







## YSRCP govt caused extensive damage in State: Sribharat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

M Sribharat, the alliance candidate representing TDP-JSP-BJP for the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha seat, has criticised the ruling YSRCP government, attributing extensive damage to Andhra Pradesh over the past five years to what he termed as "autocratic and devastating" governance.

Addressing a fervent crowd at an election rally held at MVP Colony on Tuesday, Sribharat expressed his belief that the trajectory of the State, along with Visakhapatnam's fate, could witness a significant shift if the NDA alliance secures victory in the upcoming 2024 general elections.

Accompanied by notable political figures such as TDP sitting MLAs Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu and PGVR. Naidu (Ganababu), former MLAs Ganta Srinivasa Rao and Palla Srinivasa Rao, as well as Kolla Lalitha Kumari, the BJP contesting candidate P. Vishnu Kumar Raju, and JSP contesting candidate Vamsi Krishna Yadav, Sribharat reiterated accusations against the YSRCP government. They collectively alleged that the ruling party was misleading the public regarding Election Commission directives concerning the distribution of pensions through volunteers. Furthermore, they accused the YSR Congress Party of resorting to various forms of malpractice to secure victory



Echoing Sribharat's sentiments, the leaders at an election meeting, asserted that the people harboured frustration towards the YSRCP administration's governance during the past five years and eagerly anticipated the resurgence of the NDA alliance to power in the state

in the forthcoming elections.

Echoing Sribharat's sentiments, the assembled leaders asserted that the people harboured frustration towards the YSRCP administration's governance during the past five years and eagerly anticipated the resurgence of the NDA alliance to power in the state. With the election fervour intensifying, the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha constituency braces itself for a heated electoral battle, with political alliances vying for the electorate's mandate amidst claims and counterclaims.

## YSRCP leader flays TDP's 'conspiracy to stop pension'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State leader Akula Srinivas has strongly criticised Telugu Desam president Chandrababu Naidu's 'conspiracy to cancel social security pensions'. Chandrababu intentionally created trouble in distributing pensions to the beneficiaries through volunteers who are serving the people by door delivering the government welfare schemes. He said that the TDP, Jana Sena and the BJP have been criticising the volunteers who come to the homes of beneficiaries on the 1st of every month and give pensions.

Akula Srinivas expressed his anger that Chandrababu and Co have created a situation where the elderly, widows, disabled, sick people are not able to receive pensions at home for about three months until the elections process is complete. He



said that Nimmagadda Ramesh, who is a key person in the Citizen for Democracy organisation, belongs to the Telugu Desam Party, and through that organisation, TDP complained to the Central Election Commission and stopped the distribution of pensions through volunteers. Srinivas mentioned that one pensioner in Chittoor district Venkatagiri and one in Kakinada Rural died after knowing that the pension distribution will take time and will not be door delivered, and Chandrababu Naidu is the reason for these deaths.

# Twitter war intensifies ahead of elections in AP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the political atmosphere heats up in Andhra Pradesh with the upcoming elections looming, the battleground has shifted to the digital sphere. The ongoing dialogue war between political parties has escalated on Twitter, with accusations and counter-accusations flying. Amidst the escalating dialogue warfare between political factions in Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, the chief of the TDP party, found himself embroiled in a heated exchange on Twitter. Accusations hurled by YCP leaders claimed that the TDP, under Naidu's leadership, intends to impede pension disbursements, sparking outrage among netizens.

In the latest skirmish, the chief of the TDP party, Chandrababu Naidu, found himself under fire over allegations made by the Yuva Jana

In the latest skirmish, the chief of the TDP party, Chandrababu Naidu, found himself under fire over allegations made by the Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP). YSRCP's campaign suggests that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), led by Naidu, intends to block pensions. Responding to these allegations, Naidu took to Twitter to denounce the allegations, slamming the YSRCP's campaign as a deceptive play for political mileage.

Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP). YSRCP's campaign suggests that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), led by Naidu, intends to block pensions. Responding to these allegations, Naidu took to Twitter to denounce the allegations, slamming the YSRCP's campaign as a deceptive play for political

mileage. He criticised YSRCP leader Jagan Reddy, asserting that the party's tactics of spreading falsehoods and engaging in mean-spirited behaviour were ingrained in their DNA.

Dismissing the accusations, Naidu clarified that the TDP does not advocate for withholding pensions. Instead, he

pointed fingers at the YCP, alleging a conspiracy to manipulate pension policies for their own political agenda. He emphasized the plight of the elderly and disabled, condemning any attempts to exploit their suffering for political gain.

Promising a better future for pensioners, Naidu pledged to raise pension amounts to Rs 4000 once in power. Additionally, he vowed to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and ensure the seamless delivery of pensions directly to recipients' homes. As the electoral battle intensifies in Andhra Pradesh, the virtual skirmish on social media underscores the high stakes and fierce competition between political adversaries. With both sides trading barbs and accusations, the Twitter feud serves as a precursor to the heated confrontations expected in the run-up to the elections.



## Muttamsetti launches a tirade against Ganta

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a fiery election campaign rally held in Bheemili, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, the YSR Party candidate, has launched a scathing attack on his opponent, Ganta Srinivasa Rao, alleging neglect of the constituency's development. Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, alongside Visakhapatnam Parliament candidate Basa Jhansi Lakshmi, led the rally from Padmanabham Junction to local Reddipalli Major Panchayat, rallying supporters under the leadership of Vice Chairman Visakhapatnam Zilla Parishad, Sunkara Giribabu. Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao vehemently criticized Ganta Srinivasa Rao, labeling him as a "liar" and "cheater" for his alleged failure to address the needs of Bheemili constituency. "What have you done for the constituency?" Srinivasa Rao challenged Ganta Srinivasa Rao, accusing him of changing constituencies every five years and lacking presence in Bheemili. He further questioned Ganta Srinivasa Rao's knowledge of the constituency's villages and the names of his Telugu Desam Party workers. Warning of dire consequences, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao cautioned Ganta Srinivasa Rao and his

associates against criticizing those who have left the YSR Party. The rally also saw participation from Visakhapatnam Parliament YSR Party candidate Botsa Jhansi Lakshmi, who praised Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's welfare schemes for the poor. Meanwhile, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao condemned Chandrababu Naidu's alleged obstruction of welfare schemes for the poor and elderly. He criticized attempts to mislead the public and emphasized the importance of supporting a government focused on people's welfare.

In a rallying cry for development, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao urged voters to consider the consequences of hindering progress in Uttarandhra. Accusing Ganta Srinivasa Rao of neglecting the constituency's needs, Avanti Srinivasa Rao vowed severe consequences for any interference from opposition leaders. The campaign rally, attended by thousands, demonstrated strong support for the YSR Party's vision for progress and welfare in Bheemili and beyond. With tensions rising ahead of the May 13 general elections, the battle for Bheemili's representation intensifies as candidates vie for the trust and support of constituents.

## Spl Expenditure Observer Neena Nigam welcomed



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district in-charge Collector Gitanjali Sharma and SP Adnan Azmi welcomed Neena Nigam, a retired IPS officer, who is the

Special Expenditure Observer of the State elections. The retired IPS officer was welcomed at Vijayawada International Airport in Gannavaram late on Tuesday evening.

## Nine Naxals killed in Bijapur ...

Continued from page 1

After the exchange of fire stopped, bodies of four Naxalites were recovered from the spot along with a light machine gun, barrel grenade launchers and other arms and ammunitions, he said.

Later, five more bodies were found at the encounter site, the IG said, adding that search operation was still underway in the area.

Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard, Special Task Force, Central Reserve Police Force and its elite unit Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) were involved in the operation, he said.

Notably, Naxalites carry out the Tactical Counter Offensive Campaign (TCOC) in the summer season between March and June every year and step up their activities. A large number of attacks on security forces have taken place in the Bastar region during this period.

March 27, six Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Basaguda area of Bijapur, police earlier said.

With the latest incident, 42 Naxalites have been killed so far this year in separate encounters with security forces in Bastar region, comprising seven districts including Bijapur, according to police.

## Battle for YSR's legacy unfolds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the heart of Andhra Pradesh's political landscape lies a tale of familial dominance and legacy. The narratives of two former chief ministers, Nandamuri Tarakarama Rao and Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, continue to shape the state's political trajectory even years after they depart from this world.

NTR, as he was affectionately known, transformed the political spectrum of combined Andhra Pradesh in the 1980s by establishing the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on the foundation of Telugu self-respect. Meanwhile, YSR carved his own indelible mark with revolutionary welfare schemes for farmers and the underprivileged. The influence of these two families, the NTR family and the YSR family permeates through Andhra Pradesh's political fabric. Members from both families lead major parties, including those in power and in opposition.

Despite YSR's untimely demise in a tragic helicopter crash in 2009, his political legacy remains a force to reckon with. His son, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, undertook the mantle of continuing his father's work. However, his defiance of the Congress leadership led to the creation of a new political entity, the Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), in 2010.

Jagan's journey saw highs and lows, including a stint in jail due to a disproportionate assets case. Yet, buoyed by his father's legacy, he led YSRCP to a resounding victory in the 2019 elections, ascending to the position of Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. However, the family's unity faced strains, with Jagan sidelining his sister, YS Sharmila. Undeterred, Sharmila embarked on her own political path, founding the YSR Telangana Party in 2021 to leverage her father's legacy in neighbouring Telangana. Yet, faced with challenges and advised by the Congress leadership, Sharmila returned to the fold of Andhra Pradesh politics, seeking to rejuvenate Congress's presence in the state.

Sharmila now positions herself as the true heir to YSR's political legacy, pledging to fulfil her father's dream of seeing Rahul Gandhi as Prime Minister while criticizing her brother's alleged alignment with the BJP. As the political landscape heats up, all eyes are on the upcoming elections, particularly the battle for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat, a stronghold of the YSR family for decades.

Sharmila's candidacy against her cousin, YS Avinash Reddy of the YSRCP, promises to be a spectacle, especially with the backdrop of CBI accusations against Avinash Reddy in the murder case of YSR's brother, Vivekananda Reddy.

## HC asks ED to submit its note to special judge

Continued from page 1

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora said the special judge, dealing with the money laundering case in which Kejriwal has been arrested, is directed to pass an order, if required, in accordance with the law.

The court disposed of the public interest litigation which sought directions to prevent Kejriwal from issuing orders in his capacity as the chief minister while in the ED's custody.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora said the special judge, dealing with the money laundering case in which Kejriwal has been arrested, is directed to pass an order, if



required, in accordance with the law. The court disposed of the public interest litigation which sought directions to

prevent Kejriwal from issuing orders in his capacity as the chief minister while in the ED's custody.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Navami:

Apr 02 08:09 PM

to Apr 03 06:29 PM

Navami:

Apr 03 06:29 PM

to Apr 04 04:14 PM

Nakshatram:

Uttara Ashadha:

Apr 02 10:48 PM

to Apr 03 09:47 PM

Shravana:

Apr 03 09:47 PM

to Apr 04 08:11 PM

Rahukalam:

12:19 PM to 1:51 PM

Yamagandam:

7:44 AM to 9:16 AM

Varjyam:

01:31 AM to 03:01 AM

Gulika:

10:47 AM to 12:19 PM

Amritakalam:

03:40 PM to 05:11 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:55 AM to 12:44 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 34°

Humidity: 48%

Sunrise: 6:01 AM

Sunset: 6:21 PM

Updated: April 3, 2024 5:00 PM



Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam; held in Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In connection with Telugu Ugadi on April 9, 'Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam' was held in Tirumala temple on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion TTD Chairman Sri Karunakara Reddy said, that 'Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam' is a traditional temple cleaning ritual that is observed four times a year before 'Anivara Asthanam', 'Annual Brahmotsavam', 'Vaikuntha Ekadasi' and Telugu Ugadi. As a part of this cleaning fete, the entire temple including the roofs, walls, and puja utensils in the sanctum sanctorum and in sub-shrines were smeared with an aromatic mixture called Parimalam. Later devotees were allowed for darshan of Sri Venkateswara Swamy. TTD has cancelled Astadala Pada Padmaradhana seva in view of the ritual. TTD EO AV Dharma Reddy, DLO Sri Veeraju, temple DyEO Sri Lokanatham, Peishkar Sri Srihari and others were present. Issued by CPRO TTD Tirupati.

Dislodge Jagan govt: YS Sunitha to people

PNS ■ KADAPA

Slain leader Vivekananda Reddy's daughter, YS Sunitha has appealed to the people to vote out the State government led by YSRCP. Addressing the media here on Tuesday, she accused the government of being responsible for her father's murder and urged the people to reject the YSRCP in upcoming elections. She questioned the integrity of Jagan Mohan Reddy, highlighting his alleged fear of investigations into her father's murder. Sunitha challenged him to debate the issue openly, even proposing to do so on the Sakshi channel. Furthermore, she accused Jagan Mohan Reddy of sidelining her cousin, YS Sharmila, who is now contesting from the Kadapa constituency with Sunitha's full support. Sunitha emphasised the brutality of her father's murder, contrasting it with the portrayal in a biopic movie



YS Sunitha warned against reelecting the YSRCP, asserting that it would be detrimental to the progress of AP

named 'Vivekam'. She warned against reelecting the YSRCP, asserting that it would be detrimental to the progress of Andhra Pradesh. Sunitha's speech underscores

her determination to seek justice for her father's death and her opposition to what she perceives as a corrupt and murderous political regime.



BJP leader joins YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CM Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday commenced his ongoing 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra by inducting a slew of prominent senior political leaders in the party. The leaders including senior BJP leader Dr AV Subareddy from Rajampet, Madanapalle TDP Minority Leader Mobasir Ahmed and another senior TDP leader, M Gangadhar from Kadiri Constituency joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of CM, ahead of the forthcoming polls.

TDP's move against village volunteers turns 70L voters

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The TDP has lost the support of 70 lakh Andhra Pradesh voters with just one decision. The TDP's move on volunteers has become a big boon for the ruling YSR Congress. After the TDP's complaint, the Election Commission issued orders barring village and ward volunteers from distributing social welfare benefits. For the last four years, beneficiaries have been getting pensions at their doorstep through these volunteers. Now this has been stopped by the Election Commission after the TDP's complaint. The beneficiaries will now have to go to village secretariats to get pensions. Till June, the beneficiaries have to go to secretariats to get their pensions in the hot summer. In Andhra Pradesh, there are about 66 lakh beneficiaries and over 2.6 lakh village and ward volunteers. After the TDP's complaint, the social welfare beneficiaries are now angry with the TDP. Due to the TDP, they are now unable to get pensions at their doorstep and the

The TDP in another complaint to the Election Commission said that the volunteers are campaigning for the YSR Congress and requested the ECI to ask them not to campaign.

TDP has lost the support of 66 lakh voters. The TDP in another complaint to the Election Commission said that the volunteers are campaigning for the YSR Congress and requested the ECI to ask them not to campaign. Accordingly, the ECI barred the volunteers from campaigning. With this, volunteers across the state are submitting mass resignations and are becoming the YSRCP's army as alleged by the TDP. This means the TDP has lost the support of another 2.6 lakh voters. Every volunteer is in regular touch with 50 families for the last four years and can influence these families to support the

YSRCP. That means the TDP may lose the support of lakhs of voters. The YSRCP is utilising this opportunity to turn people against the TDP. The YSRCP is pointing out that due to the TDP, the beneficiaries have lost the opportunity to get their pension at their doorstep and in the hot summer senior citizens have to go to secretariats to get pensions. The YSRCP is also campaigning that if the TDP comes to power it may stop pensions and even if it gives the beneficiaries will have to go to far away offices every month to get pensions. The village volunteer system introduced by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy attracted attention across the nation and some states have adopted the system. Earlier, TDP supremo Chandrababu and his son Lokesh made offensive remarks against the volunteers. Jana Sena President Pawan Kalyan also made allegations against the volunteers and said that thousands of girls have gone missing and expressed doubts about the role of volunteers in it.

Minister Dharmana condemns Oppn's 'media manipulation'

Opposition exacerbating the plight of the elderly, widows, disabled individuals, single women, and kidney patients

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

State Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao has launched a scathing criticism against the alleged media machinations of the Chandrababu-led Opposition, accusing them of exacerbating the plight of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, widows, disabled individuals, single women, and kidney patients in the State. Rao's remarks came amidst his participation in the 'Rajakula Atmiya Sammelan' in Srikakulam district, where YSRCP MP candidate Perada Tilak also addressed the gathering. Highlighting the issue of delayed pension distribution to the elderly and disabled, Minister Dharmana accused Chandrababu Naidu's faction of orchestrating conspiracies aimed at hindering welfare initiatives. He contended that such tactics were reminiscent of Chandrababu's previous tenure when he lacked political power. Moreover, Rao alleged that



Chandrababu's administration had disparaged volunteers as "thieves and rowdies" over the past five years, warning that a return to power for such leadership would spell further hardships for the populace. In contrast, he lauded Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's non-partisan approach to governance, emphasising the delivery of welfare schemes irrespective of caste, religion, or political affiliation. Asserting the commitment of the Jagan-led government to the welfare of all citizens, Minister Dharmana criticised Opposition figures like Pawan

Kalyan and Chandrababu for what he deemed as superficial engagement with the State's issues, alleging that they only become active during election periods. He underscored the government's initiative in providing housing for Rajakulams in Srikakulam constituency, signalling a tangible commitment to grassroots development. Rao cautioned against the potential return of Chandrababu's administration, portraying it as a regression from the inclusive governance model championed by the incumbent government under Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership.

