

**-SPORTS**

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"Most of you have not experienced

Murthy appealed to leaders of other countries at the UN to emulate the Akshaya Patra model and "bring joy, health, confidence, hope and success to poor children in their own countries."





# Intense battle ahead in Araku

Kothapalli Geetha of BJP, a former deputy collector, faces YSRCP's Dr. Chetti Thanuja Rani, daughter-in-law of MLA Chetti Phalguna

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In what promises to be a riveting electoral showdown, the Araku Lok Sabha constituency, reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST), is bracing itself for the impending clash between two formidable women candidates. Dr. Chetti Thanuja Rani, making her foray into electoral politics under the banner of the Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), squares off against the seasoned politician Kothapalli Geetha of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Spanning across the expansive landscape of two districts, Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) and Parvathipuram Manyam, the Araku Lok Sabha constituency stands as one of the largest in the country. Boasting a staggering electorate of over 14.5 lakh voters, it encompasses seven Assembly segments, setting the stage for a crucial political battleground. Kothapalli Geetha, a former deputy collector, commands attention with her political journey marked by twists and turns. Securing victory in the 2014 elections on YSRCP ticket, Geetha later diverged from the party's path, forming her own political outfit, the Jana Jagruti Party, in 2018. Now aligned with BJP, Geetha seeks redemption in the Araku Lok Sabha constituency after her defeat



in the 2019 polls.

On the opposing front stands Dr. Chetti Thanuja Rani, backed by familial political legacy and professional acumen.

Nominated by the YSRCP, Thanuja Rani, daughter-in-law of Araku Valley MLA Chetti Phalguna, brings a fresh perspective to the electoral arena. With a background in epidemiology and a medical degree from the International School of Medicine-International University of Kyrgyzstan (ISM-IUK), Bishkek, Thanuja Rani presents herself as a formidable challenger. In the 2019 elections, YSRCP emerged victorious in the Araku Lok

Sabha seat, with candidate Goddeti Madhavi clinching a resounding triumph over her competitors. YSRCP's dominance extended to all seven Assembly segments within the constituency, underscoring its formidable electoral prowess.

As the battleground is set for a fiercely contested electoral spectacle, the Araku Lok Sabha constituency captures the nation's attention. With two accomplished women candidates vying for supremacy, the stage is primed for an enthralling display of political prowess and democratic fervour.

## CPM State committee's emergency meeting today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPM) State committee's emergency meeting will be held at the party office in Vijayawada on Thursday to discuss the seats and finalise the candidate list. The CPM is in alliance with the Congress party and CPI for the upcoming elections.

As of now, the Congress party announced five MP and 117 MLA segments and its candidates. Already, the CPM announced the MP segment Araku candidate and it desires to contest another Lok Sabha segment in the State.

Also, the party leadership is showing interest in contesting as many as 10 to 15 Assembly constituencies. So far, no segment has been announced by the party. During the party emergency meeting, as per the seat-sharing pattern with the CPI and Congress, the CPM will announce its contesting segments and candidate lists.

# More YCP leaders set to join Congress ranks

Allocation of tickets to those from YCP fold reflects Congress party's attempt to bolster its ranks

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant development leading up to the upcoming elections, the Congress party has officially unveiled its initial list of candidates. The selection process has seen former and present MLAs from YCP being allocated tickets, marking a strategic move by the party. This decision is poised to resonate deeply within political circles, as it provides a pathway for individuals who were previously uncertain about their political futures. The allocation of tickets to those from the YCP fold reflects the Congress party's attempt to bolster its ranks and appeal to a broader spectrum of voters.

Meanwhile, the emergence of Sharmila as a formidable political force has injected a sense of

uncertainty into the electoral landscape. The possibility of her splintering the anti-government vote is causing unease among alliance parties, casting a shadow over their electoral strategies. The overarching theme of the Congress party's election agenda revolves around highlighting the failures of both Central and State governments, along with the bureaucratic hurdles and burdens faced by the populace.

The All-India Congress Committee (AICC) has finalised candidates for five Lok Sabha and 114 Assembly seats, signaling a concerted effort to assert its presence across various constituencies. Additionally, the alliance with Left parties, including CPI and CPM, underscores a collabora-

tive approach towards the electoral battle. As the countdown to the elections continues, speculation abounds regarding the fate of the remaining seats, with the possibility of a second list being announced to accommodate potential losses to rival alliance parties.

The influx of leaders defecting from the YCP to the Congress party underscores a shifting political landscape, with the latter poised to capitalise on this momentum. Amidst these developments, concerns persist regarding the potential electoral impact of the Congress party's participation. The party's focus on issues such as special status and State division has raised eyebrows among rivals, who accuse them of colluding with BJP.

## CBN playing with...

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Nani praised Jagan Mohan Reddy for ensuring that pensions were distributed on the first of every month, which is history.

Perni pointed out that during the 2019 elections they did not stop the distribution of money to farmers through the Janmabhoomi Committees. Money was distributed to TDP workers through Janmabhoomi Committees. However, they did not complain to the EC to stop the money being deposited in the name of Pasupu Kumkuma. Now, TDP gives lectures against YSRCP to the EC, said Nani. Chandrababu tried to attract the voters with Pasupu Kumkuma and Rythu Nestam, but the people who were deceived taught the TDP a good lesson in the 2019 elections.

Nani said that Chandrababu has come up with the wretched idea of stopping pensions of the poor people across the State. He pointed out that the YSRCP government provided 1.6 lakh secretariat jobs soon after taking the reins of the State. But the Opposition falsely propagated that not a single job was given. The Opposition, which said that jobs were not given by YSRCP, is now saying that YSRCP has given 1.6 lakh jobs.

Perni Nani said that after YS Jagan Mohan Reddy became CM, more than two lakh people were employed. The youth got jobs without bribes. He criticised Chandrababu for shamelessly blaming the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. He appealed to the voters whether they would vote for five years of administration under the YSRCP regime or for those who gave

# TDP leaders join YSRCP

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Telugu Desam Party leader A Harikrishna has joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Son of former Minister Kuthuhallamma, A Harikrishna contested from the Gangadhara Nellore Assembly constituency in 2019. He joined the YSR Congress Party at the Ammagaripalle stay point on Day 7 of the Memantha Siddham Yatra. Deputy Chief Minister K Narayanaswamy was also present on the occasion.



Meanwhile, TDP leaders from Kuppam constituency also joined YSRCP in the presence of the Chief Minister at the Ammagaripalle stay point.

On the 7th day of the Memantha Siddham Yatra in Chittoor, M. Subramaniam Naidu, former chairman of Chittoor Zilla Parishad for Kuppam constituency, along

with Krishna Murthy and Betappalu, joined the party. Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, MP Midhun Reddy and MLC Bharat were also present.

## Dissent within TDP ranks in Srikakulam; high command intervenes

Party in-charges unhappy with appointment of new candidates by high command

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has found itself embroiled in internal strife, particularly in the Srikakulam and Pathapatnam Assembly constituencies within the district.

Discontent has surged following the appointment of new candidates by the TDP high command, sparking open expressions of displeasure from party in-charges.

In Srikakulam, the nomination of Gunda Sankar Rao as the party candidate has ignited protests led by Gunda Lakshmi Devi, a prominent aspirant and constituency in-charge. Lakshmi Devi's supporters vehemently oppose the decision, labelling Sankar's selection as "incorrect" and

declaring their non-cooperation with the official candidate. In response, the party high command has initiated negotiations with Lakshmi Devi and her followers in an effort to quell dissent.

Meanwhile, in the Pathapatnam Assembly constituency, the allocation of the TDP ticket to Mamidi Govinda Rao has triggered opposition from party stalwart and former MLA Kalamata Venkata Ramana, who serves as the constituency in-charge.

Ramana has not only voiced his disapproval but also announced his intention to contest independently with the backing of his supporters and well-wishers. Despite efforts by the party's leadership to engage in discussions with Ramana, a resolution remains elusive at present.

The unfolding discord underscores the challenges faced by the TDP as it navigates internal dissent while striving to maintain unity ahead of the upcoming elections.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dashami: Apr 03 06:29 PM to Apr 04 04:14 PM

Ekadashi: Apr 04 04:14 PM to Apr 05 01:28 PM

Nakshatram: Shravana: Apr 03 09:47 PM to Apr 04 08:11 PM

Dhanishta: Apr 04 08:11 PM to Apr 05 06:06 PM

Rahukalam: 1:51 PM to 3:22 PM

Yamagandam: 6:11 AM to 7:43 AM

Variyam: 11:51 PM to 01:18 AM

Gulika: 9:15 AM to 10:47 AM

Amritakalam: 10:29 AM to 11:59 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:54 AM to 12:43 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 39°

Humidity: 52%

Sunrise: 6:00 AM

Sunset: 6:21 PM

Updated: April 3, 2024 5:00 PM

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"People gave them (TDP) an opportunity in the past to do good but did they fulfill it? Have an open discussion amongst yourselves and make a conscious decision. People should discuss what they (Chandrababu's government) provided in their 10-year rule. Check your bank statement from earlier years. Were you able to find even a single scheme through which Chandrababu deposited one rupee in your account," said Jagan.

The Chief Minister also explained the schemes introduced by the YSRCP government from village secretariats, revolutionising government schools, village clinics, DBT to women beneficiaries, Rythu Bharosa Kendras to help farmers to other doorstep delivery services to help the people.

"We are the only State

which provides pensions to 66 lakh people. Further, we gave Rs 34,370 crore to the farmers (Rythu Bharosa), and free crop insurance of Rs. 7,800 crore was paid. Through input subsidy, the farmers were given Rs. 3,262 crore. And in total, only through DBT, Rs 2.7 lakh crore was directly deposited in the beneficiary accounts under various welfare schemes," said the Chief Minister.

On the seventh day of the Memantha Siddham Yatra, the Chief Minister started his road show from Sadum mandal in the morning and proceeded via Kallur, Damalacheruvu, Gundlapalli, Talapupulapalli, Tenepalli to Pulalappattu where he addressed the public meeting. After the meeting, he started towards the night halt at Renigunta in Tirupati via Gollapalli, Gadanki, Kongaravari Palem, and Mamanduru.

## Nine candidates who switched sides in fray



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the upcoming elections in the combined Krishna district, nine candidates will contest the polls with changed political affiliations. Two sitting MLAs have switched to the Opposition TDP from the ruling YSRCP, and are contesting in the elections.

Similarly, one sitting MP switched loyalty to YSRCP from TDP, while the second one joined JSP from YSRCP. Two sitting MPs are once again contesting from their respective Lok Sabha constituencies of Vijayawada and Machilipatnam. Interestingly, both MPs have switched sides and are now contesting with different party symbols.

