compared to competing economies such as Singapore, Vietnam etc. A new department called Invest India (a public-private joint venture) was created, early on in the current Government's regime, to assist potential investors through the difficult, regulatory regime. Even for semiconductors, where, India is the preferred potential partner, a dedicated business division has been created in the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, in the form of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).



The recent trade policy agenda 2024 released by the Biden administration highlighted "Since announcing the negotiating mandate in August 2022, the two sides have pursued an ambitious schedule of meetings to make progress as quickly as possible. In June 2023, AIT and TECRO signed the first agreement under the Initiative. This agreement includes high-standard commitments and economically meaningful outcomes in a number of trade areas, including customs administration and trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, services domestic regulation, anticorruption and small and medium-sized enterprises", underscoring the importance of the partnership between the two countries.

The US supports India's ambitions to develop into a significant player in semiconductor design and manufacturing space, as an alternative to China. India US trade relationship, which has been in limbo has been energised in the last two years after a formal Trade policy forum came into existence, which has had regular meetings on several bilateral issues. In the 2024 trade policy agenda document, US mentions, "We committed to pursue enhanced engagement leading to mutually beneficial outcomes in several areas, with a view to deepening the trade relationship for the benefit of working people. We identified certain areas, including critical minerals, customs and trade facilitation, supply chains and trade in high technology products, in which our Governments intend to develop an ambitious and forward-looking roadmap for enhanced cooperation in order to achieve economically meaningful outcomes."

Given the convergence of interests and the willingness of like-minded partners and allies to invest and support India in the race of semiconductors, the next Government could do well to include removing regulatory bottlenecks in its 100-day agenda. It would be a good start towards a Stated Vikist Bharat target.

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

Sri Lanka's Easter attack revisited

As the island nation grapples with the aftermath of the attack, the intricate web of extremism and intelligence failures continues to haunt it even five years later



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

When conspiracy theories gain traction and permeate the public consciousness, they inevitably taint the discourse surrounding the event in question. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in politically charged contexts. Five years ago, amidst the Easter attack on tourist hotels, two Catholic churches and a Zion church in Western and Eastern provinces, a plethora of conspiracy theories surfaced. Initially, speculation swirled suggesting the involvement of a powerful Western nation, followed by theories positing the attack as a ploy to consolidate political power. More recently, local politicians and various social groups have propagated the notion that India orchestrated the attack. Yet, none of these claims have been substantiated with credible evidence.

Meanwhile, the culpability of the investigating officers' negligence, which played a role in the tragedy, has been overshadowed by these baseless allegations. Instead of being held accountable, those partially responsible have reshaped the narrative to deflect blame onto others.

However, in the aftermath of the attack, public media reports surfaced alleging that prominent politicians and Government officials were aware of the impending threat. Some even openly discussed this matter. Additionally, a leaked classified document from the police indicated forewarning of an imminent attack. What followed was not just the proliferation of various interpretations but also the dissemination of misconceptions. For instance, blame was swiftly pinned on the State Intelligence Service, the country's premier intelligence agency, extending to judicial indictments. However, a more rational examination, grounded in verifiable data, reveals a different societal reality. It uncovers a systemic failure across institutions tasked with national security and a disregard for prior warnings. Furthermore, it exposes concerted efforts to downplay this negligence for political gain. In a nation scarred by nearly four decades of internal conflict and widespread devastation, such institutional negligence sadly becomes almost unsurprising. It's crucial to highlight overlooked facts concerning the attack in question.

Leading up to the incident in question, there was a noticeable proliferation of extremist factions advocating violence across Sri Lanka. This surge wasn't limited to Muslim extremist groups but encompassed various ideological factions, each pursuing distinct political agendas. The emergence of the Islamic State in West Asia particularly bolstered the prospects of extremists across different nations, with Sri Lanka serving as a pivotal transit hub. Investigations have revealed a significant influx of extremists from regions like Kerala, as well as countries such as the Maldives, into Sri Lanka. It's evident that intelligence agencies within the region, including those of Sri Lanka and Western nations, amassed substantial intelligence on these activities and collaborated in information sharing. Testimony from the wife of Zahran Hashim, a ringleader of the carnage, attests to the financial backing he received from a Singaporean national to establish his initial mosque. She further detailed Zahran's extensive involvement in extremist endeavours, including recruiting adherents and garnering financial and logistical support throughout the country. This revelation sheds light on the proliferation of extremism in Sri Lanka, culminating



SINCE MARCH 2017, THERE HAVE BEEN 11 SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS LEADING UP TO THE EASTER ATTACK, YET NONE HAS UNDERGONE THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

ing in the Easter attack and subsequent incidents like the suicidal blast at the Sainthamaruthu house, where Zahran's family last resided. Zahran and his cohorts have exhibited affiliations with extremist ideologies and have been inspired by the Islamic State. Moreover, Sri Lankan nationals who joined the organisation's ranks in Syria have been observed exerting influence on local activities. Between 2014 and 2018, a staggering 41,490 individuals from 91 nations travelled to Syria to support the Islamic State, including 32 Sri Lankans. Exploiting this influx, organisations espousing extremist ideologies, under various guises, began proliferating throughout Sri Lanka. Additionally, individuals of Sri Lankan origin who attempted to travel to Syria via Turkey but were unsuccessful have returned home and aligned themselves with figures like Zahran. Simultaneously, the ideological backing of Mohamed Naufar, known as the "second emir" and a close relative specifically, the husband of Zahran's maternal aunt, played a pivotal role. Naufar, identified by the FBI as the mastermind behind the attack, exerted significant influence on the events. Since March 2017, there have been eleven significant incidents leading up to the Easter attack, yet none have undergone thorough investigation. This failure on the part of investigative agencies, which were supposed to act on precious intelligence passed on to them, has been perceived as a deliberate effort to conceal the underlying truth of the entire episode from society, thereby impeding the crucial lessons to be gleaned from this tragedy.