DEATH OF PENSIONER Kannababu assures support to kin

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Kakinada Rural MLA Kurasala Kannababu visited Turangi village today to offer condolences to the family of K Venkat Rao, (70) who passed away from a heart attack. Kannababu expressed his deep sorrow, stating, "The death of Venkat Rao is a terrible loss. His family relies heavily on his pension, and a one-day delay in receiving it caused him significant worry." It was reported that Venkat Rao was unaware of the recent High Court decision restricting volunteers in pension distribution. This likely led to his confusion regarding the delay and his decision to travel, with the aid of a walking stick, all the way to the secretariat to inquire about it. Sadly, he suffered a fatal heart attack during this journey. "We have brought this matter to the Chief Minister's immediate attention," said Kannababu. "The Chief Minister expressed his condolences and directed officials to ensure support for Venkat Rao's family."

Special facilities for disabled voters: Collector Nagalakshmi

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a bid to ensure inclusivity in the electoral process, District Collector Nagalakshmi emphasised the Election Commission's commitment to providing special facilities for disabled voters. Speaking during a meeting here on Tuesday, Nagalakshmi highlighted the measures taken to facilitate disabled individuals' participation in the upcoming elections. Nagalakshmi underscored the provision of ramps and minimum basic facilities at all polling centres across the district to accommodate disabled voters. Notably, all polling centres have been situated on the ground floor, eliminating the need for disabled individuals to wait in queues. Moreover, a specially designed app by the Election Commission offers invaluable assistance, allowing registered disabled voters with over 40 percent disability, as per their certificate, to vote from home upon prior application through the Saksham app. The app also caters to various needs such as transportation to polling centres, verification



ing voter registration details, locating polling centres, and requesting wheelchair or volunteer assistance. It incorporates features like voice assistant and text-to-speech functionality, ensuring accessibility for all. Additionally, the Collector announced the availability of 580 wheelchairs district-wide on election day, with volunteers recruited from National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS) to assist. To cater to visually impaired voters, arrangements

have been made to distribute voter slips in Braille and provide a sample ballot paper in Braille script at each polling station. EVMs are equipped with numbers in Braille, and magnifying glasses will be provided for those requiring visual assistance. The voting process, segmented into five stages, aims to accommodate the diverse needs of disabled individuals. "Inclusivity is not just a goal; it's a responsibility we owe to our citizens," Nagalakshmi pointed out.

Vja rly divn earns Rs 5,614.13 crore in 2023-24

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Division in the South Central Railway (SCR) has reported a notable achievement, generating revenues totalling Rs 5,614.13 crore during the fiscal year 2023-24. This impressive figure encompasses various revenue streams, including Gross Revenue, Freight Revenue, Passenger Revenue, Ticket Checking earnings, Other Coaching Earnings, and Sundry earnings. Notably, this marks the highest-ever gross earnings in the history of Vijayawada Division, surpassing the previous record of Rs. 5,311.8 Crore from the preceding year. Remarkably, this fiscal year saw Vijayawada Division crossing the significant milestone of Rs. 5500 Cr mark for the first time. The revenue distribution from different segments demonstrates a robust performance, with 72% from the Freight business, 24% from the Passenger business, 1.8% from other coaching, and 1.3% from sundries.

Naidu shedding crocodile tears for pensioners

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Social Welfare Minister Merugu Nagarjuna has vehemently criticised TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, accusing him of obstructing pension distribution and shedding crocodile tears for pension beneficiaries. The minister denounced Naidu's political tactics, stating that the former chief minister is willing to stoop to any level to deceive the people of Andhra Pradesh. According to the minister, Naidu's actions demonstrate a lack of responsibility and foresight for the welfare of the State's population. He alleged that Naidu, in collaboration with his relative Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, conspired against the volunteer system, which has been hailed as a groundbreaking reform nationwide. Nimmagadda's opposition to the YSRCP during his tenure as SEC led to detrimental measures against the volunteer system, claimed the minister. Minister Nagarjuna said that Chief Minister Jagan initiated the volunteer system to ensure the effective delivery of welfare schemes directly to the beneficiaries. However, Naidu, along with Nimmagadda, allegedly manoeuvred legal avenues, including the courts and the Election Commission,



to impede the distribution of pensions, thereby undermining the system's credibility. The minister commended the invaluable services rendered by volunteers across the state and denounced Naidu's attempts to discredit their efforts. Accusing Naidu of politicising the issue for personal gain, Minister Nagarjuna asserted that Naidu's actions were aimed at dismantling the volunteer system and exploiting the situation for political advantage. He criticised Naidu's attempts to mislead the public through social media platforms like Twitter. Challenging Naidu to cite a single significant scheme introduced during his 14-year tenure as chief minister, Minister Nagarjuna alleged that the TDP failed to fulfil any of its promises after assuming power in 2014. He accused the TDP of resorting to empty promises to deceive the public once again and questioned the party's ability to field candidates in all 175 constituencies. The minister further accused Naidu of intimidating volunteers and depriving the poor of government benefits. He emphasized the government's commitment to implementing effective welfare measures in the state.

'Entrepreneurship Bootcamp 1.0' for young innovators organised by SRM-AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp 1.0 Demo Day, hosted by the Directorate of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at SRM University-AP, marked a fitting culmination of rigorous entrepreneurship training for aspiring student and faculty entrepreneurs. Dynamic pitches were presented by participants showcasing their innovative ideas, robust business models, and effective go-to-market strategies. These presentations were met with sharp and insightful feedback from global investors and world-class mentors. Among the elite panel of industry mentors were Srikanth Talluri, Founder and CMD of 6D.Works; Rathnakar Samavedam, Investment



Director & CEO at Hyderabad Angels; Deb Mukherji, Chief Advisor-Anglian Omega Group - India; Siddharth Dangli, Founder & CEO at Mentogram, Singapore; Ravi Eswarapu, President of TIE and CXO turned Entrepreneur; and Dr. Dhiraj K Mahajan, Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Ropar, alongside Prof. Manoj

K Arora, Vice Chancellor of SRM AP. The Entrepreneurship Boot Camp 1.0 at SRM AP spanned a comprehensive 6-week cohort with 8 interactive sessions carefully curated for a dedicated pool of over 60 selected participants. These individuals immersed themselves in an intensive boot camp guided by Prof. Sidharth Tripathy, a Harvard Alumnus and Director of

Entrepreneurship and Innovation at SRM AP. Participants delved into the intricacies of ideation, business development, and strategic planning, benefiting from world-class case studies, practical implementation roadmaps, and real-time engagements with industry and business mentors of international calibre. From a competitive pool of 180 applicants, a rigorous selection process led to the acceptance of only 60 candidates. Further refinement resulted in the identification of 16 standout ventures. Ultimately, a select group of 10 ventures was chosen to receive a grant of Rs 50,000 each, empowering them to incubate, accelerate, and develop their ventures in the Hatch Lab Research Centre, SRM AP's incubator.

MLA Vishnu complains to CEO about TDP phone calls to pensioners

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Planning Board Vice-Chairman and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu, on Tuesday, complained to State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena against the Telugu Desam Party, which is not only disrupting the pension distribution system but also spreading false information to the people of the State through phone calls. He strongly condemned sending voice messages to lakhs of people without any permission, in the

wake of the model code of conduct. He asked the CEO to immediately take action against the 'false propaganda' of TDP. Later, Malladi Vishnu spoke to the media persons and alleged that 66 lakh social security pensioners across the State are suffering due to Chandrababu's conspiracies. Moreover, TDP is sending false bulk messages shamelessly. He said that everyone knows that the financial year ends on March 31, so pensions will be distributed two days late and last year also pensions were



provided on April 3. But the Telugu Desam is hell-bent on propagating Goebbels' campaign. Vishnu said that Chandrababu cannot bear to see

the popularity of the Chief Minister's Memantha Siddham bus yatra and is spewing venom on Chief Minister through the 'TDP' website. Vishnu said that

he has asked the Election Commission to take strict action against the false posts that are being made to insult CM Jagan Mohan Reddy. Vishnu added that Chandrababu does not dare to tell the people what he did while in power, so he is throwing mud at the ruling party. Even till December 2018, Chandrababu gave a pension of only Rs 1,000 to beneficiaries. It is shameful for Telugu Desam leaders to talk about welfare programmes. Ironically, all those

who criticised Andhra Pradesh is becoming another Sri Lanka till yesterday are boasting that they will provide double welfare. On the other hand, Malladi Vishnu said that he has also complained to the Election Commission about the misinformation being spread in the form of leaflets against YSRCP candidate Velampalli Srinivas of the Central constituency. So, all the people of the State understand Chandrababu's conspiracies and ask the TDP to come to their senses once again.



# Congress seems to have adopted vindictive attitude towards BRS

The Congress government seems to have adopted a vindictive attitude towards the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) if the operation to lure MLAs from the opposition party is taken into account.

The ongoing saga of desertions from the BRS has indicated that the Congress party has decided to boost its slender majority in the Assembly.

In the 2023 Assembly elections, the Congress managed to secure just four seats majority to come to power. Its ally, the Communist Party of India won one seat. The Congress party felt that it was not possible to ensure hassle-free governance with the slight majority. The Congress high command based on the assessment of the party leaders in Telangana believed that

Telangana people would choose the grand old party in the maiden elections to the Assembly after the formation of the State. The Congress party even kept TRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao at arm's length strategically and did not allow his merger plans. But, the Congress leaders' plans miserably failed with Telangana people stunned the Congress party by choosing the TRS headed by K Chandrashekar Rao, better known as KCR, in 2014. The then TRS party decided to weaken the Congress to boost its slender majority by luring MLAs from the grand old party.

Now the Congress has resorted to the same plan in 2024 by enticing legislators from the BRS.

**In the 2023 Assembly elections, the Congress managed to secure just four seats majority to come to power. Its ally, the Communist Party of India won one seat. The Congress party felt that it was not possible to ensure hassle-free governance with the slight majority.**

KCR, after becoming the chief minister, destroyed the TDP in Telangana though he was the TDP MLA for five terms. In the subsequent elections in 2018, KCR accomplished the task of dismantling the Congress by ensuring that it was stripped of the status of Opposition Party in the Legislative Assembly. In the first term, KCR allowed K Jana Reddy to continue as

Leader of Opposition. But, in his second term, KCR promptly ensured that Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka was no longer the Leader of Opposition. After suffering humiliation at the hands of KCR, the Congress party has resorted to the same game plan. The political rivalry between KCR and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy became personal one with the TRS government filing a crim-



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

inal case in vote for cash-for-vote scandal and sending the latter to jail.

Against this backdrop, the Congress could have fears that the principal opposition party, BRS, may destabilise the government because it enjoyed a slender majority. It led to the

Revanth government embarking on a mission to lure the BRS legislators into the Congress fold. The BRS suffered setbacks in Zilla Parishads and Municipal councils with no-confidence motion led to toppling of ZP chairpersons and municipal chairpersons in several places.

Encouraging desertions may erode not only the principles of true democracy but dignity and decorum of the legislature. During the first Assembly in Telangana (2014-18), a legislator started switching loyalties. Then TDP legislator T Srinivas Yadav switched loyalties to KCR and joined the Cabinet. It is highly objectionable for a legislator who is elected on a party ticket to join another and even accept a cabinet berth. Despite severe resentment then, the Governor allowed Yadav to take oath as

Minister. Srinivas Yadav justified his action by saying that his resignation to Assembly membership had been sent to the Speaker and he expressed readiness to face by-poll if it was accepted. The four-and-a-half years elapsed and at the fag-end of the period of first House of Telangana, Speaker's Secretariat made a stunning revelation that the resignation letter of the said legislator was not with it. Nobody knew where that resignation letter was.

The present day episode of another legislator D Nagendar of the BRS from Khairatabad is causing concern among the votaries of democracy as he is all set to contest from Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency on the Congress ticket. After admitting him into its fold, Congress asked him to resign to the Assembly

seat before filing nomination to contest from Secunderabad Lok Sabha seat. But, it was not heeded by the legislator. Initially, the legislator is eyeing the Cabinet berth. Is it not ridiculous on part of BRS to cry foul over the inaction of the Speaker in the case of Nagendra?

Anyhow, influencing the legislators of other parties to switch loyalties is unacceptable. Defections are happening because the laws that were enacted to ensure that a party member does not violate the mandate of the party have become toothless. Political parties took the lead in weakening the anti-defection laws. The then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had brought the strong Anti-Defection law in mid-1980. But the political parties diluted the spirit of the enactment.

# Officials deny permission for Pawan's Uppada meet

PNS ■ PITHAPURAM

The district officials did not permit Pawan Kalyan's meeting to be organised at Uppada Kothapalli on Tuesday.

Jana Sena party sources said that Pawan Kalyan had to address women activists and leaders belonging to the fishermen community at Uppada Kottapalli. The JSP legal cell members applied for permission 48 hours earlier but the officials did not say anything till the last minute. The JSP leaders booked a function hall for Pawan Kalyan's meeting.

Meanwhile, a large number of women and JSP leaders converged at the village hoping that the meeting would be held and Pawan Kalyan addressed them. Pawan Kalyan went to Uppada Kothapalli and waited patiently for permission till the last minute.

As a large number of women went to the village to attend the meeting, Pawan Kalyan interacted with them for about four minutes. He did not make any political comments during his



**As a large number of women went to the village to attend the meeting, Pawan Kalyan interacted with them for about four minutes. He did not make any political comments during his interaction with the women.**

However, the reason for not permitting Pawan Kalyan's meeting was not known, JSP sources told the media. The JSP leaders expressed their anger over the officials for not

responding when permission was sought to hold an election meeting. The JSP respects the institutions and the election officials, they said, adding that they are following the model code of conduct.

Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan while interacting with the people at the villages assured them of serving them like their family members.

"I will make Pithapuram my native town and will be accessible to the people always. I will take responsibility of resolving the grievances of the people of the constituency. I will strive to develop Pithapuram constituency as a model constituency," he told the women.

Since the election code of conduct is enforced all should follow the code of conduct, he said. Kakinada JSP MP Candidate T Uday Srinivas, Dr Jyotula Srinivas and other leaders were among those who accompanied Pawan Kalyan.

Earlier, Pawan Kalyan visited the Bashir Bibi Auliya Dargah at Ponnada village and participated in prayers. He broke a coconut at Ursu in the Dargah. In the evening, BJP Assembly candidates Y Sujana Chowdary and Kamineni Srinivas, TDP MLA Nimmakayala Chinarajappa called on Pawan Kalyan.

## 2 checkpoints set up in Bapatla district: SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has said that a total number of 12 check-posts have been set up in the district to conduct round-the-clock checks.

The SP told the officials to carry out extensive checking of vehicles on highways at checkpoints around the clock till the elections are concluded. He said that steps were taken to Cls/SIs doing duties at the check posts.

He said that the political parties may transport cash and liquor in a big way to lure voters and checking of vehicles should be taken up extensively. A Circle Inspector or a Sub-inspector would be appointed as in charge at check posts to monitor the checking of vehicles, the SP said. Later talking to the media, SP Vakul Jindal said that since the beginning of enforcing the election code of conduct the police have seized Rs 4,63,65,316.



# DC Prasanna, SP Mary Prashanthi hold flag march

PNS ■ ELURU

Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh, Superintendent of Police D Mary Prashanthi and Joint Collector B Lavnya Veni participated in the flag march conducted by the security and police personnel here on Tuesday.

In view of the forthcoming elections, the security and police personnel conducted a flag march which began at the ZP office. The Collector, SP and JC led the flag march. The flag march by the police and security personnel was conducted to infuse confidence among the voters.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that the district election administration has made all arrangements so that the voters can vote freely without fear.

"Static Survey Lines Teams (SST), Flying Survey Lines Teams (FST) and Video Surveillance Teams (VST) have been formed at the check posts under the direction of Police, Revenue and Commercial Taxes Departments in the district and inspections are being



carried out intensively," the Collector said.

The Collector said that 8,000 to 10,000 police personnel have been appointed to conduct the elections in the district, adding that 3 teams of Central Armed Forces (CIRF) have been assigned to the district.

Out of that, 2 groups are currently conducting a flag march in the district, he said, stating that the police department is organizing flag marches and awareness rallies to infuse the assurance voters

can exercise their franchise freely.

District SP Mary Prashanthi said that the cooperation of the district police would always be there so that people could freely and fearlessly exercise their right to vote in elections, adding that flag marches were organized to instil confidence in the people.

RDO NSK Khajavali, returning officer M Mukkanti and municipal commissioner S Venkataraman were among a host of officials who participated in the flag march.

## Rs 11.43 lakh seized during vehicle checking

PNS ■ ELURU

The election officials seized Rs 11.43 lakh during the checking of vehicles at Ungatur constituency on Tuesday.

Eluru RDO NS Khajavali told the media that the Static Survey Lines teams and flying squads are conducting extensive checking vehicles across the district.



When they checked cars at Ungatur, Ganapavam and Nidamaru they found Rs 11,34,700 being carried out without proper documents and seized them. The seized money was preserved in the strong room. Relevant documents should accompany the cash when being carried by the individuals, the RDO said.

# Vijayasai unveils manifesto for Aatmkur's development

PNS ■ NELLORE

YSRCP Nellore Lok Sabha candidate Y Vijaysai Reddy and Atmakur MLA candidate Mekapati Vikram Reddy unveiled a manifesto especially for the development of the Atmakur constituency on Tuesday.

A huge rally was held in Atmakur on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Vijaysai Reddy highlighted the manifesto assurances stating that ancient mosques and temples would be renovated, if YSRCP is voted to power. He also promised to construct a Christian community hall.

He said that bus stations, kalyana mandapam, shadi manjil and community centres would be constructed at Sangam, AS Pet, Chejarla and Marripadu

villages. He also assured of establishing a polytechnic and ITI.