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas alias Nani is once again contesting from the same Lok Sabha constituency, however, for the other side. He got a ticket from the ruling YSRCP after defecting from TDP, alleging lack of importance in that party. In the past two elections, he was elected as MP from Vijayawada on TDP ticket. However, this time, he is representing YSRCP.

Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashowry has also changed his political loyalties. He was elected from Machilipatnam in the previous elections in the YSRCP symbol. Following differences with the party leaders in Machilipatnam, he switched to the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and is contesting this time with the support of TDP and BJP. Thanks to these developments, there is an increased curiosity among the people regarding the results. For the parties, on the other hand, the contests in these six Assembly and two Lok Sabha constituencies will be prestigious.

YSRCP's sitting MLA Kolusu Parthasaradhi, who was elected from Penamaluru twice, was denied ticket this time. The party encouraged Minister Jogi Ramesh who is representing Pedana for Penamaluru. So, Parthasaradhi defected from the party and joined TDP and he is contesting from the Nuzvid Assembly segment. Also, Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad joined TDP after YSRCP refused to give him a ticket for the second time. He is contesting as TDP can-

didate from the same constituency.

Likewise, Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan, who was elected as TDP MLA from Gannavaram in the previous elections, is now contesting as the YSRCP candidate from the constituency. After being elected, he was associated with the ruling YSRCP and made allegations against TDP. Interestingly, Yarlagadda Venkata Rao, who lost to Vamsi Mohan, joined TDP and is now a rival candidate to Vamsi.

Former Deputy Speaker Mandali Buddha Prasad also switched sides as the Avanigadda constituency was allotted to the Jana Sena Party as per the seat-sharing agreement. He is a main ticket aspirant from the TDP. However, he joined JSP and is likely to contest. Furthermore, former union minister Yalamachili Satyanarayana Chowdary alias Sujana Chowdary is contesting from the Vijayawada West segment as a BJP candidate. He started his political career with TDP and after losing elections in 2019, he joined BJP.

Also, Devineni Avinash, YSRCP candidate in Vijayawada East, contested from Gudivada in the previous elections as the TDP candidate.

## Narasimha Rao to persist with 'GVL for Vizag' campaign

Ticket for Visakhapatnam was granted to TDP candidate M Sribharat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

BJP's Rajya Sabha member GVL Narasimha Rao has declared his unwavering commitment to the people of Visakhapatnam by announcing his determination to persist with the 'GVL for Vizag' campaign, despite not securing the ticket for the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha constituency. The coveted ticket for Visakhapatnam was instead granted to TDP candidate M Sribharat, the distinguished president of GITAM University and son-in-law of renowned actor Nandamuri Balakrishna. This decision emerged as part of the intricate seat-sharing arrangement among TDP, BJP, and JSP.

Breaking away from conventional norms, Narasimha Rao chose to convene a press conference at his residence in Pandurangapuram, rather than at the BJP office at Lawson's Bay Colony in the city. During the conference, he expressed disappointment over BJP's failure to secure the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha seat for the impending 2024 polls, attributing it to



various factors, including familial lineage.

Highlighting BJP's historical connection with Visakhapatnam, evidenced by its previous victory in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and the 1982 mayoral election, Narasimha Rao underscored the disillusionment felt by numerous BJP supporters, leaders, and cadre following the allocation of the ticket to TDP. Despite his candid acknowledgment of his non-inclusion in the electoral fray, Narasimha Rao reiterated his steadfast commitment to the people of Visakhapatnam, whom he diligently served over the past three years through extensive tours and interactions across diverse segments of society.

## Centre asks...

Continued from Page 1

"It is also known that the general election 2024 is at its doorstep in which wide public participation is expected and without public participation this great event will not be complete. While ensuring public participation in this, it is the responsibility of all of us to take care of health," he said.

Keeping the above in mind, a meeting was held with all the stakeholders and instructions have been given to the ministry to take appropriate action immediately in coordination with the states, he said.

He stressed on taking special care of children and the elderly at home.

In case of symptoms of heat stroke, one should go to nearest community health centre, Ayushman Mandir, or consult a doctor in the district hospital, Mandaviya said.



# 30 kg of ganja seized at Bommuluru check-post

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During a surprise visit to the Bommuluru check-post, located between Eluru and Krishna districts, Geethanjali Sharma, the in-charge collector of Krishna district, and Superintendent of Police (SP) Adnan Nayeem Asmi confiscated 30 kg of illegally transported ganja.

On Wednesday, they conducted inspections at the Bommuluru check-post in Bapulapadu mandal and the Kesarapalli check-post in Gannavaram mandal of the Gannavaram Assembly constituency.

They oversaw vehicle checks at these two posts and interacted with the staff. During the inspections, a car was found transporting 30 kg of ganja from Visakhapatnam to Vijayawada, and it was seized.

In view of the upcoming general elections, the police have intensified checks at border checkpoints to prevent illegal transportation of money,



Krishna district in-charge Collector Geethanjali Sharma and SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi inspecting the seized ganja, transported illegally in a car at the Bommuluru checkpost near Hanuman Junction on Wednesday

liquor, ganja, and other goods. Border checkpoints have been set up by the Krishna and NTR district administrations.

Local police, including the CISF and other Central battalions, are conducting round-the-clock checks on every vehicle. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has instructed that no more than Rs. 50,000 in cash can be carried, and transportation of liquor, ganja, and other valuable goods is prohibited.

In line with this, district collectors and police officials frequently visit the check-posts to oversee the checks. In continuation of this practice, Geethanjali Sharma and SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi made an unannounced visit to the Bommuluru and Kesarapalli checkpoints, which serve as the border check-posts to Eluru and NTR districts, respectively. During these inspections, Gannavaram DSP Jay Surya, Hanuman Junction Inspector Naveen Narasimha Murthy, and others accompanied them.

## ‘Chandrababu complained to EC as part of conspiracy’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress State Medical Wing has claimed that the ban on Village and Ward Volunteers is the conspiracy of Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu to defame the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. Dr Mehboob Sheikh, vice-president of YSRC State Medical Wing, and other leaders said that the TDP chief and his cronies caused difficulties to the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill through ban on volunteers. Everyone is worried that the days of Chandrababu Naidu's rule will return, he said.

Dr Mehboob cautioned that if Chandrababu comes to power again, people, old people, disabled people, women



notice this difference once and think wisely,” he said.

Dr Mehboob stated that Chandrababu complained to the EC as part of his conspiracy against CM Jagan for fear of facing defeat due to the flawless implementation of welfare schemes for the past 59 months.

This sin will not go away. Chandrababu and company are intentionally causing trouble to around 65 lakh elderly, disabled, chronically ill patients, single women etc. just for their selfishness. He deplored that Chandrababu has brought a situation where the people who have been getting pensions at their homes with peace of mind are now living in extreme anxiety, stress and fear.

and people with chronic diseases will face a hundred times the situation of today to get social security pensions. He claimed that if YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is the Chief Minister, the pension will come again at people's doorstep and the fruits of welfare will reach the beneficiaries. “The YSRC State Medical Wing requests the voters to

## Senior YCP leader Killi Kruparani quits; set to join Cong

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a surprising turn of events, Srikakulam district's YCP received a significant blow as the elections drew near. The party's leader and former union minister, Killi Kriparani, has tendered her resignation from the party. The announcement came during a media conference held in Srikakulam on Wednesday. Kriparani, in her statement, revealed feeling consistently sidelined and marginalised within the party. Allegations surfaced of constant disregard and schemes to suppress her within the Tekkali constituency. She cited instances where her loyalty to YCP and Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy remained steadfast, even against the directives of the Congress High Command during Jagan's consolation yatra.

Having contested and won the Lok Sabha elections in



including her omission from consideration for the Srikakulam MP or Tekkali MLA tickets, prompted her to distance herself from YCP activities. Speculations hinted at her potential shift towards the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

However, it appears that Kriparani has resolved to join the Congress ranks. Recent visits to Hyderabad and Delhi included discussions with Congress leaders, signaling her imminent affiliation. Sources suggest she might contest the Srikakulam MP seat on behalf of Congress, while there are indications of her son's interest in contesting the Assembly elections. The political landscape in Srikakulam district is poised for upheaval as Killi Kriparani's defection marks a significant realignment of political allegiances ahead of the upcoming elections.

2009 under the Congress banner, defeating the formidable TDP leader, Kinjarapu Yerran Naidu, Kruparani ascended to the post of Minister of State for Communications in the UPA II government. Following YCP's rise to power, she assumed the role of district president but was later displaced when Dharmana Krishnadas took over. Reports suggest that Kriparani harbored aspirations for a Rajya Sabha seat, which didn't materialize. Subsequent events,

## CM Jagan assures support to 23-year-old affected by paralysis



PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The family members of M Mukesh, a 23-year-old resident of Sadum village in Chittoor district, who suffers from paralysis, met Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and explained his difficulties in covering medical expenses, as his family is already burdened with rising treatment costs.

During the Memantha Siddham Yatra, Mukesh's family had the opportunity to meet the Chief Minister. Jagan personally invited Mukesh onto the bus to enquire about his health in detail. Mukesh's family informed the Chief Minister that he would require funds of over Rs 15 lakh to cover his medical bills and requested assistance from the government.

The Chief Minister directed officials from Aarogyasri to document Mukesh's information. Encouraged by the Chief Minister's assurance, the family remains hopeful that Mukesh will soon recover and regain a normal life.

## Election observer visits Durga temple



Durga Temple officials presenting a portrait to Special Expenditure Observer Neena Nigam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Retired IRS officer Neena Nigam, who has been appointed as Special Expenditure Observer to Andhra Pradesh for the upcoming elections, visited the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The temple authorities

accorded a warm welcome to her.

Later, the temple Vedic Scholars gave blessings to her at the Veda Ashirvachanam Mandapam. Also, they presented her with Laddu Prasadam, Sesha Vastram and a Durga Devi portrait.

Vijayawada Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) Bhavani Sankar and others accompanied Nigam.

## Anganwadi timings changed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of summer, the working timings of Anganwadi Centres have been changed in NTR district to avoid untoward incidents for the children. During the summer season, these schools should work from 8 am to 12 noon. In this connection, NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao issued instructions to the District Child and Women Welfare and Integrated Child Development Services officials

on Wednesday.

He said in a press release here on Wednesday, that the new timings would come into force from Thursday with immediate effect. Also, these new timings will continue up to May 31, he stated. After having the mid-day meal, children will be sent to their homes. Also, he announced the summer holiday for Anganwadi workers from May 1 to 15, and for the



assistants from May 16 to 30.

He asked the Anganwadi workers and assistants to distribute nutritious food to the beneficiaries during the summer holidays without interruption. Also, they should keep adequate ORS packets and drinking water at the centres. The entire process will be monitored by Women and Child Welfare Officer G Uma Devi, he added.