The series of events began with a clash at Kattankudy Aliyar junction on March 10, 2017. Following this conflict, police attempted to arrest Zahran, but their efforts proved unsuccessful. Subsequently, on May 17, 2017, a member of National Thowheeth Jamaath was shot. This was followed by a bomb thrown at the National Front for Good Governance (NFGG) Mohammad Farzan's house on February 06, 2018 and another bomb thrown at

the NFGG Kattankudy office on February 12, 2018. Further escalations occurred with the shooting of Palani Bawa in Kattankudy on June 08, 2018 and the detonation of a bomb by Zahran's brother Rilwan in Arayampathy on August 26, 2018, resulting in injuries and fatalities at Wavnathiv police post on November 30, 2018. The incidents continued with the vandalism of religious statues in Mawanelia on December 23, 2018 and further vandalism on January 16, 2019, related to providing information about the destruction of statues and concealment of explosive materials in Vanathavilluwa of Puttalam District. The situation intensified with the discovery of material and the shooting of informant Raziq Mohammad Taslim on March 08, 2019, resulting in permanent disability. Finally, a motorcycle explosion in Thalankudah on April 16, 2019, just five days before the Easter attack, marked the culmination of these incidents. Numerous intelligence reports concerning these events have been received by the commissions tasked with investigating them, shedding light on the negligence of the officers responsible for the criminal investigation. One of the most significant incidents out of these eleven took place in August 2018, involving Rilwan, who mishandled explosives, resulting in an accident. After the explosions in the Arayampathy area, Rilwan was taken to Colombo National Hospital and admitted under the name Zaeed on 26 August 2018. Investigations have confirmed that Zahran, conducting a training camp in the Hambantota area at the time, visited his brother in Colombo. The following day, 27 August 2018, Rilwan was admitted to the National Eye Hospital. Subsequently, he visited the clinics of the National Hospital on 27.09.2018, 04.10.2018, 11.12.2018 and 15.03.2019. This incident occurred eight months prior to the attack, yet neither the training camps nor the incident itself were reported to any police or intelligence agencies.

Remarkably, the individual managed to conceal his identity from the National Hospital and Eye Hospital for several days. The doctor suspected of aiding in this matter has later fled the country. Later, there was another incident identified as a dry run, which the State Intelligence Service formally reported to the Inspector General of Police as well as the head of CID, stating that the incident on 2019.04.18 was an explosive test. However, due to the lack of proper investigation into the incident until the Easter Sunday attack, a key opportunity to apprehend the perpetrators was missed. Upon examination of the intelligence reports submitted to the investigative commissions regarding the attack, it becomes evident that not only did the local intelligence agency provide information, but also the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB), India's internal security and counter-intelligence agency under the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, accurately foresaw the impending attacks. This information was disseminated not only to the then Inspector General of Police and the Secretary of the Ministry of Defense but also to the officers responsible for crime and investigation. Their acknowledgement of receiving this crucial information is documented. Despite being forewarned, no preventive measures were taken to thwart the attack. This apparent failure to act raises serious questions about accountability and highlights a disturbing trend of negligence. That was a collective failure. The balance sheet of five years since this tragedy is that there has been a concerted effort to obscure the truth by proliferating conspiracy theories, thereby masking this dereliction of duty. This deliberate attempt to deflect attention from institutional failures through the propagation of unfounded narratives not only undermines public trust but also obstructs the implementation of preventive mechanisms to ensure non-recurrence.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist. Views are personal)

The U-turns and contradictions in Antony's political journey

From advocating communal harmony to his stance on Hindu-Muslim relations, Antony's journey reflects his love for courting controversies

The year was 1993. The Kerala Press Academy (since renamed as Kerala Media Academy) under the ownership of the Kerala Government was having the Mathai Manjooran Memorial Day. Mathai Manjooran was a socialist party leader and was a member of the EMS Namboodiripad-led coalition Government during the 1967-69. He was also a trade union leader who never hesitated to speak his mind. It is unfortunate that he passed away in 1970 at the age of 58. A K Antony, the quintessential Congress leader was the speaker who delivered the Manjooran Memorial speech and as a journalist, I was there to cover the event. The country was yet to come out of the impact of the demolition of the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

disputed structure at Ayodhya and the entire secularist forces were up in arms against the Hindus for the "barbaric" act. Not a single day passed in Kerala without communal harmony meetings and all speakers were vying with one another in blaming the Sanatanis for the heinous act and praising Islam as the religion of peace. But Antony chose a different approach in his 45 minutes. He warned the minority com-