Vijaysai Reddy assured in the manifesto that cold storage centres would be constructed. Basic amenities including the construction of crematoriums would take place in the Atmakur constituency if the YSRCP was voted to power, he told the people.

Vijaysai Reddy said that Atmakur is a bastion of the YSRCP and the Mekapati family has been serving people for four and half decades. Vijaysai Reddy appealed to the people to elect him as MP and Vikram Reddy as an MLA.

He highlighted the welfare schemes being implemented and the creation of a volunteer system to reach out to people doing away with the mediators.



# 5,000 litres of jaggery wash destroyed

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The police conducted a raid on the outskirts of Gopalapuram and destroyed a huge quantity of jaggery wash, meant for brewing illicit liquor, and seized 120 litres of illicit liquor.

Police here on Tuesday said that on a tip-off that illicit liquor

was being distilled at the village, police teams led by Devarapalli CI and Gopalapuram SI conducted a raid. They destroyed 5000 litres of jaggery, meant to brew illicit liquor. The police seized 120 litres of illicit liquor and three gas cylinders. The police arrested two persons in this connection.



# Congress Minister collecting 'B' tax: Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJLP leader Aleti Maheshwar Reddy alleged that one of the Ministers in Revanth Reddy's Cabinet is engaged in collecting money indiscriminately in the name of 'B' tax like 'R' tax.

Maheshwar said that it is not one or two per cent but the Minister has been collecting 8 to 9 per cent as 'B' tax from contractors. He said the Minister is collecting money thinking that they don't know how long the government will last.

Addressing the media on Tuesday at the BJP state office, Maheshwar said 'B' does not mean Bhatti. He said that contractors are coming to him and telling him their woes in clearing pending bills.

He said that the R&B Minister is not the Chief Minister to give him a Minister post and that he continued in the Congress for 10 years although it was not in power. He said that he quit the party due to unavoidable conditions.

He alleged that the BRS government had engineered a Rs 2 lakh crore scam using the Dharani Portal and that the then Revenue Minister KCR and IT Minister KTR were

partners in the scam. He asked the Revanth Reddy government to explain why it is not ordering a judicial probe into the scam.

Maheshwar said that there were 24 lakh acres of assigned land, however, now it is just 6 lakh acres. What happened to 18 lakh acres of assigned land? Maheshwar asked. Why is Revanth not ordering a probe into it? he asked.

He also asked what happened to 65,000 acres of temple lands in the state and added that Chevella Congress LS candidate G. Ranjith Reddy grabbed temple lands.

Maheshwar said KCR went after making the state debt-riddled. However, the Revanth government is also contracting Rs 1000 crore debt every week. He said the Revanth government had contracted Rs 13,000 crore debts in 13 weeks.

He said the Revanth Reddy government was formed on false foundations and that he would continue in the BJP till his last breath.

"My culture is not changing parties. I had quit the Congress due to the fight between the 'Cycle Congress' and the 'Original Congress,'" Maheshwar said.

## First flight takes off to Ayodhya from Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) has announced the commencement of new flight services from Hyderabad to Ayodhya starting from April 2, in partnership with Spicejet.

Flight SG611 which departed from Hyderabad at 10:45 am on Tuesday, reaching Ayodhya at 12:45 pm, while the return flight SG616 departed from Ayodhya at 1:25 pm, and arrived in Hyderabad at 3:25 pm, marking its first service. This non-stop service will operate every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

CEO of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited, Pradeep Panicker, said, "We are excited to introduce the new service as part of our commitment to offering a diverse range of travel choices for our passengers. This new route will open the door for travellers to new cultural and pilgrimage destinations in the city of Ayodhya. Our continuous efforts to serve our passengers better focused on increasing connectivity to multiple destinations from the city."



# Awards for 3 staffers of BZA railway division

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Narendra A Patil, DRM, Vijayawada Division, South Central Railway, presented General Manager's Man of the Month Safety Awards to three employees of the Division on Monday, for showing alertness in the duty and taking timely action to prevent unsafe conditions. SS Subrahmanyam, KVV Narayana, and V Veeralingeswara Rao are the award winners.

Divisional Railway Manager Narendra A Patil presented the awards during the virtual safety meeting held here. Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR, along with Principal Heads of Departments from Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad, and Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) of all the six Divisions viz., Vijayawada, Guntakal, Guntur, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, and Nanded attended the meeting



through video-conferencing.

The General Manager reviewed the safety preparedness of the zone. He instructed the officials to conduct regular safety drives, and night inspections in the sections to notice the deficiencies in the system and to ensure alertness and avoid untoward incidents. Narendra A Patil congratulated the staff for their alertness

and prompt action on duty.

SS Subrahmanyam, Tech-I/Mech/Rajahmundry of Mechanical Department, while conducting a rolling examination for the Train No.13351 Dhanbad-Alappuzha Express on Rd-01 of Rajahmundry, noticed an unusual sound. On further checking, he suspected hot axle and observed the temperatures of axle boxes of B3



Coach was 580 and the difference of axle boxes temperature was 190. Escort was arranged from Rajahmundry to Vijayawada for monitoring the axle box temperatures. After thorough monitoring of temperatures of hot axle boxes, the coach was detached at Vijayawada.

KVV Narayana, Loco Pilot, Goods, Kakinada Port of

Operating Department, while passing between the Bayyavaram and Narasingapalli section, noticed smoke coming from the under-truck of seventh wagon from the engine. LP immediately stopped the train on the main line and went to check the wagon. On checking, he noticed smoke coming from the wheel set/axle box and it was red hot. The train was pulled up to Narasingapalli Station to main line with cautious speed where the defective wagon was cut and was placed in siding.

V Veeralingeswara Rao, Trolley Man of Engineering Department, between Km 627/22-24 on Down Line noticed Dankuni Goods passing through signals with smoke coming from wagon wheels. Immediately, he asked the Station Master to stop the train at Gollaprolu and check the formation.



INDIA CORNER

It should be tit-for-tat: Himanta on China renaming Arunachal areas

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday urged the Indian government to adopt a "tit-for-tat" approach in response to China's efforts to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh. Sarma suggested that India should counter by assigning its own names for 60 "Tibetan areas of China." "My request to government of India is that we should give 60 geographical names to Tibetan areas of China," Sarma told reporters here. While maintaining that "it should be always tit-for-tat", the CM added, "But I don't want to comment as it is a policy decision of the government of India. But if they have named 30, we should name 60." China had released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh amid Beijing's stepped-up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state. The Ministry of External Affairs has firmly rejected the attempts by China to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh.



Election Commission of India orders Odisha govt to transfer 2 DMs, 5 SPs

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday ordered the Odisha government to transfer eight officers including two district magistrates, five superintendents of police and an IGP. ECI secretary Rakesh Kumar in a letter to Odisha Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena directed him to transfer the officers to non-election related work. "I am directed to state that the Commission has decided that the eight officers be transferred out to a non-election related post with immediate effect," read the letter. The EC has ordered for transfer of Cuttack District Magistrate (DM) and District Election Officer (DEO) Vineet Bhardwaj, Jagatsinghpur DM & DEO Parul Patawari, Angul SP Sudhansu Sekhar Mishra, Berhampur SP Saravana Vivek M, Khurda SP Jugal Kishore Banoth, Rourkela SP Mitrabhanu Mahapatra, Sundergarh SP Kanwar Vishal Singh and IGP central Ashish Kumar Singh.



Saran to become my 'karmbhoomi': Lalu's daughter Rohini at campaign

RJD chief Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya on Tuesday began her campaign for the Lok Sabha polls in Bihar and asserted that Saran constituency from where she is contesting on a party ticket would soon become her "karmbhoomi". Acharya, who donated a kidney to her father, arrived at Pahliza Ghat in Sonpur and was greeted by a large number of party supporters. "I am overwhelmed with love and blessings I am receiving from the people of Saran ... the way electors here are treating me is unbelievable. It's like a daughter has come to her home. I feel blessed.... This (Saran) has been the 'karmbhoomi' of my father and now it is going to be mine," she said. Saran will go to polls in the fifth phase on May 20. Before leaving for Saran, Singapore-based Acharya, earlier in the day, told reporters in Patna, "I took blessings of Baba Harihanath yesterday. Now, I am going to meet my electors in Saran."



Disengagement, de-escalation way forward: Rajnath on Ladakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the India-China military face-off continuing in eastern Ladakh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the Indian troops are standing "firm" and the ongoing talks between the two sides for a peaceful resolution of the matter will continue as disengagement and de-escalation is the way forward.

In an address to the top commanders of the Army, Singh reaffirmed the faith of the billion-plus citizens in the force as one of the "most-trusted and inspiring" organisations in the country.

The Army commanders deliberated extensively on national security challenges along the borders with China and Pakistan and ways to boost the force's overall combat capability.

The defence minister, complimenting the Army leadership for successfully taking ahead the country's "defence and security" vision to new



heights, said the role of the force is very important in nation building.

In his remarks, Singh also lauded the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), saying its efforts have led to the "quantum improvement" in road communication along the western and northern frontiers.

On the current situation along the northern borders, Singh expressed full confidence that while the troops are standing firm, the ongoing talks for peaceful resolution will continue and disengage-

ment and de-escalation is the way forward, the defence minister said in a statement.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a standoff in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh for nearly four years even as the two sides have completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

Referring to the situation along the borders with Pakistan, Singh complimented the Army's response to cross-border terrorism, adding that the proxy war by the "adver-

sary" continues.

The defence minister complimented the "excellent synergy" between the Central Armed Police Forces, local police and Army in tackling the menace of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The synergised operations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are contributing to increased stability in the region and the same should continue," he said.

Singh lauded the forces for the high standard of operational preparedness and capabilities, which he said he has always experienced first hand during his visits to forward areas.

Delving into the complex world situation, Singh said it affects everyone globally.

"Unconventional and asymmetric warfare, including hybrid war, will be part of the future conventional wars. Cyber, information, communication, trade and finance have all become an inseparable part of future conflicts," he added.

Gambling syndicate busted in Delhi, 22 held

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested 22 people and busted a gambling syndicate running in southwest Delhi's Raghu Nagar area. A team was formed and a raid was conducted," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena said.

Police said they have arrested 22 people, including the kingpin, Anoop Singh, who is previously involved in 18 cases including murder, rape, kidnapping, attempt to murder, quarrel, gambling and others.

"We have recovered 4.45 lakh stake money from the possession of the accused. Further investigation into the matter has been started," said the DCP.

EAM optimistic about permanent UNSC seat for India

PNS ■ RAJKOT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday expressed optimism about India's eventual permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), saying it is inevitable but emphasised the need for heightened efforts in this regard. Addressing intellectuals in Gujarat's Rajkot city, the External Affairs Minister stressed that diligent work is essential to secure this coveted position.

Acknowledging the current dominance of five nations - China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US - as the UN's original permanent members, the minister, however, said the international momentum was now favouring India's bid for a permanent seat.

The United Nations was formed around 80 years ago, and these five nations decided among themselves to become permanent members of its security council, Jaishankar said.



He highlighted the historical context of the UNSC's formation, where five nations secured permanent membership, underscoring the evolving global landscape with around 193 countries today.

"But these five nations have kept their control, and it is strange that you have to ask them to give us their consent for a change. A few agree, a few others put forward their position with honesty, while others do something from behind," he said.

Jaishankar spoke about the collaborative proposals involv-

ing India, Japan, Germany, and Egypt which have been submitted to the UN, signalling progress.

"But now, there is a feeling across the world that this should change, and India should get a permanent seat. I see this feeling increasing every year," he said, adding "we will definitely get it. But nothing big is ever achieved without hard work...we will have to work hard, and this time we will have to work even harder".

He stressed the importance of mounting pressure, citing recent stalemates over conflicts like the Ukraine war and Gaza.

Jaishankar linked the UN's perceived weakening to increased opportunities for India's bid for permanent membership saying, "...there is a feeling in the world that the UN has weakened."

"There was a deadlock in the UN on the Ukraine war and no consensus was reached in the UN regarding Gaza. I think as this feeling increases, our chances of getting a permanent seat will increase," he added.

CPI(M) won't contest polls in J-K to consolidate votes

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Senior CPI(M) leader in Jammu and Kashmir M Y Tarigami on Tuesday accused the BJP of resorting to dictatorship and said his party would not contest in the Lok Sabha seats in the Union territory to consolidate votes and get rid of "tyrants".

He sought to downplay the reported bickering within the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) constituents over seat sharing for the Lok Sabha polls, saying it is not an electoral alliance and every constituent has their own political interests.

"We will not contest (the Lok Sabha polls in Jammu and Kashmir) directly. Our political approach in today's times would be to defeat the BJP, to stop them from forming government. They have already done a lot of damage to Jammu and Kashmir," Tarigami told PTI-Video in an exclusive interview here.

"We also appeal to other



political parties to ensure that votes do not get divided. We hope we get rid of the tyrants soon," he said.

Asked about reports suggesting the coming together of the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Progressive Azad Party, Altaf Bukhari's Apni Party and Peoples Conference headed by Sajjad Lone, Tarigami questioned the move and said, "We should have been loyal towards our people."

"They are stitching together a grand alliance. Against whom? I would have wel-

comed it had this alliance aimed at raising the genuine concerns of the people such as our statehood, and our land rights. What the present government did with us does not have a precedence in the history of Kashmir.

"Keeping differences aside, we should have been loyal towards our people at least. It should have been a fight for the rights of people," the CPI(M) leader said.

He said it was unfortunate that Jammu and Kashmir has always been in the crossfire and there has been restlessness among its people.

"Pakistan has been making its own claims and our country, India, has been making its own claims. There has been a restlessness among people. The successive governments have also not been loyal towards the people of Kashmir.

"Today's government left no stone unturned to demolish the very foundation of the pact between the Centre and the people.

'Youth setting up start-ups instead of migrating from UP'

PNS ■ PILIBHIT (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the youth of the country and the state are setting up their own start-ups and are no longer resorting to exodus.

Adityanath said this at the intellectuals' meeting here while seeking votes for the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate Jitin Prasada, a statement said.

The BJP this time has fielded UP PWD Minister Prasada instead of giving ticket to the sitting Lok Sabha MP Varun Gandhi.

"The daughters are not feeling unsafe. Rather by becoming fighter pilots, they are roaring like lionesses in the defence of India.

"At the same time, (every) resident of India is proudly gaining respect in the world under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Adityanath said.

"Today our borders are completely secure. Terrorism in Kashmir, extremism in the northeastern states and Naxalism have completely ended," he said.

There is a better security environment in the country. Criminals and mafia have been defeated in the state while the daughters and the businessmen are feeling safe. The state has become riot-free, Adityanath said.

"There is a complete control on curfew in the state. Kanwar Yatra is going on with much



fanfare," the chief minister said, and added that India is working by better coordination between both its heritage and development.

He also listed various welfare works accomplished in Pilibhit.

By accepting all the proposals of medical college, road and bridge in Pilibhit, the government has worked to connect it with the new stream of devel-

SC closes proceedings on Mukhtar Ansari's appeal against conviction in case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of Mukhtar Ansari's death, the Supreme Court on Tuesday closed its proceedings on a plea filed by the jailed gangster-turned-politician against an order of the Allahabad High Court sentencing him to five-year jail term in a 24-year-old case.

"The petitioner is no more. The proceedings shall be abated," said the bench comprising justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal after taking note of the statement that Ansari passed away.

On March 28, Ansari died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

Last year on October 13, the



top court had sought the response of the Uttar Pradesh government on Ansari's appeal against the high court order.

Prior to this, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on September 23 had overturned Ansari's acquittal and sentenced him to a five-year jail term in a case related

to the Gangster Act.

The high court had also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on Ansari as it overturned the acquittal order by a special MP-MLA court in 2020.

The FIR was lodged with Lucknow's Hazratganj police in 1999 under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act.

A special court had acquitted Ansari in 2020. The state filed an appeal against acquittal in 2021.

The special court had acquitted Ansari, a five-time MLA from Mau Sadar constituency, stating that the "prosecution could not prove the offence against him beyond reasonable doubt".

AAP MLAs meet Sunita Kejriwal, say Kejriwal need not step down

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP MLAs on Tuesday met Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal and asserted that the Delhi chief minister should continue to run the government from jail and not step down.

Kejriwal is in judicial custody till April 15 after his arrest last month by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a money-laundering case linked to his government's now-scrapped excise policy.

During the meeting on

Tuesday, the AAP MLAs told Sunita Kejriwal that two crore people of Delhi stand with the chief minister and he should not resign at any cost, party leaders said.

Of the AAP's 62 MLAs in Delhi, 55 were present during the meeting.

Four MLAs are out of station while three -- Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain -- are in jail, the AAP leaders said.

The BJP has demanded that Kejriwal should resign as chief minister following his arrest in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam.



Jharkhand NDA vows to win all 14 Lok Sabha seats

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand NDA on Tuesday discussed joint strategy for the Lok Sabha election so that the alliance could win all the 14 seats in the state.

State BJP president Babulal Marandi, state in-charge Laxmikant Bajpai, AJSU party chief Sudesh Mahato, party nominees for Lok Sabha seats and other senior leaders were also present in the meeting.

Speaking to media persons, Marandi said that this was NDA's first state level meeting to discuss strategies for the Lok Sabha polls in Jharkhand.

"We will also hold such meetings at Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and district level to set up better coordination with partners so that we can win all the seats here," Marandi said.