## PV module manufacturing facility launched

Facility equipped to manufacture 500 MW of fully automated, solar PV modules

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In good news to the people of Andhra Pradesh, Indosol Solar Private Limited, a subsidiary of Shirdi Sai Electricals Limited (SSEL), on Wednesday commenced production from its cutting-edge solar PV module manufacturing facility in Ramayapatnam, Nellore, AP. Manugunta Mahidhar Reddy formally switched on the Stringer unit to commission the 500 MW modules line at the project, thus heralding India's ambitious plan to boost domestic manufacturing under the PLI schemes.

The facility's commissioning on March 31 underscored Indosol's commitment to delivering superior-quality solar products and reducing India's dependence on imports.

At the commissioning stage, the facility is equipped to manufacture 500 MW of fully automated, solar PV modules with different glass-glass and glass-back sheet combinations, including TOPCon (tunnel oxide passivated contact), and HJT (heterojunction technology) modules. Rs 1,300 crore will be invested in developing the initial phase, built on 30 acres of land allocated so far.

Once completed, this will be the world's first fully integrated quartz-to-module manu-



The facility's commissioning on March 31 underscored Indosol's commitment to delivering superior-quality solar products and reducing India's dependence on imports.

facturing plant and have a final capacity of 30 GW upstream and 20 GW downstream facilities. The complete project is envisaged to be developed in phases over the next five years.

This project will become a grand scheme for advanced manufacturing, economic development and employment generation in Andhra Pradesh.

The land required for this project is being purchased and offered at full market value including service charges by APIIC/APMB as per the 'Land Acquisition for Others (LA)' norms.

By December 2024, phase 1A of the project will be completed, which will have manufacturing capacities for 500MW modules, 500MW Cells, and 500MW Ingot-wafer, providing direct employment to 800 people.

"Once the full scale of operations of our integrated project is achieved, Indosol Solar will have a positive economic impact on up to 100,000 people while creating direct and indirect employment for over 32,000 people in the state of Andhra Pradesh," said Sharat Chandra, CEO of Shirdi Sai Electricals Limited.



## APBRAGCET results published

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (APSWREIS) Secretary Dr Mahesh Kumar Ravirala released the results of the Dr BR Ambedkar Gurukulam Common Entrance Test (APBRAGCET) for junior inter admissions in Gurukulam, at their office at Tadepalli on Wednesday.

As many as 40,853 students had registered their names to attend the entrance exam, however, only 35,629 attended. There are around 13,560 seats available. Of them, 9,280 seats are for the girl students and 4,280 seats for boy students are available in colleges.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Mahesh Kumar said that based on talent, students will be allowed to take admissions to various courses in the Dr BR Ambedkar Gurukulams. The results have been published on the website apbragcet.apcfss.in.

## POLYCET free coaching: Classes for second batch from April 8

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commissioner of Technical Education Department Chadalavada Nagarani has said that students should take advantage of the special training classes being offered for the entrance examination of POLYCET-2024 by the government free of cost.

She said that comprehensive training given to students with the aim of increasing polytechnic admissions is getting a good response. On Wednesday, Nagarani visited several entrance coaching centres including MBTS Government Polytechnic in Guntur, where POLYCET coaching is offered, and distributed study material to the students. She announced that the second batch of free POLYCET-2024 coaching will



be started on April 8 due to a huge response from students and demand from parents.

Commissioner Nagarani said training is being provided to everyone who wants polytechnic admissions irrespective of age. She explained that classes will be held in 87 government and 182 private polytechnics in the State till April 24 and the grand pre-

final entrance exam will be held on April 25.

Study materials have been prepared in both the languages to help Telugu and English medium students. She said that there is a good demand for this training in some parts of the State and the Technical Education Department is making preparations to start another batch from April 8 as per the wish-

es of the students and their parents.

Nagarani said that the study materials will be provided to each and every student. Mathematics will be taught for two hours, physics for one hour and chemistry for another hour. The POLYCET entrance exam will take place on April 27.

Students, along with their parents, participated in the programme and talked to the Commissioner personally about the employment opportunities available after polytechnic education and cleared their doubts.

Technical Education and Training Council Secretary Ramana Babu, Joint Secretary Janakiram, Deputy Secretary Ravikumar and College Principal Shekhar participated in the programme.





# Two pensioners die while waiting to take pensions

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A septuagenarian pensioner and an octogenarian women pensioner died while waiting for their turn to take social security pension at Nerabailu village in Chandragiri mandal on Wednesday and at Ganguru in NRT district.

Family members told the media that the deceased Nanne Saheb (76) belonged to Nerabailu village. He went to the village secretariat to take his pension amount. He sat in a chair in the secretariat and was waiting for his turn. However, sometime later he collapsed.

The family members took Nanne Saheb to a private hospital where he was declared dead. The family members of the deceased alleged that the politics on disbursement of pensions had taken the life of Nanne Saheb.

Meanwhile, in a similar incident, an octogenarian pensioner Vajramma (80) died while waiting to receive pension at Ganguru village in Penamaluru mandal in



Krishna district, according to her family members. YSRCP leaders alleged that the TDP created hurdles for the disbursement of pension at the doorsteps which led to the deaths of some pensioners.



However, former Minister Amarnath Reddy dismissed the allegations that disbursement of pensions was delayed due to the TDP. The disbursement of pensions was delayed since there is no money in the government exchequer, he claimed.

The YSRCP leaders intentionally put the pensioners in trouble and forced them to come to the secretariats in scorching heat to gain political mileage and to blame the TDP, he lashed out. "The YSRCP is using the delay in disbursement of pensions to win the elections," the former minister

flayed. TDP leader and former MLA Tangirala Sowmya accused the YSRCP of launching a malicious campaign against the TDP and put the blame on TDP for the disbursement of pensions. The YSRCP has resorted to a vicious campaign against the TDP on delay in disbursement of pensions, he lambasted. She questioned the officials why so much delay took place to disburse social security pensions.

# MCMC approval is required for advertisements in news channels: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Sumit Kumar has made it clear that the political parties should obtain the approval of MCMC committee in advance for the advertisements to be aired on the TV channels.

The District Collector in a statement here on Wednesday said that advertisements, meetings and rallies related to political parties are being closely monitored.



Since the release of the general election schedule in 2024, the political parties should get the approval of MCMC committee in advance for the advertisements to be aired on various TV channels.

Regarding paid news, the officials and staff performing their duties under the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) are being

thoroughly examined.

Regarding the campaigns and announcements of the political parties in the district, details such as date, time, which channel, which party should be prepared and handed over to the nodal officer of the MCMC Committee. The Collector said that the committee would examine and give permission. Paid news would be credited to the accounts of the respective parties.

## R Raghavendra assumes charge as SP

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

R Raghavendra assumed charge as Superintendent of police of Palnadu district here on Wednesday.

Raghavendra worked here as additional SP (Admin) in the district earlier. After the transfer of Ravi Shankar Reddy, he was asked to be the in-charge SP of the district. Raghavendra will continue as district SP till further orders are issued in this regard.

Meanwhile, Eluru range IG, GVG Ashok Kumar was appointed as Guntur range in-



charge IG following the transfer of IG G Palaraju.

Election Commission removed Guntur Range IG G Palaraju. Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy directed Eluru Range IG GVG Ashok Kumar to take charge as in-charge Guntur range IG.

## Pawan Kalyan indisposed; programmes cancelled

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan election campaign programmes in Tenali have been cancelled as he is indisposed.

Jana Sena party here on Wednesday said that Pawan Kalyan is suffering from fever. On the advice of doctors, he cancelled all his programmes and is taking rest. Pawan Kalyan would resume his election campaign as soon as he completely recovered from fever, the JSP leader said.

It may be mentioned here that Pawan Kalyan had to participate



in the election campaign programme in Tenali and other places on Wednesday.

# Pawan Kalyan urges JSP activists to help elderly, disabled people to get pensions

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Asking Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy what is the problem to disburse pensions to beneficiaries; Jana Sena Chief K Pawan Kalyan appealed to the JSP activists to help the elderly and differently-abled people to get their pensions at the secretariats.

On social media 'X' on Wednesday, Pawan Kalyan

said: When Pawan Kalyan movies are released, the revenue employees are deployed to the cinema theatres. Then, what is the problem with disbursing pension to the elderly people, differently-abled people and widows? Are there no employees to disburse pensions?"

"The state government has the credit of deploying employees to the liquor shops

during the Coronavirus pandemic time. Pensions can be given at home by village and ward secretariat employees and village revenue administration. The Government decisions give strength to the melodramas and blame games of YSRCP leaders," he lashed out.

Pawan Kalyan appealed to the Jana Sena activists to help the elderly people and differ-

ently-abled people by taking them to the secretariats on their vehicles carefully, help them in getting pensions and later drop them at their homes. As a social responsibility, you should help them to get pensions, he told the Jana Sena workers.

The Jana Sena chief also urged the Telugu Desam party and BJP activists to take part in the programme.

# Ambulance owners warned of action if exorbitant charges demanded



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Transport Officer T Umamaheswar Rao warned the ambulance owners of action, if they demand exorbitant charges.

As the district Collector received complaints that the ambulance owners were demanding exorbitant charges, the DTO held a meeting with the ambulance owners here on

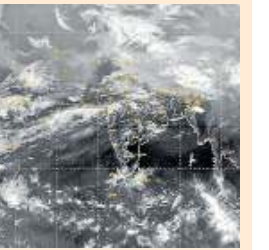
Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, T Umamaheswar Rao said that the charges of ambulances should be displaced on the ambulance. Private ambulances should be parked 300 meters away from the government hospital. Actions should be taken, if the staff of the government hospital are coddled and charged high fees, he warned.

The DTO said that complaints are being received and a monitoring cell is being set up in the government hospital.

If the ambulance owners demand exorbitant charges, they can complain on mobile numbers 8500814033, 9390411784, 9154294686 and also through WhatsApp.

District Medical Health Officer Dr D Maheswar Rao and DCH SP Suryanarayana were among those who were present.



## Heat wave conditions likely to prevail in south coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next four days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday. In a daily weather report here, it said that the same situation is likely to prevail in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on April 4, 5 and 6.

Hot, humid and uncomfortable weather is likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 24 hours. Light to moderate rain is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from April 7 to 9 and in Rayalaseema on April 8 & 9.

Dry weather is likely to prevail in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next four days, in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next seven days and in Rayalaseema during the next five days. The highest maximum temperature of 42.6 degree celsius was recorded at Anantapur in Rayalaseema on Tuesday, the report added.

## YSRCP 4th largest party in Upper House

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP scripted history by winning all 11 seats in Rajya Sabha, which will fall vacant in June this year. By bagging 11 seats, the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led party has become the fourth largest political party in Parliament's Upper House.

BJP leads in Rajya Sabha with 97 members while Congress has 29 and TMC 13 members.