munities (read Christians and Muslims) from attacking the Hindus and reminded the two communities that they should be grateful to the Sanatanis for their magnanimity in offering the minorities more than what the Hindus themselves enjoyed. "The minorities have been given more rights and privileges to run their own educational institutions and hospitals while the Hindus were denied the same. We should always bear in mind the truth that the minorities in India enjoy unique rights and privileges that the Hindus do not have and we should be grateful to them for their broad-mindedness," said Antony, which made the next day's headlines. Antony became the chief minister of Kerala for the third

time in 2001 but he quit in 2004 for reasons best known to him, the then Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the then Muslim League boss Mohammed Shihab Ali Thangal. Eight Hindu fishermen were butchered by members of a Muslim extremist organisation at Maradu in Kozhikode district in May 2003 and there was a demand for a CBI probe into the massacre. A prominent Muslim League leader, who later on became a Union Minister in the Manmohan Singh Government played a significant role in offering shelter in a mosque to the assassins. When the issue of the CBI probe came for consideration in the liaison committee meeting of the UDF, the Muslim League leaders warned Antony



who was the then Chief Minister against an investigation by the Central agency. The UDF had won 99 out of the 140 seats at stake and was in a comfortable position. The Muslim League ultimatum against the CBI probe angered Antony and he announced in a public meeting the next day

that political parties, especially the caste and community-based outfits, should not make the Government dance to their tunes with organised bargaining power. That turned out to be the nemesis for Antony as the Gods in Malappuram asked Sonia Gandhi to remove him from the post of chief minister. Despite Antony tendering an apology, the chiefs of the Muslim League, controlling Kerala politics from the Kudappanakkal castle in Panakkad, were not humoured and they insisted on the former's ouster. That was how Antony resigned as the Chief Minister and shifted camp to Delhi. The Sulthans of Malappuram had the last laugh. Antony knows very well that his shirt and dhoti should be

more secular than that of the CPI(M) and other outfits to stay in the reckoning. That is why the person who wanted the minority communities to be grateful to the Hindus wants the Sanatan Dharma to be demolished. There is nothing surprising in Antony's stance as he was always against the Hindus even as the president of Kerala Students Union, the feeder organisation of the Congress party in Kerala. The group in the Congress party in Kerala has its roots in Antony's grievances over the status enjoyed by Hindu leaders like K Karunakaran and their clout in the High Command. The group in Congress has nothing to do with ideology and Antony's hatred towards Hindus is reflected in his cursing his son Anil Antony join-

ing the BJP. What Antony should have done is to give freedom to 38-year-old Anil to select the party of his choice and wish him all success. Instead of that what Antony has done is to demand the Nehru-Gandhi clan to field candidates for the Lok Saba election from Amethi and Rae Bareilly. He also declared that the Congress party cannot exist without the Nehru-Gandhi family. Isn't this another way of telling that India is Indira and Indira is India? Remember, this is the same Antony who ridiculed Indira Gandhi cast his lot with the CPI(M) in 1980 and formed a Government with the Marxists during 1980-1982.

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

'NAWAB KA SHEHAR, IT'S A REFELCTION OF EASYGOING PACE OF LIFE'



offer prospects for accumulating riches, and a bustling leisure environment. They may not be as good as places like Bombay, Delhi, or Bangalore, but they are unquestionably superior to many other locations!

Her ability to have a casual conversation in Hindi is one factor that helps her in this situation. Here in the twin cities, there is a balanced approach to language, unlike in other southern cities where Hindi may not be as extensively spoken! The greatest benefit of residing here is that.

On the other hand, it has been difficult to acclimate to Hyderabad's year-round hot weather and restricted options for dining, entertainment, and education after living in other Indian cities where she was exposed to a variety of vibrant cultures.

"The climate here is one thing that continues to bother me," she says. "As someone who grew up experiencing all four seasons, I find it difficult to get used to Hyderabad's never-ending heat. Additionally, there don't seem to be many notable eateries in the area, with the only options for cuisine being Biryani and Khubani-ka-Meetha." Then, after completing her undergraduate studies in Bangalore and moving to Hyderabad for her post-graduation education, she had studied all throughout India. At first, she noticed that everyone

fluid, given the frequent relocations. My roots trace back to Bangalore through my mother and Gudivada in Andhra Pradesh through my father, but Hyderabad holds a special place in my heart. After years of living here, it's become my chosen hometown. Shopping in Hyderabad offers a unique variety not found elsewhere. Laad Bazar stands out for its ethnic dresses and wedding shopping, though grooming schools are scarce."

Kanha Shanti Vanam, a meditation hall, has recently emerged as a significant spiritual destination for her. "The serene ambience of Taramati Baradari and the captivating sound and light show at Golconda Fort are personal favourites. While there are temples aplenty, options for family outings are somewhat limited, with Yadagirigutta Temple being a primary choice." She continues to shares, "Every place has its pros and cons, and what I appreciate about Hyderabad is its tranquil atmosphere. Unlike the frenetic pace of some cities, it embraces a sense of calmness. Engaging in simple activities like gardening feels fulfilling when there's no pressure to constantly be on the go. In essence, Hyderabad offers a haven for the nervous system, allowing one to embrace a more peaceful way of life."