The state BJP president said, "In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the NDA won 12 Lok Sabha seats out of 14. This time, we have vowed to win all 14 seats in the state in a bid to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of



Vikshit Bharat. The PM has a roadmap ready for up to 2047. He even has the roadmap ready for the next 100 days after winning the elections.

Bajpai said, "This election is to make India Vikshit (developed), Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) and corruption and people of the country are ready for 'Abki Baar, 400 paar'. We are working together to win all 14 seats from Jharkhand and we will do it at any cost."

The AJSU party chief Sudesh Mahto said that they discussed joint strategies for the Lok Sabha elections so that NDA could win all 14 seats in Jharkhand.

"The promises that the NDA in previous elections all have been either fulfilled or roadmap is ready for them at least," he said.

Mahto said that the AJSU party would lead the burning issues from the state. "We believe that Prime Minister Modi will take out solution of the issues that need to be resolved from the national level," he said.

SC terms Baba Ramdev's apology lip service

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday tore into Patanjali Ayurved's defence for putting out misleading advertisements, rejecting the apology from yoga guru Ramdev and the firm's managing director Acharya Balkrishna as "lip service" and saying they had broken "every barrier".

The bench, headed by Justice Hima Kohli, also questioned the Centre's alleged inaction over Patanjali's tall claims about the efficacy of its products and denigrating allopathy

during the Covid peak and asked why the government chose to keep its "eyes shut".

The bench posted the matter for hearing on April 10 and said both Ramdev and Balkrishna have to appear again.

"You have to abide by undertaking given to court and you have broken every barrier," the bench said.

Sternly reprimanding Ramdev and his number two Balkrishna, Justice Kohli said the court was taking their apology with a "sack full of salt". The bench also com-



prised Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah.

The bench also warned Patanjali, Ramdev and

Balkrishna that it would take note of "perjury" as certain documents, which were said to be attached with other papers, were created later on.

"This is a clear case of perjury. We are not closing the doors on you but we are telling all that we have noted," the bench said.

The apex court, which granted Ramdev and Balkrishna a last one week opportunity to file affidavits, took strong note of their "absolute defiance" in not adhering to the undertaking given before it in the case filed by the Indian Medical

Association (IMA).

Patanjali Ayurved Ltd assured the top court on November 21 last year that it will not violate any law, especially those relating to advertising or branding of products manufactured and marketed by it. It also assured the bench that "no casual statements claiming medicinal efficacy or against any system of medicine will be released to the media in any form".

The top court had said Patanjali Ayurved Ltd is "bound down to such assurance".



## Tumultuous times

Imran Khan gets relief in Toshakhana corruption case; no reprieve for Pakistani politics



In what can be termed as a minor victory for cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, he has got some relief from the court in the ongoing corruption case against him. In a dramatic turn of events, the former Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, and his wife, Bushra Bibi, have had their 14-year jail sentence suspended by the court. Imran Khan received a reprieve as the High Court of Islamabad suspended the sentence imposed on him and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in the Toshakhana corruption case. Initially sentenced on January 31 by an accountability court, the couple challenged the verdict in the Islamabad High Court. The Islamabad High Court has granted temporary relief to the couple by suspending their sentences and providing them bail. The decision, made by the Islamabad High Court, has stirred considerable controversy and reignited discussions about the state of governance and accountability in Pakistan. The case revolved around allegations that Imran Khan and his wife had received luxury gifts from foreign dignitaries during his tenure as Pakistan's Prime Minister and did not deposit them in the state treasury. The decision to suspend the jail term has sparked intense debate across Pakistan. Supporters of Imran Khan view it as a victory for justice, citing a lack of substantial evidence and alleging political vendetta by the ruling party. On the other hand, critics argue that the move undermines the credibility of Pakistan's anti-corruption efforts and raises questions about the role of the judiciary. This development comes at a crucial juncture for Pakistan, with the country grappling with a myriad of economic, social, and political challenges. The new regime that came to power is still gasping for legitimacy. The popular perception is that the election was a farce and Imran remains popular though behind bars. He was ousted from office two years back when he fell out of favour with the Pakistan army, which holds significant influence as the kingmaker in the country. Imran campaigned for his party in the general elections but was put behind bars just before the elections and remained there throughout the election while Pakistan Muslim League (N) won the elections and Shehbaz Sharif was elected as the prime minister of the country. The popular perception is that it is the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf of Imran Khan has a large support base and Imran remains a popular leader. With the court verdict now going in his favour Imran may take on the ruling party more aggressively. While Imran Khan's supporters see it as a vindication of his leadership and a blow to his political adversaries, PML(N) is likely to intensify its efforts to dig deeper into Imran's follies. Moreover, the role of the military in Pakistani politics continues to be a subject of speculation and concern. Amidst these challenges, Pakistan faces an uncertain future. A lot needs to be done to ensure good governance and accountability in the country. As Pakistan navigates through these turbulent times, the need for strong and principled leadership has never been more pressing.

### PICTALK



A herd of wild Asiatic elephants seen on the outskirts of Guwahati

## Political seesaw in Nepal

As Nepal navigates through these uncertain times, the future of its leadership and the direction of its governance hang in a delicate balance

Many Nepalese see second time Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane as a future Prime Minister. With Bell as its election symbol it became the fourth largest party on debut in politics. Bereft of ideological orientation and any macro vision, it has focused on development and eradication of corruption. Ironically, Lamichhane is himself being investigated for fraud a second time—the first time he had to step down due to dual passport and citizenship issues. Nepali Congress had blocked Parliamentary proceedings setting a deadline of 31 March for an impartial parliamentary probe and demanding his resignation for alleged fraud in a cooperative fund. He was questioned by an inhouse panel of lawmakers where he denied the charge. Both Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and former PM KP Oli have ruled out the probe and his resignation. Lamichhane captured the people's imagination as a Galaxy 4K TV anchor who championed the crusade over corruption in his signature show, Seedha Kura Janata Ko Sang (Straight Talk with People). He is youthful, charismatic and a popular leader who is going places. A Janata Samajwadi Party politburo member, whose party is in the five-party coalition Government told me yesterday in Pokhara, : "Lamichhane ko dui ta haath ma laddu chha (Lamichhane has sweets in both hands), implying he's the new kingmaker sought by the opposition NC to break the coalition and return to power. The NC is believed to have offered him the premiership before Prachanda and Oli had secured him. Will Lamichhane take a break till investigations - if ordered - are completed? Or will the case lead to another political crisis? But the assault on corruption is absolute. The former Maoist leader and Prachanda confidante KB Mahara was rearrested and released on bail in the 61 kg gold scam in which his son Rahul is already in jail. Many distinguished leaders are in and out of jail. There is a



money and name trail with Chinese deeply embedded. The Bhutan refugee scam had powerful politicians including former NC defence minister, Balkrishna Khand, recently released on bail and Maoist Top Bahadur Raymajih still in custody. Many others including a "prominent lady" are linked to it. Min Bahadur Gurung, the owner of the biggest departmental store chain, Bhat Bhateni, was in jail recently. And last month, Nepal's only billionaire and NC lawmaker, Binod Chaudhary, was investigated over Bansari land scam while his brother Arun was briefly jailed. The names of two former PMs have been linked to Lalita Niwas land scam. Another former PM's name is whispered about a tea estate in Jhapa. Both Prachanda and Lamichhane are attacking corruption with utmost vigour. China was last month delighted with the Left alliance returning to power which Communist leader Oli insisted was not Beijing's handiwork but "ours" - "we brought about the change". Despite the perceived pro-China Government, its leaders are moving very slowly on BRI and the utilisation of Rs 60 bn pledged by President Xi Jinping during his maiden visit in 2019. Last week Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shreshtha was on a nine-day visit to Beijing (UMI's Bishnu Poudyel was also in China)



THE FORMER MAOIST LEADER AND PRACHANDA CONFIDANT KB MAHARA WAS REARRESTED AND RELEASED ON BAIL IN THE 61 KG GOLD SCAM IN WHICH HIS SON RAHUL IS ALREADY IN JAIL

and met his counter part Wang Yi. They reaffirmed to "very soon sign the BRI implementation plan" which is according to Chinese procedure, is needed for executing projects. When NC's former Foreign Minister Prakash Mahat signed the BRI Framework Agreement in 2017, Nepal had worked on 35 projects which were toned down to nine. The hesitation on part of both China and Nepal and the consequential delay is due to defining the funding modality. Kathmandu wants aid and grants or , concessional, not commercial, loans from China. Nepal has joined only China's Global Development Initiative, not Global Security or Global Civilisation Initiatives. After an agonising four years, Kathmandu subscribed to US's Millennium Challenge Corporation - Nepal Compact in 2022. BRI is intended to balance MCC. Nepali strategists have modified Prithvi Narayan Shah's dictum — Nepal is a yam between two stones (India and China) to three stones (India, China and US). Till about 2010, US Embassy in Delhi would say: "It will take the lead on Nepal from India." Over time, that has changed. I've been living in Lame Ahal, a predominantly Gurung village below the Kathmandu-Pokhara Highway which China, its original builder, is four-laning for the last two years throwing up dust, slush and anger.

Chinese engineers from Wayuan Highway and Bridge Construction Company with Nepalese labour are working at snail's pace. Pokhara-ites were telling me it hadn't rained for two years. Many village taps had dried up. Then suddenly last week Pokhara valley was deluged in rain, causing havoc for road and air traffic from Pokhara. It is an unseasonable phenomenon and climate-change related. India is still the favourite whipping boy. When I visited Bhat Bhateni and observed in audible voice: everything is Chinese" the lady at the counter responded: "India does not give us anything". On my daily trek across Seti river, I sometimes hear the word 'thug' about India. All of this is compulsive and imagined anti-India sentiment which will not go away anytime soon. Prachanda is already talking about switching coalitions again. This tactic keeps coalition partners with him. NC is trying to wean away JSP and Unified Socialists led by Upendra Yadav and Madhav Nepal who was once called Madhav India to revive Democratic alliance keeping the current coalition on a short fuse and Nepal unstable. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WATER SCARCITY

Madam — Acute water shortage is a fact of life in most Indian cities. The water crisis in Bengaluru adds to the plethora of apocalyptic tales of water scarcity. In Bengaluru, the cost of tanker services surged, impacting upscale and residential areas alike. The issue of water scarcity and the lack of access to clean water in many parts of the world. water is frequently regarded as a commodity rather than an essential human right. The absence of water could be perilous in alternative scenarios like urban fires due to which firefighters are struggling to encounter increased challenges in reaching a blaze in our densely populated country. Declaring water as a human right can be seen as problematic because it doesn't address the underlying issue of access and distribution. While it's crucial for those who lack it, simply declaring it a right without addressing systematic issues could be seen as a superficial solution. In 2023, the sale of bottled water in India was worth about 403 billion rupees. The growth slowed down mainly because fewer people in rural areas were buying bottled water. It takes about five times more water to make a plastic bottle than the amount of water it can hold inside.

Palak Rohra | Ujjain

### GET RID OF WASTE

Madam — The common practice for household refuse disposal in rural areas is to dump solid waste openly in backyard gardens or open spaces. Such indiscriminate disposal is an environmental hazard and can threaten human health and safety. Solid waste that is improperly disposed of can result in several problems. It can create a breeding ground for pathogenic microorganisms and vectors of disease and cause a public nuisance due to its unsightliness and bad smell. It can cause contamination of surrounding soil, groundwater and surface water, and it can also create fire hazards, and physical hazards and have poisoning effects (from pesticides and insecticides).

## Empowering women in science



Apropos news article "Need more women representation in science" published on April 02, this is my response. The underrepresentation of women in STEM fields is a multifaceted challenge, stemming from societal biases and a lack of support within professional circles. Recognising this disparity, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in India has launched the 'Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN)' scheme, a commendable effort to empower women across diverse backgrounds in scientific pursuits. WISE-KIRAN's comprehensive approach addresses various hurdles faced by women in STEM, from societal stereotypes to limited resources and mentorship opportunities. By offering scholarships, mentorship programmes, and capacity-building workshops, this initiative aims to foster a supportive environment for women in scientific careers. Moreover, schemes like WIDUSHI and CURIE further bolster women's participation by supporting retired and non-permanent women researchers and enhancing research infrastructure in women's institutions. Additionally, initiatives like Vigyan Jyoti play a crucial role in sparking young girls' interest in STEM disciplines, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse scientific community. These efforts signify a step forward in breaking down barriers and fostering a culture of inclusivity, ultimately driving innovation and progress in STEM fields.

Vishal Kumar | Delhi

However, these problems can be avoided by using appropriate management techniques. For all waste management issues, your role should be to engage community members and families in awareness of the solid waste problems in their area and try to change their behaviour. In doing so, it should be possible to have a clean, attractive and sustainable environment. Proper management of e-waste will help your community prevent communicable diseases and sustainably safeguard the environment.

Shanthi Ramanathan | Mumbai

### STRUGGLE OF INDIAN CRICKETERS

Madam — Apropos news article "New pace sensation Mayank who found inspiration in jet planes" published on April 01, this is my response. There is no dearth of Mayank Yadav's like stories in Indian cricket. Many past and young cricketers who have made it to the IPL or Indian team have seen their share of struggles in their lives and come from humble beginnings. MS Dhoni, Bumrah, T. Natarajan, Mukesh Kumar, Praveen Kumar—the list is endless.

Since we have a fascination for fast bowling hence any bowler who bowls at faster than 150 kmph delivery gets into the limelight. Mayank, who did not have proper cricketing shoes 7 years ago and could not even get proper meals and his father's small commodity business collapsed during Covid. But the Sonnet club in Delhi took great care of him and nurtured him. There is no doubt that by clocking 156 kmph delivery he has become the talk of the town but he should not forget that before him there was Umran Malik who bowled at 157 kmph delivery and even played for India too, but then his inconsistency did him in. So Mayank Yadav would do well to sharpen his other aspects of the game and try to be consistent if he wants to play for India. Because only bowling fast will not fetch him the desired results. He has to develop in swing, outswing, slower, cutter all kinds of variations.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Role of parents in a child's formative years

The first five years of a child's life are termed 'golden period,' a pivotal phase where parents play a monumental role in shaping its future

The first five years of a child's life are a unique opportunity for parents to nurture and guide their child's development so that they can realise their full potential and become the best version of themselves. This period is often referred to as the "golden period," a critical and transformative phase that lays the foundation for all their future development, learning, and well-being. Let's understand why. Unraveling Synaptic Pruning Every baby is born with about 100 billion brain cells which are largely not connected with each other. As the baby comes into the world and experiences the world through sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feel, these brain cells start firing and connecting with each other at an astounding rate to form "synapses". But, starting around the age of 2, the brain wants to be efficient and it starts pruning off brain connections (synapses) that it thinks are not strong or important enough by a process called synaptic pruning. It's almost as if the child starts losing their talents even before they have a chance to



fully develop them. **Pivotal Role Of Parents in Early Childhood** For parents, it's crucial to understand the significance of synaptic pruning in the early years of a child's brain development, and it highlights the importance of providing rich, engaging learning experiences for their baby right from birth. By offering diverse and holistic learning experiences - that includes physical play, creative stimulation - parents can help ensure that the most beneficial synapses are strengthened in their child's brain, setting the foundation for a lifetime of talents and skill development. **Sooner, the Better** During the first five years the brain is exceptionally malleable, and experiences leave a lasting impact on cognitive, emotional, and social development. Maximising positive experiences and interactions during this critical phase

sets the foundation for a child's future success in various aspects of life. The younger the baby, the faster they learn, and wider the window for them to explore their fullest potential. **Practical Tips for Parents:** **1.Quality Interactions:** Your young baby or toddler is capable of amazing feats, much beyond your imaginations! Treat them not as a helpless being, but as a fearless and curious learner! **2.Deliberate Stimulations:** Create deliberate opportunities to provide your baby or child with the right stimulations to grow and develop their physical, intellectual, social, cognitive, creative, logical, and problem solving skills through play. **3.Consistent Activity:** Get into an easy-to-follow routine, where you are not stressing out daily about researching and reading on what to do with your child, but can follow a done-for-you program that tells you what activities to do with your child on a daily basis for their all-round development. **4.Meaningful Playtime:** Try and give many opportunities to your child to play with kids

of their own age to help develop compassion, confidence, social skills and even a higher IQ. It is as important for them to interact with other kids as it is for them to interact with adults, and we can't neglect one over the other! **5.No Screen time:** Yes, it's easy to feed your child while watching a video on mobile! But, screen time may lead to long term impact on your child's brain development, and may also lead to speech delays, so avoid screen time as much as you can! Bill Gates has said that the first five years of a child essentially shape how the next 80 years turn out to be. Parents thus have a huge responsibility towards their children to understand the significance of synaptic pruning and recognise this golden window of opportunity. Through love, engagement, and thoughtful nurturing, parents can contribute to the flourishing of strong neural connections, laying the groundwork for a bright and promising future. (The writer is Co-founder, Raising Superstars; views are personal)



RAGHAV HIMATSINGKA



FIRST COLUMN

TIME TO ROOT OUT CORRUPTION

Create an environment that ensures fairness, justice and integrity in governance



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

In recent months there has been one topic that has consistently grabbed headlines in Indian media and that is 'Corruption'. Huge scams, central agencies probes, public protests and anti-corruption agitations have kept the topic alive in all sections of media, Government quarters and in public and private discussions. There has been enormous pressure on the Government by civil rights activists to make a strong anti-corruption Law and implement it aggressively across the country. However, in this whole struggle, we tend to forget the fact that the issue of corruption cannot be dealt with by activism and political awareness alone. Because laws and regulations cannot deter humans from indulging in follies of character and moral values. It is like pruning or cutting the stems and branches that will sprout again and proliferate in more directions. Such laws can surely deter people in high public offices from indulging in blatant acts of bribery, fraud and corruption but it cannot root out the evil itself.