In February, the YSRCP had unanimously secured all three Rajya Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh. The party nominated Golla Babu Rao, Vaviri Subbareddy, and Meda Raghunath Reddy for three positions. Currently, YSRCP's tally stands at 11 in Rajya Sabha.

The newly elected members Subbareddy, Babu Rao and Raghunath Reddy will take their oath as Rajya Sabha members in the national capital on Thursday.

## Ponguleti decries KTR's remarks

Says probe will bring out all names, however big they may be

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Finding fault with Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president KT Rama Rao's 'thata theesta' remark, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has said that people will decide who will remove whose 'thata'.

Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy asserted that the state government would not spare the guilty in the phone tapping case however big they might be.

He was speaking to media persons after checking arrangements at Tukkuguda for the Jana Jata to be held on April 6th along with IT Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu, CM advisor Vem Narendar Reddy and others. Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy alleged that the previous BRS government had tapped not only his phone but also the phones of his staff. He said that there was no need for the former Minister (KTR) to shake if

'THATA THEESTHA'

Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy asserted that the state government would not spare the guilty in the phone tapping case however big they might be

someone spoke about phone tapping. He said that the Congress government would not spare anyone involved in the phone tapping case, however big they might be. He alleged that the BRS party had been feigning concern for farmers only for the sake of the Lok Sabha elections. He asked BRS leaders to spell out whether they had helped farmers any time.

The Revenue Minister made it clear that their government is ready to implement the 6-guarantees as well as other

schemes. He said that the Congress government would implement the Rs.2 lakh loan waiver scheme.

Sridhar Babu alleged that Bharat Rashtira Samithi and the Bharatiya Janata Party were enacting dramas in regard to phone tapping. He said that as per the Indian Telecom Act no one had the right to tap others' phone calls. He said that the Centre had the right to initiate action against the persons involved in phone tapping. Sridhar Babu questioned the Centre as to why it was not using its powers and initiating steps taking suo motu notice of the phone tapping case that took place in Telangana. He alleged that the BJP was in favour of the BRS party in regard to the phone tapping case. He made it clear that the officials were investigating the phone tapping case without intervention of the government.

# Disbursement of pensions rocks state, TDP, YSRCP blame each other

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The disbursement of social security pensions has rocked the state with allegations and counter allegations by the ruling and opposition party leaders even as three pensioners reportedly died while waiting to get pension.

The delay in disbursing pensions led to major controversy in the state as the ruling YSRCP is trying to utilize it for election mileage while the TDP is trying to hold the government responsible for the same.

It may be mentioned here that the Citizens for Democracy appealed to the CEO to remove volunteers in disbursing pensions as they were acting in favour of the ruling party. The CEO ordered the officials concerned to remove the volun-



unteers in disbursing pensions. After a lot of deliberations, the officials decided to disburse pensions in the secretariats and asked the pensioners to go to the ward and village secretariats. Some octogenarian and differently-abled pensioners were seen being carried on wheelchairs and cots to the secretariats by some persons, said to be YSRCP activists.

Interestingly, some pensioners were seen holding a black flags in their hands to register protest against those who caused delay in disbursing pensions while going to secretariats. Large number of pensioners thronged to the secretariats across the state after they got information about disbursement of pensions. The disbursement of pensions was carried out in

the night also.

Significantly, according to the political analysts, the TDP attempts to remove the volunteers in disbursement of pensions, has boomeranged as the pensioners were seen blaming the opposition party for the delay.

JSP chief Pawan Kalyan recalled that the government used the government employees to sell liquor during Coronavirus time and questioned why the government failed in taking steps to disburse pension at the doorsteps by using their services now. Former Minister Devineni Umamaheswar Rao alleged that the YSRCP led government intentionally delayed disbursement of pensions to gain political mileage and he took strong exception to force the pensioners to stand under the scorching heat.

He recalled that pensions were disbursed during the TDP regime despite there being no volunteer system. He held Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, SERP CEO Muralidhar Reddy and CMO head Dhanunjay Reddy responsible for the mess in disbursing pensions.

Former Minister Perni Venkatramaiah accused Chandrababu Naidu of creating obstacles for disbursement of pensions. He said that pensions had been disbursed at the doorsteps for 58 months. If the volunteer system was anti-people, the people would defeat the YSRCP, he asserted.

Minister Jogi Ramesh blamed Chandrababu Naidu for delay in pensions as they approached election officials seeking removal of volunteers.

# Morphing Jagan's photos: YSRC lodges complaint against TD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress leaders led by AP State Planning Board Vice-Chairman and Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu, on Wednesday, lodged a complaint with Additional CEO Koteswara Rao seeking strict action against those who are morphing photos of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and making them viral on social media.

Further they sought action to be taken against the bad propaganda of Telugu Desam through voice messages on pensions on the second day as well against the Jagan government.

Malladi Vishnu criticised Chandrababu for distorting facts, propagating lies to people and spreading mud on the government under which Chandrababu is spreading lies alleging diversion of pension funds to contractors



which is totally false.

He alleged that Chandrababu is doing personality abuse especially through social media under which many websites which were operated by the TD are putting up posts in the background of the general elections to disturb the reputation of the Chief Minister.

He pointed out that although it is clear in the election rules that caste and religion should not be mentioned, TD leader GVS Anjaneyulu made inappropriate

comments against YSRC in a Church.

Malladi Vishnu alleged that TD is repeatedly complaining against the officials who are working impartially. Also, he said that the YSRC asked the Additional CEO to inform about the actions taken by EC on the complaints filed by YSRC. MLA Vishnu deplored that on the other hand, many pensioners across the state lost their lives due to Telugu Desam's disruption of pension distribution and demanded that Chandrababu should take moral responsibility for this.

APSFL Chairman Poonuru Gautham Reddy, Navaratnalu Programme Executive Vice Chairman Ankam Reddy Naga Narayanamurthy, YSRC Legal Cell State president Manohar Reddy and Legal Cell members Srinivas Reddy and others were present.



INDIA CORNER

## 'Sagar Kavach' conducted off Lakshadweep Islands

A two-day exercise involving all maritime security agencies of the country was conducted off the Lakshadweep Islands from April 1-2, officials said on Wednesday. During the exercise, validation of the effectiveness of coastal security mechanisms while dealing with asymmetric threats emanating from the sea was undertaken, they said. Assets of the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Police, fisheries, customs and other security agencies were engaged in the coastal security exercise -- Sagar Kavach 01/24. "Validation of effectiveness of coastal security mechanism while dealing with asymmetric threat emanating from the sea were undertaken," a senior official said. The exercise witnessed enhanced preparedness, response mechanism, surveillance capabilities and coordination between the coastal security stakeholders, the officials said.



## Man robbed in moving auto in Gurugram

A Bihar native was robbed by four people in an auto near IFFCO Chowk Metro Station here, police on Wednesday said. The accused snatched his mobile and transferred Rs 58,000 from his UPI account before leaving him on a roadside. According to the complaint filed by Rahul Kumar Bhagat, a native of Siwan district in Bihar, the incident happened Monday evening when he was returning home in an auto. "One of them took my mobile password and forced me to reveal the UPI PIN. After that, they dropped me on the way and took off with my phone. Later I found they transferred Rs 58,000 from my account in two transactions," Bhagat, who lives in Sector 33, said, according to police. Following his complaint, an FIR was registered against four unnamed people under sections 379 (theft) and 420 (cheating) of the IPC at Sector 29 Police Station on Tuesday, police said. A police officer said that they are trying to identify the auto and the accused with the help of footage from CCTVs in the area.



## Andaman cops develop chatbot for effective policing during polls

Two young officers stationed at a remote district of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI) have brought pride to the entire Union Territory police department with their in-house chatbot named 'Election Mitra'. Developed by North and Middle Andaman SP Geetanjali Khandelwal (IPS) and Rangat SDPO Rahul L Nair (IPS), 'Election Mitra' has been trained on all handbooks of the Election Commission of India (ECI) pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of police. It provides prompt and accurate responses to user enquiries by referencing authentic sources, an official said. This initiative underscores the emphasis placed by DGP Devesh Chandra Srivastava on the development and utilisation of state-of-the-art technology in everyday policing, the official added. Khandelwal, a former army captain, is renowned not only as an excellent team leader, but also for her involvement in various social initiatives.



# No Muslim living in India will lose citizenship: Rajnath Singh

Says Opposition creating confusion on Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said no Muslim living in India will lose his or her citizenship and accused the opposition parties of creating confusion in the community about the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Addressing an election rally in support of the party's Lok Sabha candidate Atul Garg in Ghaziabad, he said the BJP does not engage in politics on the basis of caste, creed and religion but stands for nation-building. "We said that if our government is formed, we will make a citizenship law. And I want to tell you that after becoming the Home Minister (in 2014), I started this process by talking

to the prime minister but due to a lack of clear majority in the Rajya Sabha, that bill could not be passed there whereas it was passed in the Lok Sabha," Singh said. Later, when Amit Shah became the Home Minister, he took this responsibility on his shoulders and the bill was passed with full majority in both the Houses of Parliament, he said. The rules for the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, were notified in March this year, four years after the contentious law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before



December 31, 2014. "Now the opposition people try to create this illusion among our Muslim brothers that now you will be thrown out of the country. I want to tell my Muslim brothers that rest

assured we believe in the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', i.e. the whole world is our family. No matter what caste or creed one is born in or a follower of any religion or sect, we consider everyone as a member of our family," Singh said. "Sisters and brothers, anyone who is a Muslim living in India is not going to lose their citizenship. This kind of confusion is being created by our opponents. You go and tell our Muslim sisters and brothers about this," the BJP leader told the gathering. The minister said the BJP has delivered on what it promised in its manifestos since the days when the party was known as Jana Sangh, whether it was the issue of Ram

temple in Ayodhya or abolishing triple talaq. "I only want to say one thing for the BJP, we do what we promise. I want to remind you that when we worked as Jana Sangh, we had then said in our manifesto that the day we get a clear majority in Parliament, then no power in the world would be able to stop us from making a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya. This was part of our manifesto 1984 onwards," Singh said. "We had talked about abolishing triple talaq and we did it. Congress workers would say to us why we are poking our nose into other religions. Whether it's the women of Hindu community, or Muslim, Christian, Parsi, we look at everyone with respect.