She shares about her career here: "After completing my psychology education at the University of Arts and Social Sciences in Hyderabad, initially, therapy wasn't widely embraced, with many being hesitant and shy, even covering their faces when seeking help. However, the pandemic brought a significant shift, with a surge in people seeking therapy, even for minor issues. I've witnessed a transformation in attitudes towards therapy, with pre-marital counselling becoming less taboo. Hyderabad has emerged as a conducive environment for practising psychology, especially with the increasing acceptance and demand for counselling services."

The significance of Hyderabad in her life, she shares, "When I first began my practice in Hyderabad, I grappled with the challenge of not being proficient in Telugu, having been raised in northern cities where English and Hindi were my primary languages. However, two years ago, opportunities arose with media organisations, prompting me to participate in series and shows on examination stress, albeit in a mix of Telugu and English. Despite my initial hesitations due to my limited Telugu vocabulary, I soon realised that the essence of content creation and the desire to assist others transcended language barriers. As collaborations expanded, I discovered a sense of belonging within the city's warm embrace. Though not originally from Hyderabad, the community welcomed me wholeheartedly, providing me with opportunities to flourish as a therapist. Over time, I've come to embrace my Telugu Brahmin identity, finding fulfillment in serving the evolving needs of Hyderabad's diverse populace."

around here didn't have the same enthusiasm that she was used to. Therapists and healers seldom visit for workshops, and beyond engineering and medical fields! The college culture here also leaves much to be desired. "My younger son attends Loyola Academy, but I haven't seen the kind of college life I experienced in the 90s. It feels more like an extension of school than a place for holistic learning."

Despite its unique charm, the city's recreational landscape could benefit from further diversification to cater to varied interests. "In the military, the concept of a hometown can be



This week for our special weekly column of **Hyderabad**, *The Pioneer* connects with Kavita Panyam, a counselling psychologist progressing in Hyderabad, sharing her association, and insights from her life in Hyderabad.

HYDERABOND

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Meet Hyderabad-based Kavita Panyam, a seasoned counselling psychologist who is making progress. She has found her professional purpose and a strong sense of belonging in Hyderabad's lively community, despite the difficulties she faced upon moving from her military background to Hyderabad.

In the lively backdrop of Hyderabad, she discusses her path of career achievement and personal growth through her perceptive insights! "Because of my father's military profession, I was born and reared in the vibrant North; I didn't start to settle into Hyderabad's calm atmosphere until after he retired in 1994. I always thought that people in the North were more gregarious, lively, open, and less reserved when I was a child. I also happen to be that kind of person. But since coming here, I've observed that Hyderabadis are generally laid back. But I've noticed a shift since the pandemic. People now appear more motivated to succeed in life. As they say, "Nawab ka Shehar," it's a reflection of the easygoing pace of life."

With regard to Secunderabad in particular, "it's even more laid-back." However, the twin cities are very different when taken into account. They are similar to big cities in that they

'Gia Manek was that hidden gem of TV industry that had not been recognised yet'

Music composer-filmmaker Palash Muchhal, who had recently collaborated with Rajpal Yadav yet again in *Kaam Chalu Hai*, speaks exclusively with *The Pioneer*, sharing some interesting anecdotes from the film.

PNS| HYDERABAD

All that has to be said is that *Kaam Chalu Hai*, starring Rajpal Yadav, has the proper heart. It narrates the tale of Manoj Patil, who loses his daughter in a pothole-related car accident. Motivated by an actual event, Patil decides to cover every gap on his own when the authorities decline to assist him. The story reveals the government's complacent behaviour and also brings out genuine emotions.

Having been much appreciated for the story, we have the man behind the project onboard, Palash Muchhal, director of *Kaam Chalu Hai*, sharing some exclusive insights on the film, streaming on Zee5.

Kaam Chalu Hai marks his second collaboration with the extremely talented Rajpal Yadav. Also a music composer, Palash was all praise for his lead cast, Rajpal Yadav and Gia Manek, as he shares, "Rajpal and Gia have played their parts



outstandingly. We have all been well aware of the versatility of Rajpal and Gia's natural acting was the icing on the cake. As I told you earlier, our film and TV industries have hidden gems that have not been recognised or used well. Even Kurangi (the child artist) and the rest of the cast have played their fair parts."

In *Kaam Chalu Hai*, predictability and the exploitation of pain take center stage in its fixation with telling the true tale. Palash is pretty sure that *Kaam Chalu Hai* will definitely put the audience on an emotional roller coaster. "It has all the elements to be family entertainment, and also adding to that is the social cause on which the film is based. I hope and pray that the audience will enjoy the movie as well as be aware of the threat something as small as a pothole can cause to someone's life. Just because it's not happening with us right now doesn't mean it can never happen to us." Cinema has always been one of the most impactful mediums to reach a greater mass. And so, "I believe if more filmmakers focus on such societal causes, the audience will be more aware of such trivial yet important issues."



Managing blood pressure fluctuations to reduce ischemic stroke risk!

Blood pressure variability (BPV) refers to short-term or long-term fluctuations in blood pressure levels over time. These fluctuations can happen within short breaks (minute-to-minute variability), within 24 hours (daily variability), or over longer intervals (long-term variability). Various factors like autonomic nervous function, abnormal breathing, body position, behavior and body temperature can lead to short-term fluctuations. However, some degree of BPV is considered as normal but excessive variability has been linked with several cardiovascular conditions, including ischemic stroke. Moreover, repeated rise in blood pressure may cause hemorrhagic transformation whereas repeated fall in blood pressure may worsen ischemia.