So what is it that makes man corrupt? Is it power, status, wealth or lack of these that makes him so? The genesis of corruption is not to be found in any external circumstance, it actually lies in the psyche or the character of the human soul. It begins with a desire that tempts one to have more, acquire more and grab more money, assets, power and fame in order to gain happiness.



Once it starts, it creates a chain of vicious circles that keeps feeding itself with more desire and indulgence. This blind chase is then supported by the temporary feeling of being high and powerful which is followed by emptiness, insecurity and despair that further drives a person to commit such acts of corruption. All this begins from the fundamental ignorance about the true identity of self. Because we believe our self-worth depends on money, role, status, fame or authority we strive to create more identities based on that. With time these fabricated means of self-worth crumble and fall apart and in that fear, we put in all effort to strengthen and protect these false support systems because we feel we are nobody if all these identities are taken away.

From a spiritual perspective, it is said that vices like greed, ego, lust, anger and attachment are all born out of body consciousness i.e. the false identification of the self with one's physical image, role and assets. It is this ignorance and vices that begin to corrupt the soul and everything that comes from a corrupt soul will be tainted i.e. its thoughts, feelings, actions and habits. In that sense, one can say that today almost all human souls have become corrupt to some degree. Hence we must understand that corruption is a soul-deep malady and it can be remedied only by spiritual awareness and empowerment. We must awaken to our true selves and live by our original values of peace, purity, love and joy.

When we look inward and become aware of our true identity and innate qualities, we begin to express and experience them in our lives naturally. A person who empowers himself this way experiences contentment in life. Such a person will never fall into the trap of sensory attractions and desires as it's only when we are disconnected from our innate self we feel empty inside and get attracted to external things to feel happy or worthy. In the soul consciousness stage, we are naturally aware of our virtues and we also understand the law of cause and effect — the law of karma. Remember! A soul that is aware of its spiritual identity will never indulge in corrupt actions as it knows that they will lead to suffering and degradation. This realisation and experience will free us from corruption.


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

# Kangana Ranaut: From stardom to political aspirations

Kangana's evolution from a silver screen sensation to a grassroots politician unfolds against a backdrop of controversy and high expectations

In line with the 19th-century Victorian realist philosophy of 'Chance and destiny' championed by Thomas Hardy, Kangana Ranaut's journey from an obscure village in Himachal Pradesh to the glamorous world of Bollywood and now to the realm of politics seems like an unimaginable dream turned into reality. Her indomitable spirit and unwavering determination have propelled her from testing her luck in the film industry in Mumbai to considering a political career in her hilly home state.

Kangana's ascent from the nondescript village of Bhambala in Mandi district is a testament to her sheer willpower and commitment. Despite facing resistance from her family, who initially



K S TOMAR

opposed her choice to pursue a career in Bollywood, Kangana forged ahead, overcoming financial struggles and the harsh realities of life in Mumbai. Her journey was fraught with challenges, with her even lacking a proper place to live at times. However, her training under renowned theatre director Arvind Gaur proved to be a turning point, honing her skills and shaping her into the formidable talent she is today.

Transitioning from the glitz and glamour of Bollywood to the rough and tumble world of politics is no small feat. Kangana's decision to enter active politics, particularly by contesting the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, signifies a significant shift in her career trajectory. Despite her lack of experience in politics, her unwavering support for Hindutva ideology and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, coupled with her association with the RSS, has garnered her the BJP ticket, setting the stage for a potentially dramatic political showdown.

However, Kangana's foray into politics is not without its challenges. Unlike the scripted narratives of films, political reality demands a different set of skills and commitments. Voters in Mandi will expect her to prioritise their needs and concerns, necessitating her to establish a permanent presence in the constituency. Her inexperience in political manoeuvring will require her to work doubly hard to earn the trust and support of the electorate, notwithstanding



the backing of the BJP machinery and the charisma of Prime Minister Modi. The bypoll for the Mandi Lok Sabha seat held on October 30, 2021, saw the Congress candidate securing victory, largely due to the sympathy factor following the demise of Virbhadra Singh. However, with the political landscape shifting and the Congress party grappling with internal strife, Kangana's entry into the fray could potentially tilt the scales in her favour.

Kangana's nomination for the Mandi seat on her 37th birthday was seen as a fitting tribute to her unwavering commitment to her ideological beliefs and her determination to serve her birthplace. However, her propensity for controversy, evident in her social media posts and public statements, has garnered both acclaim and criticism. From her remarks on the farmer's agitation to her views on India's independence, Kangana has courted controversy, often finding herself embroiled in heated debates and facing backlash from various quarters.

As she embarks on this new chapter in her life, Kangana will need to shed her filmy persona and connect with the grassroots workers and voters on a more personal level. Building rapport with the electorate and demonstrating a genuine understanding of their needs will be crucial for her success as a politician.

In conclusion, Kangana Ranaut's journey from Bollywood to politics is a testament to her resilience and determination. While her transition may be fraught with challenges, her unwavering commitment to her beliefs and her desire to serve her people could pave the way for a successful political career. As she navigates this new terrain, Kangana will need to draw upon her strengths and adapt to the demands of the political arena, all while staying true to her roots and convictions.

*(The writer is a political analyst; views are personal)*





MONEY MATTERS

eFeed launches new platform to fuel innovation in sustainable dairy practices

Feed, a precision animal management and nutrition company, on Tuesday said it has launched a nationwide research platform to fuel innovation in sustainable dairy practices in India. India has the highest cattle population of over 300 million, a factor that significantly impacts sustainability and climate change, it said. "We are at a crossroads where the need for sustainable dairy practices is not just a choice but a necessity," eFeed Founder Kumar Ranjan said in a statement. "Our platform will serve as a launchpad for groundbreaking ideas in sustainable dairy, providing the necessary resources to transform these ideas into tangible products and facilitate real-world trials." The new platform by eFeed is designed to address critical challenges in the dairy industry, such as the increasing methane emissions from cattle, the detrimental use of urea in cattle feed affecting soil health, and the consequent depletion of groundwater levels. Recognising these challenges, eFeed's initiative is not just timely but crucial, the company added.



IHCL inks Taj branded resort at Kollam in Kerala

Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) on Tuesday announced the signing of a Brownfield resort with 205 rooms under the Taj brand at Kollam in Kerala. "With this signing, we further strengthen IHCL's longstanding presence in Kerala. As a historic seaport city renowned for its picturesque landscapes and cultural heritage, Kollam holds immense potential as a prominent tourist destination. It is also the southern gateway to the renowned backwaters of the state," IHCL Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Puneet Chhatwal said in a statement. With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 20 hotels across Taj, SeleQtions, Vivanta and Ginger brands in Kerala including six under development.



SpiceJet to soon receive Q400 plane as part of settlement with lessor

SpiceJet on Tuesday said it will soon be receiving a Q400 aircraft as part of the settlement reached with lessor Nordic Aviation Capital (NAC) last year. The airline has settled all past liabilities for the Q400 planes leased from NAC, and under the settlement agreement it already has five Q400 aircraft. "The ownership of these planes has been transferred to SpiceJet," the airline said and added that the sixth Q400 plane is en route to India from Germany. The aircraft is expected to arrive in Delhi soon. The carrier, which is taking various measures to deal with multiple headwinds, recently announced four major settlements with key aircraft lessors. According to the airline, these settlements will result in substantial savings of Rs 1,252 crore.



BHUSHAN STEEL BANK 'FRAUD' CASE

Delhi HC seeks response of accused in ED plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court sought the response of an accused on Tuesday on a plea moved by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging the bail granted to her by a trial court in a bank fraud-linked money-laundering case against the erstwhile Bhushan Steel Limited (BSL).

The amount involved in the alleged bank-loan fraud is more than Rs 46,000 crore.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued a notice to Archana Ajay Mittal, the sister of the company's former promoter, Neeraj Singal, on the ED's plea and asked her to file a reply within three weeks.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on July 11.

During the brief hearing, the ED's counsel submitted that the agency has challenged the



trial court's February 14 order granting bail to Archana Mittal and sought the cancellation of her bail.

The agency's counsel contended that there were several erroneous findings in the trial court's order.

The trial court granted bail to Archana Mittal on February 14 on a personal bond of Rs 10 lakh with one surety of the like amount and directed her not to

leave the country without the court's prior permission.

The federal agency has alleged that the company obtained loans from various banks and financial institutions and as on March 31, 2017, had an outstanding liability of Rs 46,646.73 crore.

According to the ED, Archana Mittal and her husband Ajay Mittal knowingly received proceeds of crime to

the extent of Rs 70 crore.

They also mortgaged a property of BSL and routed the funds to Singal's family, it has alleged.

Ajay Mittal and Singal are currently in judicial custody.

Singal was arrested by the ED after it raided him in June last year. A chargesheet under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was filed against him and others in August last year. Archana Mittal's bail plea had claimed that she was neither a director nor a promoter-member nor an employee of BSL.

The agency had opposed the application, claiming that she played a 'pivotal role' in the commission of money laundering. After the completion of the corporate insolvency resolution process, BSL was taken over by Tata Steel Limited in 2018.

Whizhack Tech inks pact with Total Solutions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Whizhack Technologies has inked a deal with Vietnamese company Total Solutions and Logistics to develop cutting-edge cyber security solutions, according to a release.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is aimed at providing cyber security training, deploying Whizhack's AI-based cybersecurity products, and providing managed SOC (Security Operations Center) services to various IT and manufacturing industries as well as smart cities of Vietnam. The partnership aims to drive the latest cyber security technologies in Vietnam to create a one-stop solution in developing a facilities centre for training and R&D for futuristic technologies.



MoRTH raises Rs 40,314 cr through asset monetisation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has raised Rs 40,314 crore through various modes of asset monetisation in 2023-24 against the target of Rs 28,968 crore, a senior government official said on Tuesday.

The ministry had raised Rs 15,968 crore through monetisation of 4 toll-operate-transfer (TOT) bundles, Rs 15,700 crore through Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) and Rs 8,646 crore through securitisation, the official told PTI.

"NHAI's total asset monetisation programme has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore till date," he added.

The ministry had raised Rs 32,855 crore in 2022-23 through various modes of asset monetisation.

Currently, MoRTH monetises its assets under three different modes -- toll-operate-

transfer (TOT) model, Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) and project-based financing to provide all categories of investors an opportunity to invest in assets pertaining to highways and

The official also said that during the financial year 2023-24, NHAI achieved construction of 6,644 km of National Highways against the target of 6,544 km.

"This is the highest ever National Highway construction achieved in a financial year by NHAI," he added.

At 6,644 km, construction increased in FY 2023-24 by around 20 per cent compared to 5,544 km in FY 2022-23 and around 53 per cent against 4,331 km in FY 2021-22.

According to the official, the capital expenditure by NHAI in 2023-24 for the development of national highway infrastructure reached an all-time high of Rs 2,07,000 crore.

The capital Expenditure increased by around 20 per cent compared to Rs 1,73,000 crore in FY22-23 and Rs 1,72,000 crore in FY21-22.



associated infrastructure. Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is an instrument on the pattern of mutual funds, designed to pool money from investors and invest in assets that will provide cash flows over a period of time.

BigBloc Construction subsidiary commences production at Kheda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading building material maker BigBloc Construction Ltd on Tuesday said its subsidiary SIAM Cement BigBloc Construction Technologies has commenced production at its new Rs 65-crore plant in Kheda district near Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Shares of BigBloc Construction jumped up to 6 per cent to hit a high of Rs 237.65 per share on NSE following the announcement.

The stock closed 4.71 per cent higher at Rs 230 on NSE.

BigBloc Construction Technologies is a 52:48 joint venture between BigBloc Construction and Thailand's SCG International India.

The JV has set up a 2.5 lakh cubic meter facility at Rs 65 crore to produce AAC blocks and ALC panels. The company will market its products under the 'ZMARTBUILD WALL by Nxtbloc' brand, BigBloc said in a filing.

ALPS International eyes one-fourth by 2026

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Homegrown hearing aid firm ALPS International on Tuesday said that it is eyeing about one-fourth of the market segment in the country by 2026, riding on the success of its wireless hearing aid with interface-free programming - The Nylo.

The ALPS International has recently introduced its hearing aid The Nylo which offers innovative client-oriented solu-



tions, a company statement said.

The current market size of the company is around 14 per cent or one lakh units out of

the total 7 lakh hearing aids sold in 2023. The company stated that it expects its domestic hearing aid market share to be up by 10 percentage points to around 25 per cent by 2026.

Its estimates show that the total hearing aid market is expected to be around 10 lakh annually by 2026.

"We are delighted to offer this breakthrough Make in India technology to the people with hearing impairment

across the world," said Anup Narang Director sales and marketing Alps International India Pvt Ltd in the statement.

This hearing device technology from India sets new standards in the hearing health care, allowing the clients to focus on what's important to them and be in the moment in real time, said Narang adding that the company is operating in the hearing aid research domain for over the last 35 years.

'One Vehicle, One FASTag' rule takes effect

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned National Highways Authority of India's 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' norm, which aims to discourage the use of single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle, has come into force from Monday, a senior official said.

NHAI had extended the



'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative compliance deadline to March-end, in view of the problems being faced by Paytm FASTag users.

Shree Cement inaugurates 3 MTPA plant in Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Shree Cement Ltd on Tuesday said it inaugurated its Rs 2500 crore new integrated plant at Dacheppalli village in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, six months ahead of schedule.

A press release from the cement maker said the new plant which has a production capacity of three million tons per annum will propel Shree Cement's manufacturing capacity to 56.4 MTPA, further solidifying its position as a key player in the cement industry.

India seeing higher valuations on investors' optimism

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Tuesday said the Indian capital markets are commanding higher valuations because of foreign investors' optimism and trust in the country.

She said at 22.2, the ratio of price to earning multiple in the Indian market is higher than the average of many indices around the world.

"Yes, some people say that we are an expensive market but still why is the investment coming? Because this is a reflection of the optimism and the trust and faith that the world has in India today that we are commanding the kind



of multiples in our markets," she said at a CII event on corporate governance here.

A few weeks ago, Buch had flagged concerns on high valuations in segments of small and midcap stocks, stating that it could be becoming into a bubble.

Buch said she meets foreign

investors regularly as part of her mandate and has seen an increased interest in India among them because of the velocity which the country's economy has got after years of high speed growth.

They are encouraged by data suggesting the strength of the economy as visible in the growth in GST collections month on month, advance tax payouts, power and energy consumption, she said.

The interest has led to the overall market capitalisation in equities reaching over Rs 378 lakh crore at the end of FY24 from Rs 74 lakh crore a decade ago, Buch said, adding that the market capitalisation is at the level of the overall GDP now.

Aditya Birla Fashion shares jump

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL) on Tuesday ended 12 per cent higher after the company announced the demerger of its fast fashion and retail business Madura Fashion & Lifestyle into a separate listed entity to unlock opportunities for value creation.

The stock climbed 16.86 per cent to Rs 247.40 during the day on the BSE. It later ended at Rs 236.15, up 11.55 per cent. Shares of the company rallied 11.97 per cent to settle at Rs 237 on the NSE.

During the day, it jumped 16.93 per cent to Rs 247.50.

Stock markets snap 3-day winning run; Sensex down 110 pts on profit-taking, foreign fund outflows

PNS ■ MUMBAI



Stock markets snapped the three-day gaining run on Tuesday with benchmark Sensex dropping by 110 points due to profit-taking in select private bank and auto shares amid weak trends from the US markets and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 110.64 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 73,903.91. During the day, the index dropped by 270.78 points or 0.36 per cent to a low of 73,743.77.

The broader NSE Nifty dipped 8.70 points or 0.04 per cent to 22,453.30.

Both Sensex and Nifty scaled

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.43 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai, Apr 2 (PTI) The rupee on Tuesday consolidated in a narrow range and settled 4 paise lower at 83.43 against the US dollar, weighed down by a strong dollar and elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said a weak trend in domestic equities also dented investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.37, then touched an intraday high of 83.34 and a low of 83.44 against the greenback.

DGCA seeks daily report from Vistara on flight cancellations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation watchdog DGCA has asked Vistara to submit a daily report on flight cancellations and delays, and the situation is also being monitored by the civil aviation ministry, amid non-availability of pilots causing flight disruptions for the airline. The airline cancelled over 50 flights on Tuesday, according to a source.

A day after the carrier announced reducing operations due to non-availability of crew and other operational



reasons, sources on Tuesday said some commanders as well as first officers of its A320 fleet are also reporting sick to protest pay revisions due to signing of new contracts.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday said in view of various

flight disruptions of Vistara, it has asked the airline to submit daily information and details on the flights that are being cancelled and delayed.

The officials of the DGCA are also monitoring the situation to ensure compliance with requirements for providing facilities to passengers in case of flight cancellations and delays. This is to minimise the inconvenience to passengers, the regulator said.

On Tuesday, the civil aviation ministry said it is monitoring the situation of Vistara flight cancellations.

Sanjay Nayar Assocham president

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sorin Investment Fund Chairman Sanjay Nayar has taken over as Assocham president for 2024-25, the industry body said on Tuesday.

He replaced SpiceJet Chairman and MD Ajay Singh, who completed his tenure as the chamber's president.



A single act of kindness transforms the lives of 13 students!

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Saayam, a noble initiative designed to connect people, founded by Dinakara Nagalla, a US-based tech entrepreneur, continues to broaden its impact by making help accessible, reflecting its true meaning. With the vision that education should be within everyone's reach, the Saayam Charitable Association joined hands with the 'Sri Sai



Chandana Educational,

Cultural, and Religious Charitable Trust (SSCECRCT) to provide educational opportunities for 13 deserving students, fulfilling their dreams and meeting their educational needs.