## BETTER HEATWAVE MANAGEMENT

# Continuous efforts necessary to generate awareness

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuous efforts towards generating awareness is necessary for better management of heat waves, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Wednesday and added effective addressing leads to effective management. Mandaviya, who chaired a meeting to review public health preparedness for the management of heat-related illnesses, highlighted the importance of timely action as soon as India Meteorological Department (IMD) alerts are received in the states. "Timely, advance and wide awareness among the people on the preventive measures will hugely support in reducing the severe impact of such heat waves," he said. Highlighting the lack of accurate data from the ground, Mandaviya noted the impor-



Union Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar stressed on the formation of state- and district-level committees for information and awareness campaigns. She also highlighted the importance of equipping Ayushman Arogya Mandirs with water coolers, ice packs and other basic necessities. She emphasised the need for states to accelerate field-level implementation of state action plans for addressing the effects of heat waves. A granular status and analysis of overall heatstroke forecasting, pattern, climatology and vulnerable zones in India and areas most prone to increased heat waves was made by IMD officials, covering the trajectory of rainfall patterns, humidity and forecast of transition from El Nino to El Nino-Southern Oscillation.

ance of creating a central database with inputs from states to share field-level information on heat waves, including deaths and cases, so that a realistic assessment of the situation can be made. He also advised senior officials to meet with states for better coordination and understanding, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in the efficient management of heat-related illnesses.



## AAP leaders to go on fast against Kejriwal's arrest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday gave a call for a nationwide collective fast on April 7 at Jantar Mantar against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, party leader Gopal Rai said on Wednesday. Addressing a press conference, Rai, who is also the Delhi state convener of AAP, said the party has decided that on April 7, a nationwide collective fast will be observed to garner maximum support from the public for Kejriwal's fight. "Those who are against the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, who want to save the country's democracy, and stop injustice and dictatorship, are urged to observe collective fasts in their homes, villages, neighbourhoods, block headquarters, tehsils, districts, and state capitals," he said. On April 7, a collective fast will be observed at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, where all Delhi ministers, MLAs, MPs, councillors, officials, and workers of Delhi will participate. Rai also urged people to either collectively pray or listen to the devotional song "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram" on YouTube. "You can sing it collectively. Together, we will pray for Kejriwal to receive strength and fight against tyranny while he is in jail. We can fight to bring the truth to light," he added. Rai, who is also a minister in Delhi cabinet, asked people to send pictures to the website kejrivalkoashirvaad.com. "This fight is not Kejriwal's personal battle. His fight is to save the country and its democracy from dictatorship, oppression, and excesses," he added.

## Kejriwal lost 4.5 kg since arrest, alleges AAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has been rapidly losing weight since his arrest on March 21, senior AAP leader Atishi claimed on Wednesday and accused the BJP of putting his health at risk by keeping him in jail. She said the Aam Aadmi Party will seek legal help over the chief minister's health condition. However, the administration of Tihar jail, where Kejriwal is lodged till April 15, said his weight has been constant since his judicial custody began. A senior Tihar jail official said the chief minister's vitals are normal. "Upon arrival on April 1, Kejriwal was examined by two doctors and all vitals were normal. Also, his weight is constant at 65 kg till date. Home-cooked food is being provided as per court order," the jail administration said in a statement. As per official records from the Tihar jail, Kejriwal's weight was 65 kg, sugar level 139 (random blood sugar) and blood pressure (BP) was recorded 120/82 on April 1. The weight remained at 65 kg, sugar level increased to 182 (RBS) and BP stood at 121/83 on April 2. His weight was recorded at 65 kg, sugar level at 140 (RBS) and BP was 116/82.

## Man slits his throat in front of Chief Justice in K'taka HC

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A man tried to end his life on the premises of Karnataka High Court on Wednesday by allegedly slitting his throat with a knife in front of Chief Justice Nilay Vipinchandra Anjaria in Court Hall One, police said. According to the police, Srinivas, who reportedly hails from Mysuru, handed over a file to security staff at the entrance of Court Hall One, and before anyone could realise what was happening, he had slit his own throat in the presence of Chief Justice Anjaria. The security personnel

responded immediately and rushed Srinivas to Bowring Hospital, where he is now under treatment, a senior police officer said. "We don't know why he took such an extreme step. He entered Court Hall One and slit his throat with a knife. Our security staff deployed inside saw it happen and immediately rescued him. He is hospitalised," he said. No suicide note was found at the spot, he added. Chief Justice Anjaria expressed concern about the security lapse on the high court premises and asked those in charge how the man managed to being a sharp object

inside court. He also ordered police to conduct a panchnama (record of findings and evidence) of the spot and told them not to touch the knife. The contents of the file that Srinivas gave to the security staff are unknown, and the court has said it would not check the documents as it was not presented to court by a designated advocate. The high court also said that the authorities must not receive any documents without the court's order. Police are still ascertaining the reason for the man's suicide attempt and are waiting to record his statement once he is declared fit by doctors.

## Criminals in UP are now scared of going to jails, says UP CM Yogi Adityanath

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Slamming the previous Uttar Pradesh governments over law and order, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said the criminals are now scared even to enter the state's jails. The BJP leader said unlike the Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP)-led governments in the state, his government follows a "zero tolerance" policy towards crime. "You stop indulging in

criminal activities or be prepared to pay the price," he said, addressing a "Jan Chaupal" at Fatehpur Sikri in Agra. Adityanath referred again to his government's claim that the criminals were earlier getting their bail cancelled so that they could stay safe in jails. "Now they are saying don't even send us to jail. We are afraid to go there too," he said, according to a statement issued here. His remark comes days after jailed gangster-politi-

cian Mukhtar Ansari died of cardiac arrest in Banda's Rani Durgawati Medical College. The five-time MLA had been behind bars in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab since 2005 and had over 60 criminal cases against him. A post-mortem report confirmed that he died of cardiac arrest. However, a magisterial inquiry was ordered as the opposition parties raised questions over Ansari's death amid allegations by his family that he died due to "slow poisoning" in the Banda jail.

## ASSERTS MODI HONOURED PEOPLE'S SENTIMENTS

# SP, Congress didn't want Ram temple in Ayodhya: Amit Shah

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR/MORAD-ABAD (UP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the Samajwadi Party and the Congress were not in favour of the Ram temple being constructed in Ayodhya. Addressing a public meeting in Muzaffarnagar to seek votes for BJP candidate Sanjeev Balian ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Shah said it was the Narendra Modi government that honoured the sentiments of people and built the temple. He also said that the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has stopped the migration of people from western Uttar Pradesh by improving the law and order situation and it is the criminals who are now leaving the state. "Akhilesh Yadav ji's party (SP) and the Congress never wanted the Ram temple to be built in Ayodhya. The Congress kept the issue of Ram Janmabhoomi stuck for 70 years but Modi ji won the

case, performed bhoomi puja and also the consecration of Ramlalla," Shah said. The SP and the Congress have formed an alliance in Uttar Pradesh for the general election. Criticising the INDIA bloc, he said, all those who were part of the opposition alliance were involved in scams. "Those part of the arrogant alliance are the ones involved in scams and corruption worth Rs 12 lakh crore... they (INDIA bloc) held a rally where they talked about giving protection to the corrupt," Shah said. "Today I am telling the entire people of Uttar Pradesh from this platform that in 2014, Modi ji said that those who have committed corruption will go to jail and in 2024 also he is saying the same thing. The aim of the opposition is to make people from their family chief ministers and prime ministers. The aim of Modi ji is to make the poor, farmers, helpless, Dalits and tribals strong and stand on their feet," he added.



# Airborne human DNA aid forensic test

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Airborne human DNA could be used in forensic analysis of crime sites that have been wiped clean of fingerprints and trace evidence, a new research has found. Offenders are unlikely to totally prevent their DNA from being released into the environment, as human DNA can be found in the air after people have spoken or even so much as breathed, researchers explained. While collecting trace DNA, comprising human cells, is common in criminal investigations, researchers said "environmental DNA" (eDNA) from solid surfaces, soil, water and air are providing new avenues for gathering evidence. Comparing samples taken from air-conditioning units in offices and homes, the research team, led by Flinders University in Australia, found that human DNA could be collected on the surfaces of these units and from the air, with air samples likely representing more recent occupation and surface samples representing prior occupation. "Our study also showed that air circulating through air-conditioning could collect human DNA, which further supports the idea that human DNA can be found in the air and settle on surfaces," said Emily Bibbo, a PhD candidate at Flinders University's College



of Science and Engineering, and author of the study published in the journal Electrophoresis. Biological material is routinely collected from crime scenes and exhibits, and these new methods have potential in

identifying the usual users of a room as well as visitors, said Mariya Goray, senior lecturer in forensic science, Flinders University. "It is very unlikely that an average offender, even with forensic awareness, could total-

ly prevent their DNA from being released into the environment," said Goray. "We now know that eDNA and eRNA shed from sources such as skin or saliva can be detected in the environment, including soil, ice, air and water." "We may be able to use (eDNA) as evidence to prove if someone has been in the room, even if they wore gloves or wiped surfaces clean to remove the evidence," said Bibbo. The researchers recommended follow-up studies that can determine the best location for air collection devices, along with the appropriate time after a crime to test and acquire DNA of interest, if it is present.

# EC reviews law and order, security situation for LS polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday directed the chief secretaries and directors general of police of all states as well as the heads of central agencies to ensure peaceful and inducement-free Lok Sabha polls and maintain a strict vigil along the interstate and international borders to plug the inflow of illicit liquor, cash, drugs and arms. Preemptive measures to address communal tensions based on past experiences and the imperative of securing porous borders against

illegal activities were also discussed. Recent violence and turmoil in Manipur and its ramifications in the conduct of a peaceful election were also addressed, with the EC urging for swift action to assist internally-displaced persons and ensure their participation in the electoral process, the poll panel said. The EC had convened the meeting to bring all the stakeholders concerned on one platform for a seamless coordination and cooperation among the officials of neighbouring states and Union ter-

ritories. Other key issues discussed at the meeting included a diligent deployment of central forces, logistical support for the movement and transportation of the security personnel and identification and monitoring of flashpoints in border areas that might have ramifications for the election process, the poll panel said. The commission underscored the importance of strict vigilance to curb the movement of contraband items, including narcotics, liquor, arms and explosives, across the international borders.



## Air turbulence

Vistara faces flight disruptions due to crew shortage; DGCA demands daily updates

Flight operations of Tata Group's Vistara Airlines, which has earned a reputation for its premium services and reliability in the Indian aviation sector, have of late been marred by cancellations and delays. Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, has attributed the disruptions to a shortage of flight crew. Passengers have been left stranded and inconvenienced, with some facing difficulties in rebooking their travel plans at short notice. Vistara's troubles come at a time when the aviation sector is recovering from the impact of the pandemic, with domestic travel demand showing signs of revival. The airline industry has been navigating a delicate balance between scaling up operations to meet growing demand while managing operational constraints and ensuring passenger safety. In response to the crew shortage crisis, Vistara has assured passengers that it is working diligently to address the issue and minimise disruptions to flight services.