LINKAGE BETWEEN BLOOD PRESSURE VARIABILITY AND ISCHEMIC STROKE

An Ischemic stroke occurs when there is some kind of blockage that prevents blood from reaching all areas of your brain leading to reduced blood flow and oxygen deprivation. If not given proper medical attention, it can cause permanent brain damage or even death. Excessive fluctuations in blood pressure can damage the inner lining of blood vessels leading to the formation of plaques within the arteries which further increases the risk of ischemic stroke by blocking the blood vessels. Additionally, blood pressure variability can also affect small blood vessels in the brain, resulting in microvascular damage which increases the susceptibility of brain tissue to ischemia.

SYMPTOMS OF ISCHEMIC STROKE

The symptoms of an ischemic stroke can vary

depending on the location and extent of the blockage. Few common symptoms include:

- **One-sided weakness:** A person suffering from ischemic stroke may face weakness or numbness on one side of the body, generally affecting the face, arm, or leg. This mostly occurs on the same side of the body as the affected part of the brain.
- **Aphasia:** It refers to the difficulty in speaking and understanding the speech. People with ischemic stroke sometimes find it difficult to find the right words to express themselves.
- **Vision problems:** Sudden vision changes, like: blurred or double vision, loss of vision in one or both eyes are quite common symptoms in ischemic stroke.
- **Headache:** Severe and unbearable headaches can occur if the person is suffering from subarachnoid hemorrhage.
- **Loss of balance:** Few people face dizziness and postural instability during a stroke which can make it difficult for them to walk or even balance the body.

Through lifestyle modifications, few medications and targeted interventions like endovascular mechanical thrombectomy (a surgical procedure to remove blood clots from brain), we can manage ischemic stroke and its symptoms.

(Dr. Apurva Sharma, is a Consultant - Neurology, at Manipal Hospital.)

ShilpAbha, an initiative by Pratikrut and Popbaani, launched the Indian Heritage Art Tour, with an event held at the State Art Gallery in Madhapur. Aimed at preserving, promoting, and educating people about Indian heritage folk art paintings, the tour is expected to bring renewed focus to India's rich artistic traditions.

● Sravanthi Juluri

● Prati

● Maredu Ram

● Balabhakta Raju and Lakshmi

● Saraswati

● Rachita

● Hema Nalini

● Charitha

● Harman Kaur

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



Nissan Motor India has announced a two-month long free AC check-up camp for its customers across the country, reaffirming its commitment towards customer centricity and service excellence. It will conduct the AC check-up camps between 15th April to 15th June 2024 at all authorised service workshops across India where all customers are eligible for a wide range of services and discounts.

Informa Markets successfully kicked off the 8th edition of RenewX at the HITEC Exhibition Centre, Hyderabad. The dedicated expo showcasing South India's renewable energy innovations with a focus on sustainability and green energy witnessed a significant turnout, with around 5000 visitors exploring the innovations presented by over 150 domestic and international exhibitors. The event brought together manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, and experts, including energy consultants, independent power producers, and regulatory bodies, providing valuable insights and new opportunities in the energy sector.



CARE Hospitals, Banjara Hills, announced the successful reversal of diabetes in three patients from Orissa with high BMI and co-morbidities following transformative bariatric surgery at the esteemed facility. After enduring years of obesity and poorly managed diabetes, the trio underwent bariatric surgery, guided by the expertise of Dr. Venugopal Pareek and his dedicated multidisciplinary team.

The International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad (IIIT-H) and I-Hub Data, along with India's top autonomous driving technology start-up, Minus Zero, inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in a major step towards the advancement of autonomous driving technology in the country. Through this agreement, a collaborative environment for AI and autonomous driving research will be established, and world-class autonomous driving datasets tailored to Indian scenarios will be curated.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



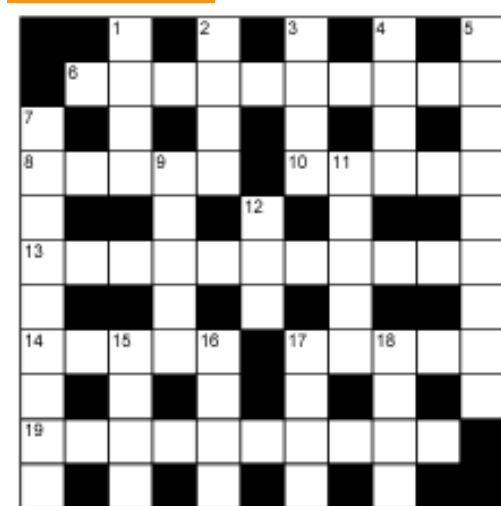
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



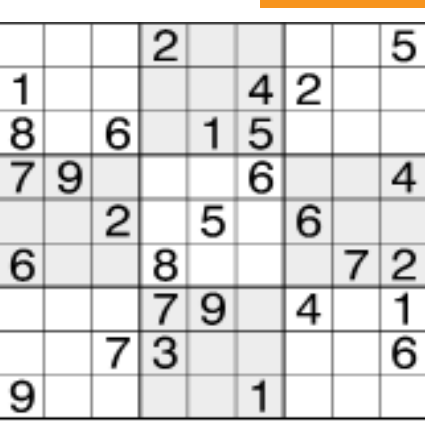
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- 6 Something chewed but usually not swallowed (7,3)
- 8 With lots of sunshine
- 10 A stand for an artist's painting
- 13 Straight away
- 14 Tossed
- 17 Put words on paper
- 19 Daily publications