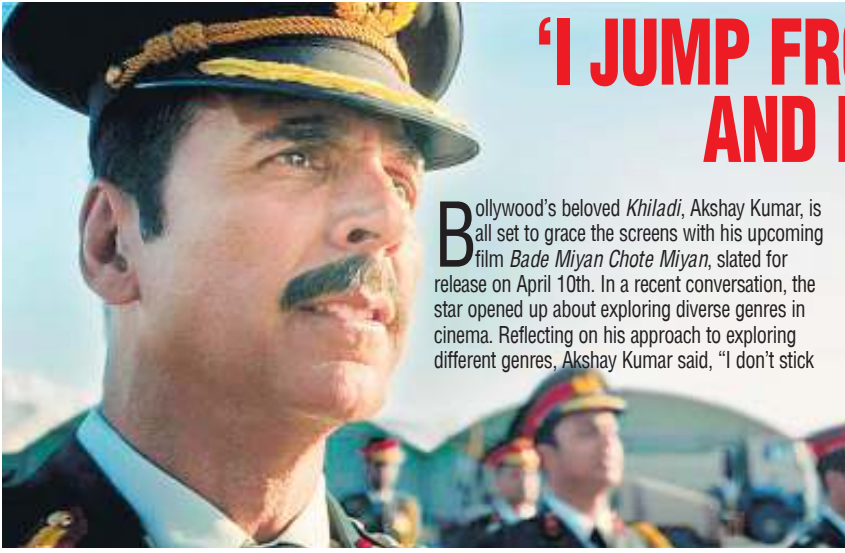
On the evening of March 13th, Wednesday, at a magnificent gathering at Ravindra Bharathi, the Saayam Organization sponsored scholarships for these students who are disabled and financially

challenged.

But what is the 'Saayam', and what's its story? How does its name define the organization's goal?

Raghuram Nagalla, Co-Founder of Saayam, spoke at the event, saying, "Saayam is not just an app; it's a family. Here, we share stories, sow seeds for change. It's a social network that raises awareness, uniting everyone towards a common goal."

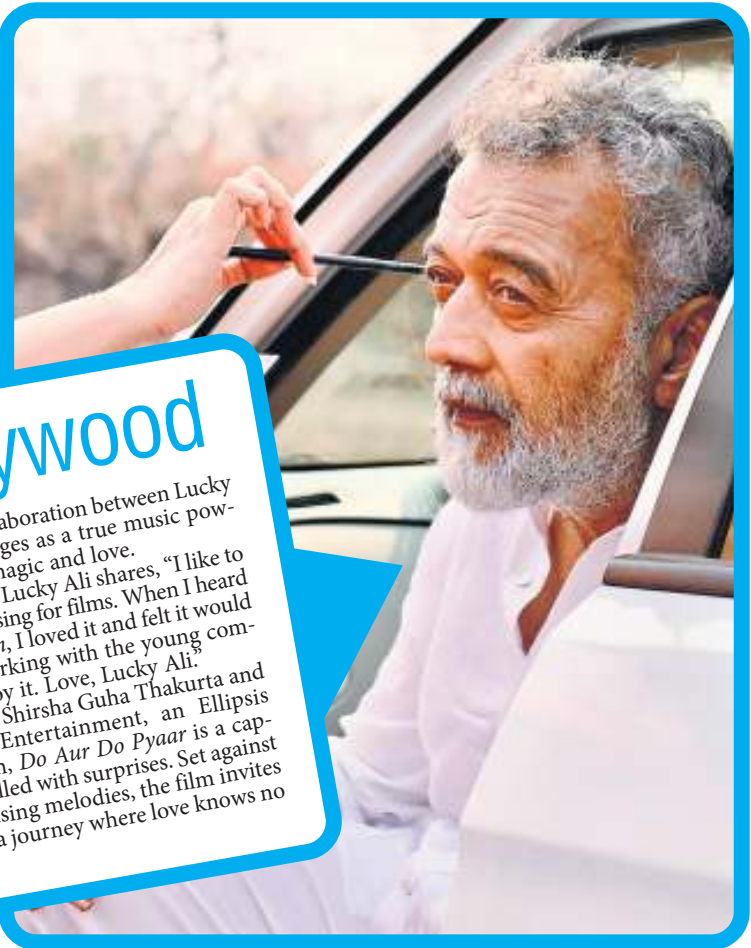




### 'I JUMP FROM ONE GENRE TO ANOTHER, AND NOBODY CAN STOP ME'

Bollywood's beloved *Khiladi*, Akshay Kumar, is all set to grace the screens with his upcoming film *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, slated for release on April 10th. In a recent conversation, the star opened up about exploring diverse genres in cinema. Reflecting on his approach to exploring different genres, Akshay Kumar said, "I don't stick to one kind of genre. I keep jumping from one genre to another. Whether successful or unsuccessful, from the beginning of my career, that is what I have done, and nobody can stop me. From social to comedy to action, I will always keep it different. I won't stick to just one, depending on what's working. I myself start getting bored and want to try something new. Whether it's *Toilet*, *Airlift* or *Rustom*, and many others, sometimes it's a success and sometimes it's not, but you just have to keep working hard."

With anticipation building for *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, Akshay Kumar expresses optimism, stating, "For *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that it will bring us all some good luck."



## Anees Bazmee opens up on rift over *No Entry 2*

The purported feud between filmmaker Boney Kapoor and actor Anil Kapoor has recently made headlines. It began when Boney, the producer of the *No Entry* series, disclosed that Anil was no longer speaking to him. What's the reason? *No Entry 2* has been confirmed with a new cast including Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, and Arjun Kapoor! Meanwhile, filmmaker Anees Bazmee, who is directing the sequel, is astonished to learn about the Kapoor brothers' strained relationship. "This is news to me. *Thodi bahut naraazgi hogi* (there could be little bit of anger)," he says, adding, "I haven't been able to speak with Boney ji because I was busy shooting *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*." Bazmee, who has worked with Anil on numerous films, including *Pagalpanti* (2019), believes that *No Entry* (2005) was a vital film. "If *uske sequel mein nahin hain*, then naturally *aadmi ko pain hoga* (If not in its sequel, then naturally one would feel hurt)," the 61-year-old explains. "Boney Ji must have had his reasons, too." However, Bazmee remains optimistic about their reconciliation. "They're brothers... Tomorrow, they'll meet and hug. They both love each other," he concludes.



## Lucky Ali returns to Bollywood

After a hiatus of nine years from the silver screen, legendary Lucky Ali makes a stunning comeback with his mesmerising rendition of *Tu Hai Kahaan*, the second song from the much-anticipated album *Do Aur Do Pyaar*. Following his unforgettable contribution to the classic soundtrack *Safarnama* from the film *Tamasha*, Lucky Ali once again captivates audiences with his timeless voice, evoking nostalgia and stirring hearts. This soul-stirring melody, which feels like a heartfelt love letter, is a collaborative masterpiece composed and written by the acclaimed band, *The Local Train*. The band's previous hits have already set the stage for excitement, causing fans to go gaga over social media in anticipation of this latest release. *Tu Hai Kahaan* captures the essence of love in its purest form, evoking emotions of longing and affection. The collaboration between Lucky Ali and *The Local Train* emerges as a true music powerhouse, igniting a spark of magic and love.

Expressing his excitement, Lucky Ali shares, "I like to be selective about the songs I sing for films. When I heard the scratch of *Tu Hai Kahaan*, I loved it and felt it would suit my voice. I enjoyed working with the young composers. I hope my fans enjoy it. Love, Lucky Ali." Directed by the talented Shirsha Guha Thakurta and presented by Applause Entertainment, an Ellipsis Entertainment production, *Do Aur Do Pyaar* is a captivating tale of romance filled with surprises. Set against the backdrop of mesmerising melodies, the film invites audiences to embark on a journey where love knows no boundaries.



## 'Miserable': Kirsten Dunst on filming iconic *Spider-Man* kiss with Tobey Maguire

Any *Spider-Man* fan will tell you how famous the upside-down kissing sequence from the original *Spider-Man* movie is. But ask actor Kirsten Dunst, who played Mary Jane, about it, and she'll tell you a different story. The actor recently appeared on *The Jonathan Ross Show*, where she admitted that filming the scene was quite 'miserable'.

During the conversation on the show, when the host brought about how iconic the scene is from the film, Kirsten shared, "I

remember [the director] Sam Raimi giving me a book of famous kisses to be inspired, but also, he really wanted to make it special even though it was kind of miserable actually doing it."

She went on to explain how Tobey was having difficulty breathing throughout the scenario because he was upside down. "It was pouring with rain and freezing; Tobey couldn't breathe, so it was almost like I was resuscitating him," she went on to say. However, she also stated that it is an iconic moment and that it is exciting to be a part of something like that in her career.

The kissing sequence won Best Kiss at the 2003 MTV Movie and TV Awards. Kirsten Dunst and Tobey Maguire's on-screen chemistry in the film became real when the two began dating while filming. They dated for a little more than a year before breaking up in 2002.

## Jennifer Garner's father passes away at 85



Actor Jennifer Garner's father, William John Garner, has passed away. He was 85. Jennifer shared the news of her father's passing in an Instagram post on Monday. No cause of death was disclosed. William John Garner, who worked as a chemical engineer for Union Carbide, died over the Easter weekend. "My dad passed away peacefully Saturday afternoon. We were with him, singing *Amazing Grace*, as he left us. While there is no tragedy in the death of an 85-year-old man who lived a healthy, wonderful life, I know grief is unavoidable, waiting around unexpected corners. Today is for gratitude," Jennifer wrote alongside a throwback photo of the father-daughter pair. The 51-year-old actor said she and her family are grateful for her father's gentle demeanour and quiet strength. "For how he teased with a mischievous smile and for the way he invented the role of all-in, ever-patient girl dad, we are grateful for his work ethic,

leadership, and faith," she added. Garner also thanked West Virginia's Charleston Area Medical Center and City of Hope for their medical care of William John, which she noted "extended Dad's life and gave him time to be in his favourite spots—surrounded by daughters and grandchildren, cheering for his beloved Aggies, captaining a boat, and—most of all—next to his wife of 59 years, our Mom." "There is so much to say about my dad—my sisters and I will never be done talking about how wonderful he was, so bear with us. But for today, I share these memories with my appreciation for the kind and brilliant man, father, and grandfather he was, as well as the loving legacy he left behind," she said.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



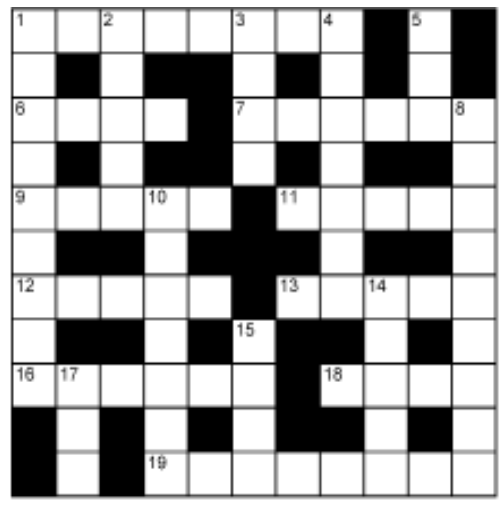
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



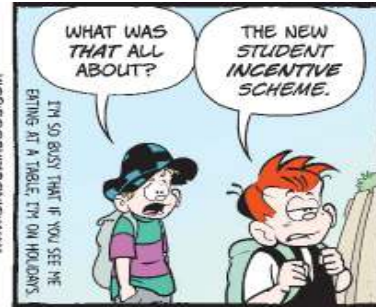
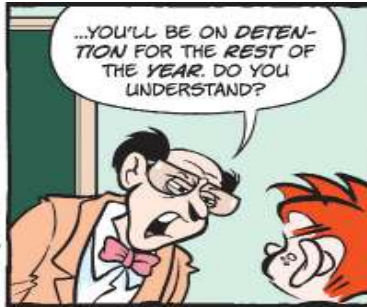
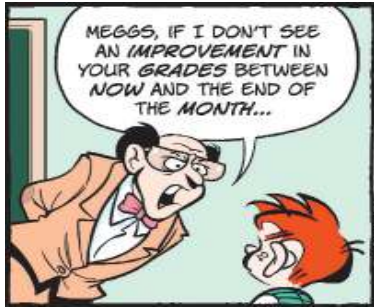
### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



### SUDOKU

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

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

- 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

- Air-holes in your nose
- Become larger
- A spider's trap
- Speaks
- The body's pump
- Uncles' wives
- Took away illegally
- Hot coals left from a fire
- Meat from a cow
- Unexpectedly, without warning
- Topic
- A chopping tool
- An insect that flutters by
- Baby cats
- Sea
- Second-hand
- A month

### DOWN

- A frightening dream
- Small seat without a back
- A feeling that makes you want to scratch





# IN A NEW PERCUSSION EXTRAVAGANZA, PERCUSSIONISTS GET MORE ATTENTION THAN JUST THE DRUMS!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

We're still going strong with the Mahindra Percussion Festival's second edition. And this time, it is with B.C. Manjunath, a musician, combines modern and classical sounds. The well-known 'Mridangam' player told *The Pioneer* in an exclusive interview—"festivals like these are indeed kind of pioneering. The reason I say this is that, while there have been many festivals where percussion has taken center stage, this is the first time that percussionists have taken center stage themselves, showcasing not only their own technical prowess but also the melodic side of percussion performed in unison. Really unique, if I may say so."

Quite active in world music, jazz, and Indian classical music genres, Manjunath is also well-known for being a practitioner and supporter of 'Konnakol', having demonstrated this in webs that examine mathematical structures, like the Fibonacci Tala, through the practice. Pretty fascinating! "To be honest, I think the one thing that makes each person here special is that they don't strive to stand out. I was aware of and witnessed a small number of actions, and they all had one thing in common: they were completely absorbed in giving their all, without trying to surpass anyone else. Among various acts, this is one of the rarest things you will ever witness," he said.

Day two of the percussion festival began with B.C. Manjunath's "Rhythms of India," which was followed by a performance by Shivangini Yeashu, Krantinaari, Pratika, and others of "Ashtanayika-Kal Aur Aaj," which fused poetry, rap, and dance to create a performance that intended to unite classical and modern arts. "Regarding my style, I don't think I ever thought of myself as someone who likes to be by themselves and present something. I always thought of myself as a capable team player. I'm attempting to pick up tips from my fellow artists and will contribute my own thoughts later. I believe that my ability to listen is what makes me special. Making everyone feel that they are part of the project, equally responsible, and in the spotlight with everyone else on stage can be vital at times. Why not just have these incredible musicians perform for you and contribute their own songs? A competent artist would do it. Few performers—the majority of those at this festival—had the ability to compose, perform, and allow others to perform," he highlighted.

The young performer continues, sharing additional details about the musical extravaganza: "Up until the day before the festival started, I was travelling throughout Europe.

Musician B.C. Manjunath, who combines modern and classical sounds, gets candid with *The Pioneer* as he shares his musical journey, musical style, and more.



I became really anxious when I realised that friends of mine who were also giving presentations had started preparing their acts several weeks beforehand. Our online collaboration was limited to ideation. However, on the day prior to our rehearsal session, everything seemed to be coming together flawlessly. But even a minute before we took the stage, we were joking around with our singing and agreeing and disagreeing with one another in a nice way. However, I believe that mentality—of being slightly on the edge—made our performance really thrilling."

He constantly strives to stay out of any band as a solo artist. All he wants is to be a valuable team player! He was a good listener previously, and this confirms it. And from where does he obtain it? He says, "Well, from the age of 12, my father, B. K. Chandramouli, who was a percussionist himself, purposefully forced me to listen to a lot of different genres of music. This served as a fantastic platform for me to explore other genres. Whether it was in jazz, modern classical, dance, contemporary dance, global music, or other genres, I could always find something that I couldn't find in Carnatic. Musicians had a very distinct perspective on the world and considered it to be sacred in some sense. In South India, we were trained to view music in a way that was entirely different from how people in other nations saw it. It was so engaging that I never missed an opportunity to learn from others and felt completely included in every way."

"Konnakol" is but one instrument in his toolbox for discussing and creating music. He simply uses it to put forward his odd and insane thoughts on social media! He hardly uses

it when performing. "Overuse of 'Konnakol' diminishes its significance," he believes. "Everyone finds it fascinating because it's a spoken art form, and for musicians, it can be a fantastic tool for discussing and creating music. Even though there was a lot of tradition in my performances, I am really pleased that I was able to represent 'Konnakol' in a very modern, unconventional way. In my current perspective, I was attempting to introduce the old system or leave out experiments that were conducted 50-100 years ago. It is undoubtedly a significant aspect of who I am."