The airline is actively recruiting and training additional crew members to augment its workforce and improve operational resilience. For passengers affected by flight cancellations and delays, Vistara has offered options for rebooking or refunding tickets, along with assistance in making alternative travel arrangements. The airline has reiterated its commitment to prioritising customer satisfaction and minimising inconvenience caused by the disruptions.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has stepped in, demanding daily reports from the airlines regarding the status of flight operations, crew availability and measures taken to mitigate the impact of disruptions on passengers. The crew shortage issue highlights the challenges faced by airlines in managing their workforce in the midst of evolving dynamics of the aviation industry, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic flights have been reporting disruptions, including layoffs, furloughs and changes in travel demand patterns, much to the consternation of passengers. The incident underscores the importance of effective workforce management and contingency planning for airlines to ensure smooth and uninterrupted flight operations. As the aviation industry strives to rebound from the challenges posed by the pandemic, maintaining a robust and adequately trained workforce is critical to meeting the evolving needs of passengers and sustaining growth. This is what DGCA must be concerned about and has taken up on priority. As Vistara endeavours to overcome the crew shortage crisis and restore normalcy to its flight operations, the incident serves as a reminder of the complex and dynamic nature of the aviation industry. Effective collaboration among airlines, regulators and stakeholders is essential to address challenges promptly and ensure the seamless functioning of the aviation ecosystem.

### PICTALK



Devotees at BAPS Hindu Mandir, in Abu Dhabi

## The escalating perils of global terrorism

The recent ISIS-K attack outside Moscow has elicited widespread condemnation and intensified global anxieties surrounding terrorism

The recent ISIS-K (Khorasan) claimed attack outside Moscow, resulting in over 130 deaths and more than 100 injuries, warrants strong condemnation. Khorasan, a splinter unit of ISIS with roots in Iran, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan, highlights four critical lessons. Firstly, politics, as observed by Thomas Hobbes in 'Leviathan', remains deeply intertwined with human nature, with greed and fear driving conflicts. Despite global changes, power struggles persist, leading to conflicts like World War I and II. The post-World War II era witnessed the emergence of non-state actors, exacerbated by the Cold War and subsequent conflicts. Secondly, intervening in internal conflicts, such as Russia's support for Assad against ISIS, can breed enmity and fuel terrorism. Thirdly, while international terror groups may appear subdued, they can resurge with renewed vigour, forming clandestine links in Central Asian Republics. Lastly, any retaliation against ISIS should involve cooperation with neighbouring countries to prevent spillover effects. This attack is reminiscent of past incidents in Russia, such as the 2002 Moscow theatre hostage crisis and the 2004 Caucasus hostage tragedy. The recent attack underscores vulnerabilities in Russia's security apparatus, with terrorists exploiting the ability to choose the time and place of their attacks for maximum media impact.

The global criticism of the attack reflects widespread concern over combating international terrorism. The US, despite geopolitical tensions, has shown commitment to addressing terror threats worldwide. However, trust deficits between major powers hinder cooperation efforts. While Ukraine denies involvement, the Federal Security Agency (FSB) is apprehensive about Ukrainian links to the attack, potentially complicating the ongoing conflict. China's expanding influence in Central Asia further complicates regional dynamics. Central Asian Republics (CAR) face increasing terrorism threats, with non-state actors exploiting cultural ties for nefarious purposes. This underscores the need for multilayered security cooperation and technological innovation to combat terrorism effectively. Despite efforts by intelligence and security agencies, challenges remain in dealing with terrorists driven by religious misinterpretations. The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries adds complexity to the security landscape. Efforts to combat terrorism through collaboration, such as the Samarkand meeting, offer hope for regional stability. However, economic disparities and inconsistent Government policies contribute to vulnerabilities in the region. The presence of international Islamist terrorist organisations like Hizb Ut-Tahrir poses significant security challenges. Despite anti-terrorist drives, Central Asian states have attempted to export terrorism to conflict zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. The recent influx of illegal migrants and increased terrorist activities have compelled China and Russia to seek cooperation in tackling transnational terrorism. Rise of fundamentalism in Central Asia poses an international reality, fueled by disgruntled groups and external influences. Central Asia's strategic importance and rich resources



SUDHIR HINDWAN

MODERN TERRORISTS ARE HIGHLY ORGANISED AND PROFESSIONAL, NECESSITATING A SHIFT TOWARDS MORE VIGILANT AND ASSERTIVE INTELLIGENCE, POLICE AND PARAMILITARY NETWORKS

make it crucial for global security. The US has recognised CAR's strategic significance for regional stability. Efforts to improve economic prowess and security capabilities in Russia and CAR require coordinated action and cooperation. Economic transformation hinges on fighting inflation and developing robust anti-terrorism mechanisms. It's crucial to recognise that the issues of law and order differ from those of terrorism, despite often being conflated. Policymakers must understand the diverse security threats facing nations today and adapt strategic policies accordingly. Modern terrorists are highly organised and professional, necessitating a shift towards more vigilant and assertive intelligence, police, and paramilitary networks. Many recommendations from various committees may not align with current realities, especially considering India's struggles with terrorism, naxalism, and insurgency. It's outdated to attribute terrorism solely to societal conditions or structural adjustments. Instead, a thorough analysis of the psychological factors driving terrorism can offer deeper insights and guide effective counterterrorism strategies. Understanding the financial links between terrorism,

organised crime, arms dealers, drug traffickers, and smugglers is crucial. Special forces should be deployed to counter terrorist activities in regions where violence is endemic. Collaborative efforts among nations are essential to develop strategic mechanisms for combating international terrorism, with the United States and India playing pivotal roles. Addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorism demands a nuanced approach that differentiates between law and order issues and acts of terrorism. Policymakers must acknowledge the evolving nature of security threats and adapt strategic policies accordingly. Vigilant and assertive intelligence, police, and paramilitary networks are vital in countering the sophisticated tactics employed by modern terrorists. Understanding the financial networks that sustain terrorism is equally crucial for effective counterterrorism efforts. As terrorism continues to pose a global threat, collaborative efforts among nations are essential. In this endeavour, the US and India can play pivotal roles, leveraging their resources and expertise in the fight against terrorism. (The writer is recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a Professor and strategic affairs expert; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### KATCHATHEEVU CONTROVERSY

Madam — Apropos news article "Katchatheevu takes centre stage in TN" published on April 02, this is my response. It is indeed hilarious to note how the powers demanding "farsightedness" enough to predict 400 plus seats in their favour (even before the first vote is cast) by gauging the "national mood," blatantly resemble a bunch of drowning lot clutching at a straw! So despite India and Sri Lanka being bound under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969 revolving around the Katchatheevu island; how ridiculously can it be brought into the discourse by making a mockery of mutually accepted international agreements framed around half a century ago?

Instead of making a mountain out of a molehill, amidst the waters of Palk Strait, located outside the maritime boundary of India; would the "nationalists" act "kind" enough to enlighten the country about the latest status of Chinese occupation in Ladakh following the fatal assault upon Indian soldiers in Galwan! Why doesn't the self-declared "patriotic" brigade concentrate its time energy and resources to protect the North-West boundary of the nation to ensure that Pathankot Gurdaspur Uri Pulwama does not get repeated on Indian soil in future? Last but not the least. Would the current powers care to applaud the stalwarts of Congress for ensuring the inclusion of Jammu & Kashmir Goa Daman Diu Sikkim into the Indian fold, though the said regions were not part of the national territory at the stroke of independence?

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

#### SC REPRIMANDS PATANJALI

Madam — Apropos news article "Patanjali advertisements: SC comes down hard on Ramdev, Acharya Balkrishna for absolute defiance" published on April 02, this is my response. If the product that Yoga Guru Ramdev and Patanjali's MD Balkrishna are making is about as good and authentic as they say it is, then they didn't have to apologise and could have won the case on its

#### RBI's role and challenges



Apropos news article "PM: Growth should be RBI top most priority next decade" published on April 02, this is my response. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), established in 1935, has been instrumental in guiding India's economic trajectory through various transitions. From steering the country towards a market-oriented economy to embracing digitalization, the RBI has demonstrated adaptability in the face of numerous challenges. Despite setbacks like the 2008 financial meltdown and the implementation of demonetization, the RBI has implemented measures such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to address

issues like bad loans, showcasing its resilience and proactive approach to crisis management. It is crucial to address evolving macroeconomic and regulatory challenges. Specifically, enhancing banking regulation and supervision and improving oversight mechanisms is imperative, especially in light of recent episodes involving financial institutions like YES Bank and Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. Transparency in dealing with regulated entities, such as Paytm Payments Bank, also remains a significant concern. Looking ahead, empowering the RBI with necessary legal changes for effective banking regulation and respecting its institutional position will be vital. Additionally, maintaining low fiscal deficits is essential to prevent potential fiscal dominance of monetary policy, thus ensuring the RBI can effectively fulfil its mandate of maintaining price stability and fostering economic growth.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

merits. They were scamming people in the name of Ayurveda. Like law-abiding citizens, the Supreme Court also wondered and pulled up the Centre, asking why the Ministry of AYUSH "chose to keep its eyes shut when Patanjali was going to town saying there were no remedies for COVID in allopathy?"

Ramdev was promoting his concoction CORONIL for the treatment of COVID when India was entering the most lethal COVID wave which killed thousands. People expected that the SC would give exemplary punishment to Patanjali in its next hearing on 10 April, instructing both Ramdev and Balkrishna to be present.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

#### CANCER AMONG WOMEN

Madam — Apropos news article "Taboos fuel breast cancer silence" published on April 01, this is my response. For years breast cancer has been a major health issue among Indian women. It accounts for 14 per cent of all cancers among our women. Statistically, one in every 28 women in

India is at risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime. And, unfortunately, in our country, the number of breast cancer cases reported each year is rising at higher rates than ever. Numerous studies have shown that regular screening of women with no symptoms of breast cancer has lowered the number of women who die from the disease.

Increased body weight and weight gain as an adult, are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause. The American Cancer Society recommends women stay at a healthy weight throughout their life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing their food intake with physical activities. Diet plays a very small but measurable role in breast cancer prevention. However, women who adhere to a healthy diet should still take other preventive measures, such as having regular mammogram tests.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## Synergy between man and machine

Ambient Computing brings many positive workplace outcomes, from reducing operational costs to human creativity and innovation in production

Industry 4.0 is enabling new concepts and technologies that make factories smarter. It begs the question: how do we create stronger synergies between humans and machines to improve production efficiencies, while progressing the creative cognition of human potential? This question gained traction after the global pandemic. The industry started to emphasise socio-technical considerations to enable new use cases around asset management, workplace well-being and process control, requiring ambient computing at the manufacturing edge.

**What is Ambient Computing:** Ambient computing is a form of ubiquitous computing, a subset of edge computing. It uses computing power to exhibit human-like intelligence in perceiving, processing and taking actions based on available data and information. In simple terms, ambient computing enables a smart agent - think of an Alexa and Siri optimised for manufacturing processes - to collaborate with people, operational technologies and assets, such as machines and



autonomous mobile robots, to mitigate disruptions at the manufacturing edge. The fusion of AI into the manufacturing edge also helps drive continuous improvement and introduces innovation of new products and services.