DOWN

- 1 Part of your face
- 2 Absent
- 3 One time
- 4 Hens lay these
- 5 People who work for a business

SOLUTION

R	E	P	A	I	R	E	P	A
S	T	A	M	K	I	N	E	D
T	I	B	S	E	D			
S	T	O	R	I	E			
U	E	V	E	N	I	N	G	
S	K	E	S	V	H			
H	U	N	G	R	Y	P	I	R
D	A	T	E	B	R	E	E	Z

GINGER MEGGS



From captivating performances to meticulous style choices, Digangana Suryavanshi has left an indelible mark in Tollywood. Join us as we explore her diverse roles, upcoming releases, and creative pursuits in this exclusive interview.

Digangana Suryavanshi reviving silver screen with FOUR AWAITED RELEASES

K. RAMYA SREE

Actress, singer and author Digangana Suryavanshi has carved a niche for herself in the Telugu film industry with her captivating performances in movies like *Hippi*, *Valayam*, *Seetimar* and *Crazy Fellow*. Now, the talented artist is all set to enthrall audiences once again with her upcoming projects. In an exclusive revelation, it was disclosed that Digangana will reunite with her *Crazy Fellow* co-star Aadi Sai Kumar for the much-anticipated film *Krishna* from *Brindavanam*. During the recent launch puja of *Krishna* from *Brindavanam*, the film's director, Veerabhadram Chowdary, emphasised the pivotal role of her character in the movie. Intrigued by this revelation, we reached out to Digangana, who has been absent from the limelight for the past two years, to delve deeper into her upcoming projects and her journey in Tollywood and to our surprise, we learned that she has been shooting four films in Telugu and Tamil over the past two years, which are all ready for release now. It looks like 2024 is going to be her year, with a handful of projects lined up to grace theatres.

Speaking of *Krishna* from *Brindavanam* and how she onboarded the movie, the actress, who is multitasking now as she is finishing her MBA in finance apart from acting full-time, shared, "I worked with Aadi before for *Crazy Fellow* and both of us had in the back of our minds to do a film with a love story. I always wanted to do a very hard-core love story. Luckily, while I was shooting for my other film with Ashwin Babu,

our manager sent this idea to me. I love being part of films where, as a female lead, there is so much story around you and so much your character says. I think that is when the audience—women of my age—can resonate. If there is no emotion, you cannot resonate with the film. I heard the whole narrative and I knew it was a meaty role and I knew I could give my best, whether it was the language or emotion. This film is bound between two people: Aadi and I, and I felt this was going to be very good."

In this movie, Digangana gets to play a modern village role. She is a college-going girl, but she assures the audience that her role in the film is more rooted and authentic, where nativity plays a strong role. "Even in real life, we are a blend of where we come from, so for me, the backstory of the person is very important and this is a film that has it all."

If one has watched the work Digangana has done so far in Tollywood, her style game is always on point. Known for her impeccable style, she discussed her approach to selecting outfits and makeup for her roles. Emphasising the significance of aligning her appearance with her character's persona, she shared, "I do give a lot of attention to my outfits. I really think dressing isn't really about looking good; it is also about representing that person. You cannot see a certain person wearing a certain kind of outfit because it doesn't suit their personality. I have been very lucky with directors, cinematographers and stylists because it is a group vision when it comes to movies. People have been very considerate so far."

As mentioned, the actor was busy the past two

years with four films and gave some details about them. She mentioned, "I have shot four films and I think everything is now coming together. I shot a film with People Media Factory, and I am awaiting its release. We haven't, however, announced it yet. I am shooting a film with Ashwin Babu, which has Arbaaz sir as the villain. I have about a week of work left. *Krishna* from *Brindavanam* is my third. I also shot for a Tamil film, and that hasn't been released either. These two years have been much about filming and less about releases (she laughs). I am glad to be missed because you get to see more of me now (hahaha)."

When it comes to selecting story selections, she said, "Most of the decisions are my soul decisions; at least 90 percent are my own calls. When I look at the script, I see, "If I am done with the film, do I want to go back and watch it?" I could have a 10-minute part or a full-fledged part; I need to like the film in totality. If I don't like the film in totality, I am not going to watch it, and how am I going to ask other people to watch it? So for me, it plays an important role."

All the roles she has played have been very close to each other, which were girl-next-door; however, the young actress believes she needs to put in extra effort to differentiate between the roles and keep in mind that she is repeating her characters and doing the same work.

Overall, in this conversation with Digangana, one thing we have learned and are sure about is that she is a dedicated actress in whatever she does and is one of those actors who would give her best in any role she picks. Despite coming from an affluent family, the actress likes to be grounded. "I am not ambitious at the stake of my



grace and dignity," tells the actress on how she maintains her values.

She is not a party person or a socialite and is more like a home bee when she is not working; however, now she is trying to be out there at premieres, as she was not somebody who used to do it previously. She shared, "I was not someone who attended premieres, although I know so many people. I was always like, 'Okay, I'll see you at the office, or I'll watch it at home'. But a couple of things have changed in the past few years. There is a shift

now as a person, and I am enjoying that shift too."