Another aspect that came to light when we heard him express that he finds more logic in rhythms than in mathematics was revealed to us! Naturally, numbers are the foundation of every rhythm; but, once you have established certain numbers, the remaining elements are permutation, combination, and reasoning. All he's trying to do is incorporate it into his Carnatic beats. Interestingly, "I had written a sad but intriguing story about my Fibonacci sequence that I wanted to show to my father when he was dying. I was meant to show it to him the next day, but he was in so much pain that he was unable to hear me. Regrettably, he departed the following day. Even after his cremation, this composition would not leave my mind; I was in excruciating sorrow at losing him. It's power lay in that. After thinking about releasing it for three or four days, it went completely crazy. Who knows, maybe my father is in that composition." Additionally, he has had the great fortune to perform in a variety of genres, including in the unusual setting of a silent film! He was forced to realise that less is more and that everything you play needs to have a purpose or a narrative. Instead of just hammering down a series of repetitive notes, he conveyed a story along with the feelings he wanted to express. "Playing in a modern dance production with the 'marimba' as the primary percussion instrument, performing in contemporary classical music where other composers wrote every note for me to play without the opportunity to improvise like a western classical percussionist would, performing with some incredible bands or performing with Flamenco, Kathak, or special Bharathanatyam productions, or presenting Carnatic music in my own unique way utilising all the influences I had would be memorable. I gained knowledge about reading staff notation, playing flamenco and kathak compositions on the 'mridangam', or creating original compositions for various bands and ensembles. I'm unable to stop. It is humbling to reflect back on all the things I am extremely delighted to talk about," he says.

At the age of fifteen, his father pushed him into teaching, even though he had very little experience. But with time, he came to see that teaching is an excellent method of learning. He became quite daring in his teaching as a result! Recently, 200 musicians performed a piece he co-wrote with French composer Sebastian Gaxie on stage at Radio France in Paris. The most thrilling part of that was when they were all singing *Shiva Shiva Shiva Enarada*, a traditional Carnatic song. Thinking about it still gives him shivers! Lastly, "Carnatic music is ingrained in my being. It shaped me; it is always the first thing that comes to mind when I think of music, and performing *jugalbandis* with North Indian musicians has undoubtedly opened my eyes to new aspects of Indian music."

## 'Chamak 2 is on the cards,' reveals Paramvir Singh Cheema

TEJAL SINHA

Actor Paramvir Singh Cheema is becoming a popular choice for depicting Punjabi storylines, as evidenced by his appearances in *Tabbar* and *Chamak*, to name a few. Recently, the actor made a remarkable performance with *Sapne Vs. Everyone*, and in fact, the show turned out to be India's highest-rated

show by IMDB. The actor gets candid with *The Pioneer* as he shares his journey, his excitement about the love received by the audience, and more.



### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

#### How would you describe your journey?

Incredible! I cherish every part of my journey because it made me who I am today. There have been so many ups and downs. But one thing I pat myself on the back about is that I never stopped believing in myself. It's still going, and I am very excited for more that's going to unfold.

#### What inspired you to become an actor?

Theater! Where I can express the emotion that I want to express without anyone judging me for it. If I do it right, people will appreciate it, and I will fall in love with it. I understood that this was the road I was going to choose. This is what I love to do.

#### A farmer's son becoming an actor is a story unheard of. What was the reaction at home?

Hahaha. Yes, my father supported me throughout my journey. He is a farmer. He always had faith in me. Because in farming, earnings are few. It is difficult. But he gave me his hard-earned money, and today he is the happiest person. My sister used to make all my audition tapes when I was at home. So finally, she's relieved.

#### Did you fear the show being compared to the rest?

A little in the beginning, but after 10 days of the shoot, I was so confident that this was something different, and the writing was great. Starting from actors to the camera team to the art team. I was pretty confident that this would hit hard.

#### How did the show happen?

I got a call from Navrattan Mehta, the casting director of *Sapne*. He said, 'bhai ye tumhare liye hai character' (This character is meant for you). When he read the script, he said he could see me in it. So he auditioned me, and Ambrish Bhai, the director of the show, called me

and said he liked the audition, and I got locked.

#### How did you prepare for your role?

I talked to the director and asked him about the character. He was very clear that Prashant was going to behave in a certain way. He had long discussions, and I started remembering the days when I was struggling between a few things in my life and acting. So slowly, Prashant came to me.

#### Could you recall for us your *Sapne v/s Everyone* moment in real life?

It's the story of every artist because this field is very uncertain. In my case, I was supposed to choose between LLB and acting. During the lockdown, I was supposed to choose one thing because I was very low in life and nothing was working out. So my father supported me and said, "No, I am there. You should not stop and go to Mumbai again. You are going to make it." So that was a second chance for me, and it worked.

#### Would you say that with your projects, you are breaking the stereotypes of how Punjabis are portrayed in the industry?

Yes, because there is a specific way Punjabis are portrayed in the industry. But even Punjabis have the same struggles in life as everyone else. I wanted people to see that.

#### What's something that attracts you as an actor to choose a project?

Something challenging and different. And something that leaves an impact on people. I am looking for good scripts and to work with good directors, which will bring out a new side of me.

#### What's more on the plate coming up for the audience?

*Chamak Volume 2* is releasing soon. And other projects that are very close to my heart, but unfortunately I can't disclose the name right now. I can only say that it is going to be worth your wait.



## Revamp your space with the latest interior design trends

Refresh your home in 2024 for a modern and revitalised feel. Choose contemporary elements wisely to blend the new and timeless seamlessly. Picture walls in a soothing peach fuzz hue, rooms adapting to your moods, and corners bringing nature indoors. Here are 8 interior décor trends you can welcome the new year with:

**The rise of flexible spaces:** Bid farewell to the rigidity of single-purpose rooms! Your living space can seamlessly transform into a yoga studio in the morning, a home office during the day, and a cosy movie den by night. Enter smart furniture that folds, expands, and moves with your needs.

**Green is good:** In 2024, homes are embracing a green revolution. Every corner is turning into a thriving green space, not just for decoration but as a celebration of nature woven into your living space. Whether you choose a tall fern, a set of succulents on your shelves, or a useful kitchen herb garden, plants are more than just looks – they become your companions.

**Say hi to peach fuzz:** Say hello to peach fuzz. More than a passing trend, it's a statement of comfort and joy. This warm and optimistic hue transcends styles, adapting to modern, rustic, or eclectic aesthetics. Whether on walls, cushions, or art, it adds sophistication without overwhelming your space, creating a welcoming atmosphere and a comfortable retreat.

**Sustainable luxury redefined:** In 2024, redefine luxury with sustainability. Opulence meets responsibility with reclaimed wood tables and organic cotton linens. Your decor choices go beyond aesthetics, reflecting conscientious living. Elevate your space with elegance that embraces the harmony of luxurious design and environmental consciousness in every detail.

Pets and plants living together: 2024 marks

the era of inclusive homes, where pet-friendly furniture seamlessly blends with your decor. Celebrate green companions with chic plant stands, fostering a balance between furry friends and leafy decor. It's a holistic design revolution, ensuring your home radiates joy, comfort, and harmony for all family members.

**Kitchens that live:** In 2024, the kitchen takes center stage as the heart of the home, boldly embracing its role. Beyond a place for culinary pursuits, it becomes a hub for creativity, relaxation, and connection. Clever storage solutions, multifunctional appliances, and personal touches make it uniquely yours.

**Curtain call:** In 2024, curtains take center stage, shedding their role as mere background players. Far from subtle, they become scene-stealers with lush textures, bold patterns, and an undeniable presence that transforms any room. Whether elegantly draped around beds for a touch of drama or framing windows with artful folds, curtains step beyond mere functionality. They emerge as a powerful expression of your style, a definitive nod to the trend of personal and expressive interiors. These window treatments not only add depth and character but also serve as a canvas to showcase your unique design identity, turning each room into a curated masterpiece.

**Work and play:** In 2024, transform your work routine with spaces designed for both productivity and inspiration. Explore outdoor desks, communal co-working areas, and flexible home offices that capture the spirit of innovation and connection. Embrace a workspace that adapts to your needs, blurring the lines between work and play, aligning with the dynamic and ever-changing world around us.

(The author, Prof. Balbir Singh, Dean, School of Design, World University of Design.)





# DELHI CAPITALS READY FOR KKR CHALLENGE

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Delhi Capitals would be keen to prove that their comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings was not a flash in the pan while Kolkata Knight Riders would be eyeing a hat-trick of victories when the two sides face off in the IPL here on Wednesday. The Capitals would be buoyed by the 20-run victory here on Sunday, their first of the season, against defending champions CSK who were outsmarted by Rishabh Pant and Co. In all departments of the game. And come Wednesday, the Capitals will have to put another such performance against KKR, whose batters pummelled Royal Challengers Bengaluru bowlers to notch their second win of the season on March 29. For DC, the onus will be on Prithvi Shaw and veteran Australian David Warner to provide a solid start. Meanwhile, Pant continues his

inspirational journey. After two scratchy innings, the skipper gave a glimpse of his devastating best as he scored his maiden fifty (51 off 32 balls) of the season and seems to be slowly finding his groove. The likes of South African Tristan Stubbs and Australian Mitchell Marsh, both capable of launching an assault on the opposition, need to be better towards the end as DC lack domestic power hitters. While Stubbs showcased his prowess with the bat against Rajasthan Royals, a consistent show from him will do a world of good for DC. On the other hand, Marsh is yet to produce a glimpse of his brute power with the willow which could prove to be DC's lethal weapon. South African Anrich Nortje is yet to find his rhythm as he returned to action after a long injury layoff. The Capitals' Indian pace unit will thus have to punch above its weight against a formidable KKR side.



Khaleel Ahmed's performance against CSK was commendable, yet his long-standing fielding troubles remain a concern. He struggles particularly with aerial catches, dropping more than he successfully takes. He dropped a catch of MS Dhoni against CSK. Mukesh Kumar lacks pace while veteran Ishant Sharma is more than capable of asking pertinent questions. KKR, on the other hand, have looked good this season, registering two wins from as many games. Opener Phil Salt, all-rounder Andre Russell and Venkatesh Iyer have been in good nick in the first two games and would look to pose a challenge for the Delhi pacers. Skipper Shreyas Iyer also got some runs under his belt in the win against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Rookie pacer Harshit Rana has impressed so far, picking five wickets in two outings, but Mitchell Starc, their record

buy, and Varun Chakravarty have gone for runs aplenty.  
**THE TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Delhi Capitals:** Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, Yash Dhull, Abishek Porel, Axar Patel, Lalit Yadav, Mitchell Marsh, Pravin Dubey, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Kuldeep Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Khaleel Ahmed, Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Tristan Stubbs, Ricky Bhui, Kumar Kushagra, Rasikh Dar, Jhye Richardson, Sumit Kumar, Swastik Chikara and Shai Hope.  
**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarty, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman.



## Parag reminds me of young SKY: Bond

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rajasthan Royals assistant coach Shane Bond has described in-form Riyan Parag as a player of "extreme talent" and likened him to a young Suryakumar Yadav who joined Mumbai Indians more than a decade ago and went on to become one of the most explosive T20 batters in the world. The 22-year-old Parag has brought his rich form from domestic cricket into the IPL, striking two high quality fifties to help Rajasthan notch up wins in all three games so far. Parag's latest effort came against Mumbai Indians in his side's six-wicket win on Monday. He dropped anchor to spearhead Royals' chase of 126, scoring 54 not out off 39 balls with the help of five fours and three sixes. "He (Parag) sort of reminds me a little bit of Surya (Suryakumar Yadav), who came to Mumbai a few years ago. He looks like that - he has got extreme talent. He has just matured as a cricketer, even though he is only 22," Bond, who is also the RR bowling coach, said at the post-match press conference. Bond played a crucial role in developing bowling talents at MI in his nine-year stint with the Mumbai-based franchise from 2015 onwards, before shifting base to Jaipur this year. "He (Parag) has had an outstanding domestic season, obviously, batting up the order. The trade we made with Devdutt (Padikkal), bringing Avesh (Khan) in, that was to put Riyan up into a position which was probably better suited," the former New Zealand fast bowler added. Suryakumar, the world's number one T20 batter, joined MI in 2011 and spent four years at Kolkata Knight Riders from 2014-17 before he was brought back to the Mumbai side in 2018. He is recovering from a recent surgery. Bond said Parag has had to play the role of a finisher in the IPL at a young age whereas other teams have experienced international players in that role. "Riyan started so young, you forget that he was 17 or something, playing in one of the toughest spots in a batting line-up of No 6. You look at the characters who finish games around the IPL, they are

generally pretty experienced guys," he said. (The) Tim Davids, (the) Dave Millers... these are high quality players who play international cricket. Riyan has been tasked with that for a number of years. He is still a very young man, but he has got this wealth of experience behind him now. "We are getting the best of him. The investment that RR have made of him, it's starting to reap the rewards. It is pretty exciting what he could offer for the rest of the season for us." Bond also felt "selfless" Yuzvendra Chahal, who produced a measly spell of 4-0-11-3 to set up Rajasthan's win on Monday, could be back in India reckoning if he continues to deliver. "The competition is pretty tough, so one of the real challenges for any bowler coming into this tournament is to forget that there is a World Cup, and you start bowling to get into a World Cup team," he said. "If your team is successful, you are in a winning team, selections and rewards come from that. That has more of been our focus, to forget about all that other noise from the outside and just work really hard for each other. "If we do that, I have got no doubt people are going to start talking like you are now about Chahal and whether he will feature in a World Cup or not. He is bowling beautifully, and if he keeps doing that, then we have got a massive chance in this tournament," he added. Bond said having knowledge about opposition players also helps in making strategies for his current team. "When you have obviously spent so much time with certain players, watched them every day and talked to them about their game and the way that they see the game, that definitely helps," he said. "It was quite fun being on the other side of the team. A couple of dismissals, you get a lot of satisfaction from that." MI pacer Akash Madhwal said a fresh pitch at the Wankhede Stadium assisted bowlers in the first game but maintaining tight lines was equally crucial. "We had to get our basics right and had to bowl in the line of the stumps. The pitch had some help for the fast bowlers," said Madhwal, who returned 3/20.

## Rohit would not have lost MI captaincy if he had been named India T20 WC skipper earlier: Sidhu



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu believes that Rohit Sharma would not have been replaced by Hardik Pandya as Mumbai Indians captain had the BCCI named him skipper for the T20 World Cup last year itself. Rohit was declared captain of India's yet-to-be-named T20 World Cup squad in February this year by BCCI secretary Jay Shah at an event in Ahmedabad, a good two months after he was replaced by Pandya as MI skipper. "If the BCCI had named Rohit as captain for the T20 World Cup in October, the franchise wouldn't have chosen Hardik as captain. It's a matter of the franchise's respect. So, the actual issue here is timing," Sidhu said in 'Star Sports Press Room'. Pandya has been facing hostility from fans in the ongoing IPL, booed in all three matches so far, including the one at MI's home turf of Wankhede, besides ending up

on the losing side. Sidhu said the fans' reaction is quite understandable as Rohit is a much-loved cricketer. "Nobody can digest the fact that India's hero, India's captain, is not the captain of our franchise. 'What wrong has he done?' is what fans of the franchise would be thinking. But what does he have to do? "There is nothing that succeeds like success. If he had won these two matches, there wouldn't have been any noise," he pointed out. Talking about other teams in the IPL, Sidhu felt Royal Challengers Bengaluru have become predictable, especially in their spin bowling. "The biggest thing needed in the winning of a team is that they are not dependent on just one individual to achieve victory. We do talk about Virat Kohli and Faf du Plessis, but you got to saddle the right horse. "The chain is as strong as the weakest link, and their weakness lies in the spin

department. Their spinners are just not there, so therefore they will have to replenish that area. Like, RCB had (Wanindu) Hasaranga, who was pretty good and even before him, there was Yuzvendra Chahal," he observed. "But they let them go and that has created a void in their bowling line-up. RCB haven't been able to fill that void, which makes them predictable. Now look at (MS) Dhoni - when he comes, no one knows his plan," he said. Sidhu reiterated that IPL performances will shape the T20 World Cup squads of all the teams. "The entire world revolves around the IPL. Playing in the IPL just before the World Cup is like participating in a mini World Cup. Stellar performance here can make you an overnight sensation. Therefore, anyone who excels in the IPL becomes a strong contender," he said. The T20 World Cup will begin on June 1 in the USA and the West Indies.



## KKR-RR, GT-DC matches rescheduled: BCCI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kolkata Knight Riders' home IPL game against Rajasthan Royals was on Tuesday advanced by a day to April 16, while Gujarat Titans-Delhi Capitals fixture in Ahmedabad was also rescheduled by the BCCI which did not give any reason for the move. The PTI had on Monday reported that the KKR-RR tie was set to be rescheduled due to Ram Navami, but the Board did not specify any reason for the rescheduling of matches on these two dates. "The fixture between Kolkata Knight Riders & Rajasthan Royals, which was earlier scheduled to take place on April 17, 2024 at Eden Gardens, Kolkata will now be played a day prior on April 16, 2024. "The Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad was earlier scheduled to host the match between Gujarat Titans & Delhi Capitals on April 16, 2024. The fixture will now be played on April 17, 2024," the BCCI said in a statement. It was learnt that Kolkata Police expressed its inability to provide adequate security cover for what will be KKR's third home game of the 17th IPL season, just three days after they host the Lucknow Super Giants. "Since the match is coinciding with Ram Navami and a portion of security is already deployed for elections. Therefore it won't

be possible for us to provide adequate security for the match on April 17," Kolkata Police had stated in a letter to Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) president Snehasish Ganguly. Bengal is also set to vote on April 19 in the first phase of the seven-phase general elections. The voting in Kolkata will take place on June 1. "Yes, the CAB has informed us that local police has asked for rescheduling of the date and the matter is being looked into. We haven't yet decided on the new date," a senior BCCI official told PTI on Monday. On part of CAB, a senior officer-bearer had informed: "We have suggested two dates, April 16 or 18. In any case, it is KKR's home match and will be played at the Eden Gardens." The CAB had suggested that the match be advanced either by a day (16 April) or pushed back by 24 hours to 18 April. KKR is currently in Visakhapatnam for a game against Delhi Capitals on Wednesday. They had begun the season with a thrilling four-run victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Eden Gardens, followed by a seven-wicket thumping of Royal Challengers Bengaluru at M Chinnaswamy Stadium. The Shubman Gill-led Gujarat Titans are placed fourth in the standings with four points, following two wins and a loss from four outings.