**Working with People, Assets and Processes:** Ambient computing let organizations focus on growth and innovation by bringing agility to the manufacturing edge where people, assets and processes are working together in unison to deliver required yield and throughputs.

**Cybersecurity and Industry 4.0:** Industry 4.0 essentially has three components: How machinery communicates in a production process, how into a system, and how information is shared throughout the manufacturing lifecycle. Learn how your cybersecurity needs to account for all three.

**Ambient computing can be applied to the following :** Assets monitor themselves and schedule maintenance based on wear and tear. A smart meter system (water, air, gas, electricity and steam) manages the production environment to reduce waste and drive efficiencies by automatically adjusting its end devices such as thermostats and valves.

Automated guided vehicles and mobile robots self-manage routes and tasks based on product, people and environment. Production and assembly floor environments monitor themselves to ensure safety and security of people, products and assets. Smart devices such as notebooks, phones, tablets, wearables and stand-alone devices collaborate with people on risks, issues, continuous improvement and production optimization. By transforming the manufacturing floor to be automated and self-sustainable, ambient computing can reduce operational costs, improve product quality and time-to-market and empower employees to work smarter.

With access to real-time information, organizations can improve how they handle market and ecosystem disruptions with better and faster collaboration between humans and systems.

**Adopting Ambient Computing:** It require seven core elements to fully embrace ambient computing, fostering data availability and enhancing collaboration across people, applications, assets, and devices:

1. Edge computing for real-time decision-making and collaboration.
2. Data-as-a-service to meet evolving needs.
3. Digital twins for predictive insights.
4. Cognitive automation for continuous learning.
5. Connectivity to facilitate constant communication.
6. Quality of experience (QoE) to cater to diverse needs.
7. Trusting systems to perform reliably.

Ambient computing represents a transformative concept that are propelling Industry 4.0 towards the realisation of smarter factories.

(The writer is cofounder Raising superstars; views are personal)



ANIL SETHI



FIRST COLUMN

ADHERE TO DHARMA AND SATYA

Dharma and Satya have profound implications on our actions and beliefs



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

These two words sometimes confuse about what they convey. What is the relationship between these two? Don't they sound similar? They do. Then, there is 'kartavya' (duty). This word also is inter-linked with these two. I will try to unravel their mystery in this article. Beginning with their definitions, dharma is what applies to everyone. For example, the nature of fire is to burn and cause it to burn. Similarly, dharma sustains life, virtue and moral duties on the planet Earth. The word Satya simply means facts like the Sun rising in the East. Some examples will shed more light on these two words. Starting with dharma, what is our svadharma or duty (kartavya)? Lord Krishna has explained that when we are born we have certain qualities due to which we are suitable naturally to do certain activities. (4.13) This is our svadharma, i.e. our dharma. Some children are naturally inclined to play sports, and if allowed to do so excel. This is his dharma by which he entertains others and also earns his livelihood. Arjuna, who was a Kshatriya had a specific dharma due to his birth, which he was supposed to uphold. He spoke about protecting family dharma (values). If not practised, it could have caused many horrible consequences. (1.38-1.45) Svadharma defines an individual's duties. Dhrtarashtra was born blind. Therefore, he was unfit to rule even though he was the elder brother. His younger brother Pandu was enthroned by the king. Upon his untimely death, Dhrtarashtra was made a stopgap king till the eldest son of Pandu gained adulthood. This was a factual position, ie. Satya. Dhrtarashtra's lineage was not entitled to be made king. But he refused to accept this fact, which was against dharma even though his eldest son Duryodhana was unfit to be made king. This resulted in the Mahabharata War, and his family was justly punished for trying to undo dharma. Dharma is worth practising for our good. It is meant for everyone to honour; one should follow it as far as feasible. Dharma is supreme; it is above everything. Satya has also many dimensions. It is a fact that all are similar souls. Satya should be used for correct behaviour, i.e. our activities should be based on it. For example, God should be worshipped by one and all. Satya is frequently situational. For example, children should study in school, but once at home should play. It changes or appears to change in our eyes or vis-à-vis our resources. For example, how much to eat? If not so hungry eat less and if quite hungry more. Similarly, if there is scarcity, the use of resources should be restricted. We have to always see what suits us and is appropriate. Our behaviour should match with the prototype in this matter. Truth is also what we perceive. Because we are too small to know the truth in its entirety, reality or essence. Truth can be known from scriptures like the Bhagavad-Geeta. Still, truth is limited; knowledge takes us to the level of humility, to be modest – a high quality. Now let us turn to the relationship between dharma and Satya. Truth is an instrument; dharma is the system. Truth should always support dharma because truth is the basis of dharma. Earlier, i.e. in Sattvayuga and Treta yuga, truth and dharma were synonymous. Lord Krishna changed it in Dwaparyuga and made dharma superior to truth because truth is not habitually spoken in this yuga. That is the reason Yudhishtir was asked to speak the confusing truth – "Ashavatham hatha it; narova kunjaro-va". Because dharma was at stake. The same rule applies today. We must always go by dharma; truth can be sacrificed for it. Let's, therefore, make dharma the basis of all our acts. What is the conclusion? Both dharma and truth are important, but dharma is more important. Truth can be sacrificed for the sake of dharma, but only temporarily, not permanently. *(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)*



# Curb malpractices within private banks



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

Reports reveal widespread irregularities and malpractices, including gross misuse of public funds by top management, highlighting the urgent need for banking reforms

Several private banks in India are indulging in massive irregularities and malpractices with some of these irregularities highlighted in the Inspection-Reports of these banks ever since the Supreme Court ordered the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to make such Inspection-Reports of banks public under the RTI Act. But now even RBI is reluctant to disclose these Inspection Reports public under the RTI Act. RBI should remove all confusion by complying original Supreme Court verdict in letter and spirit by making of Inspection Reports of all banks public on the RBI website. Moreover, it should be mandatory for all banks to put their respective Inspection Reports on their websites including all the previous ones. Considering the vast participation of public money in private sector banks, all private sector banks must be under the purview of the RTI Act. Already all employees up to the highest post of CMD are public servants according to section 46A of the Banking Regulation Act. RBI had to impose restrictions on the withdrawal of money for some time on a prominent private sector bank. The former CMD of another prominent private sector Bank is under arrest for serious charges of misappropriation of public money in the Bank. Inspection Reports of private banks revealed under the RTI Act by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reveal gross misuse of public money by top management. Another private sector bank is renowned for a large number of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). Heavy fluctuation in share prices of certain private sector banks tends to doubt regarding safety of public money in private sector banks. Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (a subsidiary of RBI) has to pay a maximum rupees five lakhs from state funds to each depositor of the bank including those in the private sector that collapse due to massive irregularities, which is public funding to declare private sector banks as "public-authorities" under section 2(h) of RTI Act. An example is the closure of a private PMC Bank in Maharashtra which even caused the fatalities of several depositors. Many banks to boost their business provide excessively secured loans more than the real market value of the mortgaged property even though rules allow only some portion of the assessed value of the property for loan purposes. This can and must be effectively checked by formulating a rule with retrospective effect whereby banks may be required to close the loan account in case the borrower surrenders vacant possession of the mortgaged property unconditionally. Strict action under section 46A of the Banking Regulation Act should be taken against officers sanctioning excessive loans higher than the recovered amount by the sale of a mortgaged property when the concerned bank is already in the advantage of having sufficient margin money. A study may be made if some ban can be imposed on giving loans on self-occupied residential properties because, in case of default, the family of the loan-taker is the sufferer for fault/default of the loan-taker. It is quite usual that many private banks often get blank papers, loan kits and cheques signed by the borrower and his family members as guarantors to misuse as per their convenience in case of default of loans. Borrowers generally sign such



ERRING BANKS EVEN DO NOT GIVE CONSUMER COPIES OF THE LOAN KIT TO THE BORROWERS WHO ARE THUS ALWAYS PRACTICALLY FINANCIAL SLAVES OF SUCH BANKS

blank documents without realising the consequences in a hurry to get loans. Erring banks do not give consumer copies of the loan kit to the borrowers who are thus always practically financial slaves of such banks. The system should be that a copy of the duly filled loan kit and cheques may be compulsorily sent by Registered Post to the borrowers, guarantors and a specially set-up section of RBI within seven days of loan disbursement to ensure that banks may not be able to misuse any other paper earlier got signed blank in case of default. The same should be applicable for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). The rule should be that all bank accounts of Government offices, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and state-run corporations (both central and state Governments) must be compulsorily only in public sector banks. Rather their employees should also have their salary accounts in any of the branches of the same public-sector bank for getting salaries through simple bank transfers. Government employees thereafter may shift funds to any bank of their choice. There were serious allegations of favouritism with a particular private bank for having salary accounts of employees of a Government department in Maharashtra because the wife of a heavyweight political ruler was a senior executive in that private bank. Maharashtra has otherwise also the unique facility of having the smallest public-sector bank having a widespread network of branches all over Maharashtra. Bank of Maharashtra was not merged with any larger public-sector bank only to retain its identity as a state-specific bank in Maharashtra state. Governments

both central and state should be duty-bound to promote public sector banks. Using public-sector banks will increase deposits and profitability of public-sector banks and ensure the safety of public money. RBI bonds issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should be issued only through public-sector banks and companies. Once there was a news item that China Central Bank had tried to raise its stake in HDFC Bank from 8 percent to 1.1 percent with China Central Bank already holding about 17.5 million shares in HDFC Bank. Even though the Indian Government subsequently tightened rules for increasing such stakes by neighbouring companies, the episode developed a feeling of uncertainty amongst investors in RBI bonds made through HDFC Bank. There should be provision of auto-renewal in RBI bonds at the interest rate prevailing at the time of maturity. Frauds are reported through some bank employees misappropriating funds in such inoperative accounts where the amount is large. RBI should direct all banks to inform account holders about their existing balance and to approach banks either to make accounts operative or close these in a time-bound period after which all such balances may be transferred to Depositor-Educative-Awareness-Fund (DEAF). With the private sector dominating the banking sector, public money lying in inoperative accounts must not be retained by banks. Frequent changes of account numbers by banks should be prevented by making it mandatory for all banks to allot 15-digit account numbers. Confusing and frequently changing account numbers

result in the bouncing of electronic fund transfers. Rather such a 15-digit account number should be a unique one with banks being recognised by the first two digits of the account number. Such 15-digit account numbers should also be for Public-Provident-Fund (PPF) and Senior Citizens Savings Schemes (SCSS) and other such deposit accounts under Government schemes. Cover-page of pass-books of all banks should compulsorily have all details submitted in account-opening forms including nominee details. The inclusion of nominee details on pass-books will allow nominees to claim rights on the death of the account holder by going through left-out important documents including pass-books after the death of the account holder. All banks especially public-sector ones should have a common and uniform style of forms used for various banking purposes with provision to download the same after filling on the computer like is a facility available for application forms for passports. Additional facility to email computer-filled forms with necessary enclosures like copies of ID proof, PAN-card etc to the Bank can save huge man-hours of bank staff in re-filling all details on the computer apart from eliminating any chance of wrong/incomplete entry in computers. Customers can go to banks just to put signatures on such emailed computer-filled forms. A system should be formulated whereby all requirements like Minimum Balance, interest rates, bank charges and other procedures may be uniform for all public-sector banks. *(The writer is a Guinness Record Holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)*