Furthermore, on the work front, Digangana has also shot for a series in Hindi, which is in its dubbing phase; however, an official announcement is awaited. She is also very excited about another Hindi project that is under wraps. Beyond her acting endeavours, Digangana is also engaged in various creative pursuits, including writing.

Her multifaceted talents and unwavering dedication underscore her status as a rising star to watch out for in the entertainment industry.



ANUPAMA SETS TONE FOR WOMEN-ORIENTED INTRIGUING DRAMA

Following the success of his critically acclaimed debut film, *Cinema Bandi*, director Praveen Kandregula is all set to mesmerise audiences once again with his upcoming project, *Paradha*. Produced by Ananda Media, the film marks the production house's grand entry into the Telugu film industry, promising to deliver an enthralling cinematic experience.

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu and filmmakers Raj & DK unveiled the first look and concept video of *Paradha*, setting the stage for what promises to be an intriguing drama centered around female protagonists. The title itself, *Paradha*, meaning curtain, hints at the layered narrative awaiting audiences. The first look poster showcases Anupama Parameswaran in a de-glam avatar, draped in traditional attire, standing alongside other women whose faces are covered with Yoni. Anupama's stern gaze captivates, setting the tone for a compelling storyline.

Accompanying the first look is a

concept video that beautifully encapsulates the essence of the film. Set in a village backdrop, the video resonates with the shloka from *Manusmruthi*, emphasising the importance of honoring women and the divine significance attached to their reverence.

Joining Anupama Parameswaran in the cast are the versatile Darshana Rajendran, making her Telugu cinema debut, and veteran actress Sangitha, adding depth and richness to the ensemble.

Paradha has been a labor of love, with shooting schedules taking the crew across picturesque locations in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, and various villages.

As the final leg of shooting approaches in Hyderabad, anticipation continues to build for the film's release. With music scored by Gopi Sundar and cinematography by Mridul Sujit Sen, *Paradha* promises to captivate audiences with its engaging storyline, talented cast, and soul-stirring music.

Satyadev's Krishnamma release pushed to May 10

Satyadev stands out not only as a talented actor but also as a symbol of resilience and determination. From his humble beginnings to becoming a sought-after name in the industry, Satyadev has carved a niche for himself with his versatile performances. Now, he is gearing up for the release of his latest venture, *Krishnamma*. The film's release was initially scheduled for May 3; however, it was announced on Friday that the film will now hit theatres on May 10 by the makers.

Directed by VV Gopalakrishna and produced by Krishna Kommalapati under the esteemed banner of Arunachala Creations, *Krishnamma* is poised to be a raw and rustic action-packed thriller. Backed by the eminent director Koratala Siva, the film promises to be a gripping tale

that will keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

In this cinematic journey, Satyadev is joined by the talented Athira Raj, who shares the screen as his leading lady. The ensemble cast also includes Laxman Meesala, Krishna, Archana, Raghukunche, and Nandagopal, each bringing their own unique essence to the narrative.

The buzz surrounding *Krishnamma* has been steadily building, fueled by the release of its teaser, title song, and lyrical tracks, all of which have garnered rave reviews from fans and critics alike. With music by the acclaimed Kaala Bhairava and cinematography by Sunny Kurapati, the film promises to be a visual and auditory treat for audiences.



Varun Tej joins forces with Pawan Kalyan in the AP elections

Actor Varun Tej is gearing up to rally support for his uncle, Jana Sena Party Chief Pawan Kalyan, in the upcoming elections in Andhra Pradesh. The talented actor will embark on a campaign tour of Pithapuram today, aiming to bolster Pawan Kalyan's efforts and connect with voters across the region. As the political landscape in Andhra Pradesh heats up, Varun Tej's decision to throw his weight behind his *babai* (uncle) Pawan Kalyan underscores the family's commitment to



the people. With his star power and influential presence, Varun Tej is poised to make a significant impact on the campaign trail, rallying support for the Jana Sena Party and its vision for the state. As Varun Tej sets to hit the road, advocating for change and lending his voice to the political discourse in Andhra Pradesh, people are said to attend the rally in large numbers to get a glimpse of their favourite star.

BLISSFUL MELODY FROM AA OKKATI ADAKKU OUT NOW



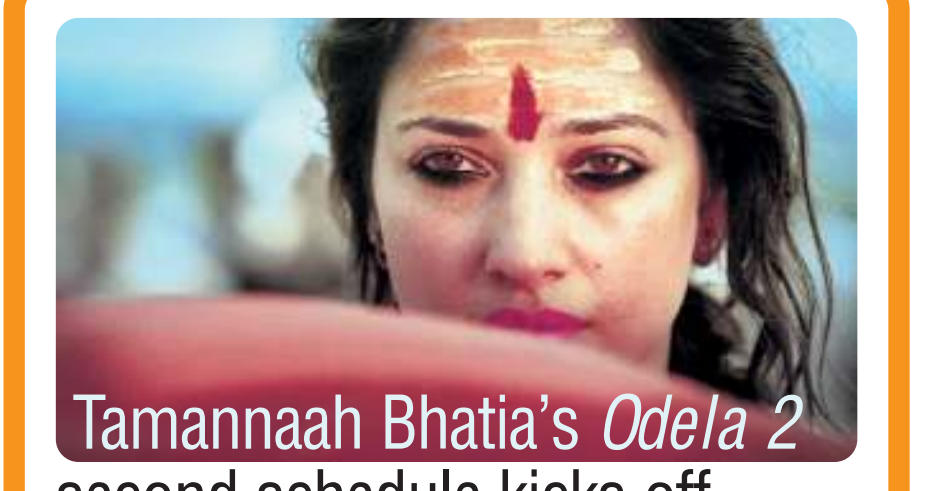
The promotional buzz surrounding Allari Naresh's upcoming family entertainer, *Aa Okkati Adakku*, is reaching a crescendo with each unveiling. Directed by debutant Malli Ankam and produced by Rajiv Chilaka under the banner of Chilaka Productions, the film promises to be a delightful treat for audiences of all ages.