## We never give up, we will keep fighting, asserts Hardik



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya on Tuesday asserted that the former champions will not give up and will continue to fight in the ongoing IPL despite slumping to a hat-trick of defeats. "If there's one thing you should know about this team, we never give up. We'll keep fighting, we'll keep going," Hardik posted on X. Hardik has been facing the ire of fans since replacing Rohit Sharma as MI captain. The all-rounder was booed in the team's opening two matches and the crowd hostility was at its peak in MI's first home game of the season on Monday. To add to the woes, under his captaincy MI's campaign at the 2024 IPL got off to a disastrous start as they sit at the bottom of the table following three losses on the trot. However, MI are known to be perennial slow starters. In 2015, they lost the first four games before going on to win the title. Hardik's poor captaincy calls have also been questioned -- whether it was not giving Bumrah the new ball or sending Tim David ahead of himself against Gujarat Titans. The change in captaincy has not sat well with the legions of MI supporters. On Monday, chants of 'Rohit Rohit' filled the Wankhede with the Indian captain himself asking the crowd not to jeer Hardik. Mumbai Indians will next face Delhi Capitals at home on Sunday.

# Kohli seems to have evolved again: Hussey

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Virat Kohli seems to have "evolved again" avowed former Australia cricketer David Hussey, who warned against writing off the champion player after a debate ensued on the Indian batter's strike rate. Despite leading the run chart for Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the ongoing edition of IPL, Kohli faced some criticism for not batting aggressively enough against KKR in their last game. Kohli is the joint-highest run getter so far with RR's Riyan Parag, scoring 181 runs in three matches with two fifties at a strike rate of 141.4. With the T20 World Cup impending, Kohli's place in the team has also been a topic of discussion even though he played one of the most memorable innings for India in their clash against arch-rivals Pakistan in Melbourne. "Virat Kohli is the leading run scorer, isn't he in the IPL currently?" Hussey replied when asked about what he made of the debate around

Kohli's strike rate. "He's a pretty good player. I don't think he's going to have too many issues. If you see the strike rate in this IPL, he seems to have taken his game to a new level, he's evolved again," Hussey told the media here on the sidelines of the announcement of the launch of Melbourne Cricket Cricket Academy, a partnership between Cricket Victoria and KheloMore. "You never write off champions, like you never write off Steve Smith, (like) you never write off Ricky Ponting, Sachin Tendulkar, Rohit Sharma..." "You never write them off and I'm certain that Virat Kohli is going to come out in the next World Cup and be the dominant force that he has been for the better part of a decade. Never write off your champions," Hussey reiterated. Hussey, who played in the IPL for Chennai Super Kings, the then Kings XI Punjab and Kolkata Knight Riders, said the competition has evolved with teams moving on from a conservative approach to an



ultra-aggressive one. "It's hit-hit, bang-bang from ball one now, whereas back in 2008, (it) was (about) take your time, get yourself in, try and have wickets in hand at the first 10-over mark and then try and get 180 or 190, (and) that was out of this world," he said.

"Now teams are getting 270 runs and other teams are almost chasing them down. If you face a couple of dot balls early and your strike rate is under 100, you're sort of ostracised, you don't fit to the T20 mould, so the planning that's evolved from 2008 till

now is phenomenal - every ball, every over is really important," he said. Hussey, who was present at the Cricket Club of India along with Cricket Victoria CEO Nick Cummins and KheloMore CEO and selector Jatin Paranjape, said 10 years

from now IPL would be entirely different. "The game has evolved out of sight and like Nick (Cummins) said, I can't wait to see what the IPL and what T20 cricket looks like in a decade's time, because teams might get 300 runs and chase it down, which should be not good for fast bowlers or spinners but it's great for the game of cricket," he said. Hussey felt Australia will have a selection headache going into the World Cup, adding that players who are likely to feature in the T20 World Cup are getting an excellent opportunity to prepare for it in the IPL. "There's competition for places, isn't there, in the Australian team? There's Travis Head who also opens up batting as well, who's playing particularly well," Hussey said. "Anybody can beat anybody on their day, the pitch is a different, foreign conditions, but the players are very, very fortunate to have the IPL to play in and prepare very well in order to go to the World Cup and execute their skills," Hussey said.





the pioneer

Vijayawada | Wednesday April 3, 2024

tollywood

Actor Harshiv, who has been donning multiple hats for the upcoming film, *Bahumukham*, spoke to the media here, sharing insights about the film, balancing his passion with work, and more.

K. RAMYA SREE

Actor Harshiv Karthik is donning many hats for the film *Bahumukham*, which is all set to release on big screens on April 5. He is the director, writer, and producer of the film, apart from being the lead actor. This film is a suspense thriller that revolves around places like Atlanta, Macon, Georgia, the USA, and others.

Before delving into the interview, *Bahumukham* is a film that is being made out of a short film, and the actor felt the short film's length was too short to create a huge impact, hence he made it into a full-length movie. Interacting with the media here on Tuesday, he shared, "I find the idea of *Bahumukham* very interesting. If a mentally ill person goes to an audition and gets insulted, the line is how far will he go. The span increased while the story was being written. It was made into a feature-length film after it was believed that such a story had never come before us. Suspense thrillers are being watched more by the audience these days. I did this project to come up with unique projects as an actor and a director."

The actor, who is a former senior software engineer in the US, has been extremely passionate about films since childhood. He expressed, "I tried a lot to go and work with people as a part-time employee; time passed, but I didn't get any proper projects. I decided to start my own then. I learned everything online after coming home from work. We are a middle-class family. I have done it while balancing passion with work." The actor also practiced some art forms for this role. He took special training in Kathak dance and tried to give his best in the film. Furthermore, it was being heard that the entire movie was shot in the US, and to this, the actor-director responded, saying, "Yes. We are doing promotions with the tag 'Made in the USA. Assembled in India'. I made the film without compromise. We organised a workshop for each actor and made the film with a very clear vision. The reason for handling most of the departments myself is to reduce the cost. Doing thorough preproduction work was very rewarding. About forty new actors will be seen in it. I worked for about 14 hours a day. I have designed the film to have a good cinematic experience. Audiences who love suspenseful psychological thrillers will enjoy it a lot.

The whole movie is very engaging." Although he is a debutant trying to cut costs, he managed to bring in popular musicians Phani Kalyan and Sricharan Pakala on board. He expressed, "Songs are composed by Phani Kalyan. He makes melodies marvellously. Very good songs have been composed for this movie. I approached Sricharan Pakala for background music. He asked for all the details about me. They also realised what my passion and commitment are. I showed the teaser. He liked it very much. Then he heard the whole story. Very brilliant background score." Although made on a minimal budget, the actor is trying hard to take the film to the audience. He is now good with his digital promotions, and through this, he understood what kind of things the audience was expecting from him. "All this will help my next project. I enjoyed this journey and process a lot," he shared. On the acting and directing front, he wrote an action drama that has yet to take off.

## Is Pooja Hegde dating Rohan Mehra?

Actress Pooja Hegde is a renowned actress in the South, but she has always kept her personal life very low-key.

Living in Mumbai, she has been constantly travelling down to Hyderabad for her shoots and promotions, and later leave back for Mumbai. She was juggling working in multiple languages at the same time. Despite setting her foot in many industries, no one so far could even tell about Pooja's personal life, especially her love life, as she wrapped it under the curtains.

However, now rumours are out that she is dating Rohan Mehra, the son of late actor Vinod Mehra.

Amidst the on-going rumours, the actress was recently spotted with him enjoying a car drive.

Although on the work front, she has nothing in Tollywood going on at the moment, she is doing a film with Shahid Kapoor titled *Deva*.

For the Telugu audience who aren't aware of Rohan Mehra, he is also an actor who made his acting debut with *Bazaar* alongside Saif Ali Khan, Radhika Apte, and Chitrangada Singh. The son of the well-established actor Vinod Mehra, the actor is also juggling finding some good meaty projects for himself in Bollywood.

## Rishab Shetty expresses his love for cricket

Rishab Shetty is one of the most visionary storytellers, directors, and versatile actors in Indian cinema. The multifaceted personality needs no introduction, as he has always left the masses in awe of his extraordinary craft. Besides being one of the most widely recognised names, he is a man who is a great follower of cinema and cricket. In a recently given interview, he spoke about the same and said, "With *Kantara Chapter 1* set to go on floors soon, my schedule has become extremely hectic. I didn't have the time to travel to Bengaluru to put this video together. So we decided on a concept that works in such a way that we could shoot in my hometown of Kundapura."

Continuing the same, he said, "I used to be an ardent cricket player during my school and college days. Even today, I have a cricket kit in the boot of my car and take to playing the game whenever I get time off from work." Recently, an image of Rishab Shetty was uploaded on social media from the sets of *Kantara*, and speaking about the same, he said, "It's the same field where we did our rehearsals for *Kantara*, and the team that helped me prepare for my role was also the one to aid me in shooting this video as well. I enjoyed planning this out, as both cricket and cinema are two of my greatest loves." Meanwhile, on the work front, Rishab Shetty, who took the fans and the audiences on the devotional ride with *Kantara: A Legend*, has begun shooting for the much-awaited prequel to *Kantara: Chapter 1*.



Director: *Love Mouli* is the result of love stories that happened in my life

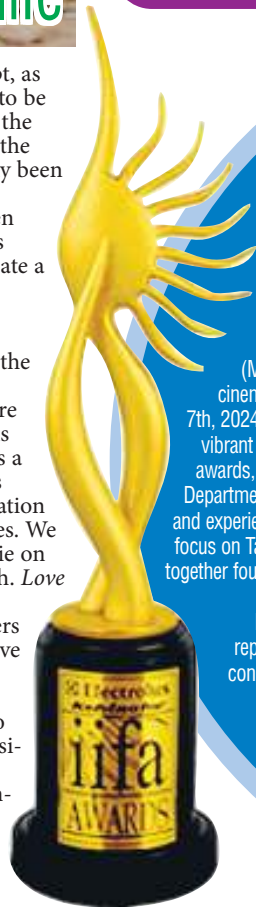
*Love Mouli* is a new-age youthful drama featuring Navdeep in a fresh get-up. His free-spirited character in this content-driven movie will bring to the fore his second version - Navdeep 2.0. The super-talented actor is going to be seen as a hero after a break from movies. Avaneendra is the director of this novel and diverse film, which is produced by Nyra Creations and Srikara Studios under the banner CSpace, which has been the 'adda' for talented technicians from Tollywood. Every update from this film has been innovative and impresses everyone. The film's release date was announced on Monday. The makers of the film made it official that the film is releasing on April 19.

Meanwhile, the director of the film, Avaneendra shared, "As Navdeep looks very different in this movie, all the audiences out there are waiting for this movie with good expectations. They believe that the film will be different

in terms of it's concept, as Navdeep 2.0 is going to be seen in it. Looking at the songs released so far, the expectations have only been enhanced. That's why everyone who has seen Navdeep recently says that he is going to create a new trend with this movie."

"The story of this movie is the result of the love stories that happened in my life. There are so many variations with respect to love as a love. The story of this movie is an amalgamation of my own experiences. We are releasing the movie on the 19th of this month. *Love Mouli* will touch the hearts of all the viewers who want different love stories," the director added.

The film is going to be bohemian and musical. The songs have been designed to complement the overall mood of the youthful film.



## IIFA UTSAVAM 2024 TO BE HELD IN SEPT IN ABU DHABI

Poised to showcase the immense talent and diversity of South Indian cinema, IIFA Utsavam is set to embark on its global tour, starting off in the remarkable city of Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, this September 2024.

Under the honourable patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahyan (Minister of Tolerance & Coexistence), it is all set to bring across the multifaceted South Indian cinematic powerhouses during a spectacular two-day extravaganza to be held this September 6th and 7th, 2024, in Yas Island, Abu Dhabi. Set against the backdrop of Yas Island's breathtaking landscapes and vibrant entertainment offerings, it is primed to dazzle audiences with its stellar lineup of performances, awards, and cinematic experiences. The highly-anticipated award show is being held in partnership with Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi, and Miral, the leading creator of immersive destinations and experiences in Abu Dhabi. Celebrating the achievements and triumphs of South Indian cinema, with its focus on Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada film industries, it serves as a unifying platform bringing together four main industries, showcasing their rich tapestry of talent, creativity, and storytelling to a global audience.

From the glitterati of the South Indian film industries to international dignitaries, media representatives, and movie enthusiasts from around the globe, it aims to foster meaningful connections, an opportunity for collaboration, and celebration among luminaries who have shaped the landscape of entertainment globally. This provides them with a unique opportunity to fully immerse themselves in a diverse array of celebrations and screenings that they won't find anywhere else. Alongside these exclusive screenings, attendees can also partake in a range of events and exclusive experiences that the celebration has to offer. Get ready for an unforgettable celebration of South Indian cinema like never before!

## Chiranjeevi begins new schedule of *Vishwambhara* in Hyd

Megastar Chiranjeevi's magnum opus, *Vishwambhara*, being helmed by Vassishtha, is progressing at a good pace. After delivering the blockbuster *Bimbisara*, Vassishtha got the opportunity to direct Chiranjeevi in his second movie, and the talented director prepared a story with a huge span for the megastar to present him in a larger-than-life character. Trisha Krishnan is the leading lady opposite Chiranjeevi in this high-budget film produced extravagantly by UV Creations. The makers, who recently wrapped up a schedule where some talkie parts, a song, and an action block were canned, began a crucial action schedule in Hyderabad.

A high-intense action sequence is being filmed right now on Chiranjeevi and some fighters at Alluminium Factory in Hyderabad under the supervision of fight masters' duo Ram-Lakshman. The action sequence is being filmed on a grand scale. This particular action sequence, which comes at a crucial stage, will offer an adrenaline rush to the viewers.

The mega fantasy adventure produced by Vikram, Vamsi, and Pramod will have rich production and technical standards, with sought-after technicians handling different crafts. MM Keeravani, who recently won an Oscar Award, scores the music, while Sri Siva Shakthi Datta and Chandrabose are the lyricists. *Vishwambhara* will be released for Sankranthi in 2025 on January 10.



## It's official! *Pushpa: The Rule* teaser to drop on April 8



The highly anticipated sequel, *Pushpa: The Rule*, starring the inimitable Allu Arjun in an invincible role, is gearing up for a grand release worldwide on August 15, 2024. This glorious pan-India project, produced by Mythri Movie Makers in association with Sukumar Writings, promises a buoyant cinematic experience of sorts. Directed by the visionary filmmaker Sukumar, *Pushpa: The Rule* is an action-packed extravaganza billed to take the global stage by storm.

The makers announced that the film's extraordinary, riveting, and power-paced teaser is going to be out on April 8. The day is special because it is the Icon Star's birthday.

Allu Arjun, with his commanding screen presence, is once again set to dominate the silver screen with this most-awaited pan-Indian cinematic sequel. His larger-than-life portrayal in *Pushpa: The Rule* will be a defining moment in Telugu cinema as well as Indian cinema. Joining him is Fahadh Faasil, embodying the very essence of vengeance in this epic tale.

## Reel meets real : Prithviraj Sukumaran converses with real-life Najeeb

*The Goat Life* has become a solidified hit at the box office with immense love and appreciation from audiences and critics alike. From being touted as a true 'cinematic masterpiece' and a 'must-watch in the theatres', to surpassing various box office records, Blessy's film has taken the nation by storm. Prithviraj Sukumaran's authentic portrayal of the real life Najeeb is said to be his career best performance that will move you to the core. In a candid, introspective, and telling conversation with the real life Najeeb, Prithviraj Sukumaran learns the similarities, the differences, and the thoughts of the character he so eloquently portrayed on the big screen. Speaking about his experience embodying the character of Najeeb, Prithviraj said, "In 2008,

when Blessy first told me about doing this movie, my first thought was, how do I approach this character? Do I come down and talk to you about who you really are, or do I try to understand the character Najeeb that Benyamin wrote or the Najeeb that Blessy has in his mind? This was the confusion I had. Finally, Blessy and I decided that, from the novel *Aadujeevitham* and the Najeeb that Blessy visualised, the Najeeb that I visualise in my mind should be the one I play in the movie, so you'll see that Najeeb in the movie. There is a big difference between you and the Najeeb I played. But you and the



Najeeb I played think alike." Sharing his unending pain and torment of being trapped in the desert, then Najeeb shared, "I always thought that I'd never escape. There were no more gods left for me to pray to. Better than life, there was death. Many times, I used to just lie down on the sand so that some creatures would bite me and I would die. But then, when I woke up, all I thought about was my family. My wife was already 8 months pregnant when I landed there. Did she deliver a baby or not? That was the only thing I had in mind."

Produced by Visual Romance, *The Goat Life* also features Hollywood actor

Jimmy Jean-Louis, Indian actors like Amala Paul and K.R. Gokul, along with renowned Arab actors such as Talib al Balushi and Rik Aby in pivotal roles. The film's music direction and sound design are helmed by Academy Award winners A.R. Rahman and Resul Pookutty, respectively. The stunning visuals of the film have been shot by Sunil KS, and they have been edited by A. Sreekar Prasad. Being shot in multiple countries around the world, the film marks the biggest-ever venture in the Malayalam film industry, setting new benchmarks in production standards, storytelling, and acting prowess. With exemplary performances and a soul-stirring background score, the film makes for a larger-than-life theatrical experience.