Adding to the excitement, the team released the second single from the movie, titled *Hamnammo*. This blissful melody, infused with classical beats and electronic vibes, captures the essence of romance in a refreshing blend of musical styles. Bhaskarabhatla's poignant lyrics beautifully convey Allari Naresh's emotions, while Yasaswi Kondepudi's enchanting vocals add a special charm to the track. Allari Naresh and Farha Abdullah's on-screen chemistry is further enhanced through graceful choreography, adding to the song's appeal.

With a stellar cast including Vennela Kishore, Jamie Lever, Viva Harsha, and Ariyana Glory, *Aa Okkati Adakku* promises an unforgettable cinematic experience. Abhuri Ravi's compelling screenplay, coupled with Surya's captivating cinematography and Gopi Sundar's melodious score, ensures a visual and auditory treat for audiences. As anticipation continues to build, fans can mark their calendars for May 3, when *Aa Okkati Adakku* is set to hit theaters nationwide.

Tamannaah Bhatia's Odela 2 second schedule kicks off

The much-anticipated multi-lingual extravaganza *Odela 2* has embarked on its second schedule, marking another milestone in its journey towards cinematic greatness. Helmed by the dynamic duo of blockbuster filmmaker Sampath Nandi and director Ashok Teja, and produced by Madhu Creations and Sampath Nandi Teamworks, this high-budget venture promises to redefine the supernatural genre. Tamannaah Bhatia donned the role of 'Bhairavi', a mystical *Naga Saadh*. *Odela 2* is now weaving its magic in and around the vibrant city of Hyderabad. Over the course of 20–25 days, the team is capturing pivotal sequences that promise to leave audiences spellbound. Tamannaah's transformation into the enigmatic character of Bhairavi, showcased in a working video, offers goosebumps-inducing moments, accompanied by a riveting score from Ajaneesh Loknath of *Kantara* fame. Joining the superstar in this cinematic spectacle are acclaimed actors Hebbah Patel, Vasishta N Simha, Murali Sharma, Srikanth lyengar, and more. Cinematographer Soundarrajan returns to the franchise, capturing the essence of *Odela* once again, while Rajeev Nair lends his artistic vision as the art director.



CHANDINI CHOWDARY TURNS POWERFUL COP FOR YEVAM

Renowned filmmaker Prakash Dantuluri is set to make waves with his latest directorial venture, *Yevam*, as he unveils the first poster, setting the stage for an impactful narrative. Featuring Chandini Chowdary in a commanding police uniform, the poster sends a powerful message, challenging societal norms with the intriguing tagline, "Aadapillane Ayithe Yentantaa?". Produced by Navadeep and Pavan Goparaju in collaboration with C Space Productions and PDP, *Yevam* promises to be a cinematic milestone, shedding light on the strength and resilience of women. With music by Keertana Sesh and Neelesh Mandalapu, the film is poised to deliver an unforgettable cinematic experience, blending powerful storytelling with soul-stirring melodies. As Chandini Chowdary takes on the lead role, audiences can expect a gripping portrayal of empowerment, redefining the traditional expectations and limitations imposed on women. *Yevam* invites viewers to join the journey of self-discovery and courage, as it celebrates the indomitable spirit of womanhood.



Mega mother Konidela Anjana Devi unveils teaser of RK Sagar's comeback film

After a hiatus from the silver screen, RK Sagar, renowned for his Apportrayal in the iconic series *Mogali Rekulu*, returns with a bang in the upcoming emotional action thriller, *THE 100*. Penned and directed by Raghav Omkar Sasidhar, the film is jointly produced by Ramesh Karutoori, Venki Pushadapu, and J Tharak Ram under the banners of KRIA Film Corp. and Dhamma Productions. Amidst much anticipation, the teaser of the film was launched on Friday by none other than Mega Mother Konidela Anjana Devi. The teaser offers a glimpse into the intense narrative, revolving around IPS Officer Vikranth, portrayed by RK Sagar. As Vikranth

faces inquiries from the Human Rights Commission for his unconventional methods in combating crime, the teaser paints a picture of a fearless officer unyielding in his pursuit of justice. Despite facing scrutiny from various quarters, Vikranth remains undeterred, challenging conventions and pushing boundaries in his fight against crime. Joining RK Sagar in the cast is Misha Narang, who plays a pivotal role opposite the protagonist, along with Dhanya Balakrishna. With Shyam K. Naidu behind the camera and Harshavardhan Rameshwar composing the music, *THE 100* boasts a talented crew set to deliver a captivating film.