# The rise of 'water aunties' and sustainable solutions

There is a critical correlation between clean water access, conflict, cooperation and climate change; water for all is imperative

This year, the theme for World Water Day is 'Water for Peace'. It renews the world's focus on clean, safe, and affordable drinking water and its complex relationship with conflict, cooperation, and climate change. About 2 billion people still lack access to safe water worldwide. India, too, has been addressing the water needs of its citizens with the promise of tap water in each home, especially in the last decade, where nearly piped water access has reached 75% of India's homes. Community-based water treatment plants help purify groundwater to serve such civilian needs. Decentralised Safe Water Enterprises (SWEs), popularly called Water ATMs, have provided low-cost, 24x7, safe



POORNAM SEWAK

drinking water access solutions for quality-affected communities and consumers on the go. In 2018, Haryana became the first state to develop a policy to put a water ATM every 400 m in public places in its cities. The Delhi Government also announced 500 similar water ATMs in slums and other densely populated areas in 2023. **The Water Aunties** Safe Water Network India

(SWN), through its Water ATMs called iJal Stations, helps provide safe water access to over 1.3 million people in India across Telangana, Maharashtra and Western Uttar Pradesh. In 2023, consumers bought over 350 million litres of water from its iJal stations, which had an uptime above 98 per cent around the year. Nearly 56 per cent of these 350 Water ATMs are managed and operated by women affectionately called Water Aunties by their communities. The consumers collect safe water in their 20-litre cans from these iJal Stations. This prevents the scourge of single-use plastic bottled water, provides freedom and livelihood to low-income communities, negates the endless wait for the

water tankers, and serves localities with contamination-free potable water. "The stations have proven to be an oasis, especially in the scorching heat and severe drought conditions," said Sinduja, a Water Auntie in Telangana. India is now home to around 65,000 Water ATMs set up by 30 national-level implementers and State Governments. **The Cost Burden** The buck does not stop just with the provision, access, or management of safe drinking water. For instance, the revenue from these Water ATMs is turning out to be unsustainable for many of the implementers at the grassroots level, according to a report of the three-year project named Sustainable Enterprises for

Water and Health (SEWAH) carried out by SWN in collaboration with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and data from ten other implementers. The study found that the water revenue in these water ATMs, priced affordably at Rs 1 per litre and Rs 5 per 20 litre, barely met the current local operating costs, such as raw water, electricity, and operator salaries. The field service costs, such as the technician's fee and high-value spare parts, overburden the operator's expenditure. The implementers also do not cover expenses relating to cluster supervision, quality monitoring, equipment or facility upgrades, etc. Time For An Uptime Model The SWN's report, called

Financial and Operating Performance of Water ATMs in 2023, warranted a relook at the sustainability of Water ATMs in India. This time, through a new lens, that would shift the total cost burden away from the operators and onto the taxpayers' rupee for govt-funded systems or CSR grants of willing companies for grant-funded systems. The report specifically proposed a result-based funding model in which SWEs received funding depending on the volume of water sold, facility up-time or revenue collected, and quality compliance. A global result-based funding organisation, Uptime Catalyst Facility, selected SWN's iJal Stations for a sustainable performance-based incentive model for the implementers.

The ideal Stations proved to be apt differentiators because their remote monitoring system and water metres provide real-time data on plant performance, the volume of water produced and sold, and the revenue collected. The revenue collected is easily monitored since the water is purchased using pre-paid RFID cards, digital QR codes, or coin dispensing. Looking at over a decade of operating experience, the Government of Karnataka selected SWN to help operationalize more than 18,000 Community Water Treatment Plants (or Water ATMs) in the state by training the village Panchayat, operators, contractors, and the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj staff at the district level. The project brought in the best

practices of training, monitoring, and operating the plant for four years during the peak of COVID, starting in 2019. A Digital Platform is now tested across states, and hundreds of systems are now export-ready on parameters that include physical and training components and Information Education and Communication campaigns to train at the grassroots level where semi-skilled operators. It is poised for replication in 17 countries, West Africa and five South Asian countries. SWN also has vast experience and training materials for training last-mile operating professionals for Water ATMs. *(The writer is vp of programmes & Partnerships, Safe Water Network India; views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

DVC seeks single regulator for uniform tariff

The Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) on Wednesday said it has sought a single regulator to ensure uniform tariff for both Jharkhand and West Bengal command areas, an official said. Currently, the respective electricity regulatory commissions of both the states decide upon their end-consumer power tariff. During an interactive session with the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce here, DVC Chairman S Suresh Kumar said the difference in tariff is causing issues among consumers of the same discom but residing in different states. "We want uniform tariff for our command area, which covers parts of Jharkhand and West Bengal. We have already sent our proposal to the Ministry of Power and are awaiting a response," said Kumar. The generation and transmission tariff is fixed by the central regulator CERC, but distribution tariffs are finalised separately by the West Bengal and Jharkhand state electricity regulatory commissions, he added.



100-DAY AGENDA FOR NEW GOVT

GTRI enlists key steps for easy e-commerce

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Simplification of e-commerce rules, disbursement of duty refund scheme in cash, and setting up of a national trade network, and publishing a report on the effectiveness of India's trade pacts should be part of the new government's 100-day agenda, GTRI said on Wednesday.

The economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) also suggested the use of blockchain technology for tracing mechanisms for major fruits and vegetable products, allowing special economic zones to sell goods in the domestic market on duty foregone basis, and reducing reliance on China for important imports such as Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, solar cells, EV batteries, and mobile phone components.

"The first 100 days represent a critical window (for a new government) to set the tone for governance and policy direction," GTRI Founder Ajay

Srivastava said.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls, the world's biggest election exercise, will kick off on April 19 with the counting of votes set to take place on June 4.

It further recommended the



On e-commerce, it said that India has more than 20 lakh firms that produce good quality products and services but less than a lakh of these exports.

preparation of an action plan for countering the adverse effects of European climate regulation; building alliances, strengthening partnerships for better results at the WTO (World Trade Organisation); highlighting how several WTO laws are discriminatory and need change; and standardising incentives in manufacturing schemes.

It said that a National Trade Network (NTN) would help

enable all export-import related compliance online, besides centralising the submission of all required documents and information online, eliminating the need for separate interactions with customs,

departments, are slow to evolve and cannot handle comprehensive processes efficiently.

"An NTN, with a redesigned business process, is necessary for India," he said.

It added that India has 14 comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and six smaller trade agreements and the new government should disclose how these pacts have fared over time.

"This analysis could offer insights into the FTAs roles in boosting exports and inform ongoing trade negotiations," the GTRI said.

It also said the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme incentives are issued in the form of an e-scrip which can be used for imports. Small firms need to sell these at discount to get cash.

RoDTEP scheme is the refund of un-refunded taxes much like the Drawback scheme and hence like drawback, the incentive must be paid in cash and not scrip, it suggested.

NCLT initiates insolvency proceeding against MEP Infrastructure

The National Company Law Tribunal has initiated the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) against MEP Infrastructure Developers Ltd on a plea filed by Bank of India and appointed an interim resolution professional to take control of the company. The Mumbai bench of the NCLT admitted the plea under the IBC filed by the public sector lender, claiming a default of Rs 127.86 crore. "The factum of the existence of financial debt and its default stands proven on record. It has also been established that the petition is within time. Considering the facts placed before us and the fact that the Corporate Debtor owes the Financial Debt in excess of Rs 1 crore, which is in default. "This bench is of the view that in such circumstances, it is imperative that the CIRP be initiated in the matter of the Corporate Debtor (MEP Infrastructure)," said a two-member NCLT bench in its 9-page order passed on March 28, 2024.



Brigade Group partners with United Oxygen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Brigade Enterprises Ltd has signed a joint development agreement (JDA) with United Oxygen Company Pvt Ltd to develop an office project worth Rs 340 crore in Bengaluru.

The project will be located on ITPL Road, Whitefield, in East Bengaluru. It will have a leasable area of 3 lakh sq ft and a Gross Development Value (GDV) of about Rs 340 crore.

Brigade Enterprises Joint Managing Director Nirupa Shankar said, "Bengaluru continues to be the most favoured office leasing market, and demand continues to improve in the Whitefield micro market."

Bharti Hexacom's IPO gets 34% subscription on Day 1 of offer

Bharti Hexacom's initial public offering received lukewarm response from the investors as it received 34 per cent subscription on the first day of bidding on Wednesday. This is the first public issue of the financial year 2024-25. The initial share sale of Bharti Hexacom received bids for 1,41,08,328 shares against 4,12,50,000 shares on offer, according to the NSE data. The category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) got subscribed 48 per cent, while the quota for non-institutional investors received 36 per cent subscription, and the portion for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) got subscribed 29 per cent. On Tuesday, Bharti Airtel's arm Bharti Hexacom said it has collected about Rs 1,924 crore from anchor investors. The company had fixed a price band of Rs 542-570 per share.



India's first small & medium REIT may be launched in six months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trust (SM-REIT) is expected to be listed on stock exchanges within the next six months, enabling small investors to have fractional ownership of rent-yielding properties by investing as low as Rs 10 lakh, according to NAREDCO.

Addressing a webinar on Wednesday, realtors' body NAREDCO President G Hari Babu said, "We are expecting the launch of first SM-REIT by September-October."

Last month, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had notified the framework for SM REITs. Investors can now have frac-

tional ownership of rent-yielding real estate assets by making a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh, with markets watchdog Sebi notifying the amended regulations for real estate investment trusts.



Hari Babu highlighted the benefits of SM-REITs and said small investors can now invest in rent-yielding real estate assets and earn both rental income as well as capital appreciation.

NAREDCO Chairman Niranjana Hiranandani hailed

the new framework for SM-REITs, which he said has come after the success of REITs.

There are three REITs backed by office assets -- Embassy Office Parks REIT, Mindspace Business Parks REIT and Brookfield India Real Estate Trust --- and one retail asset backed REIT named Nexus Select Trust.

NAREDCO Vice Chairman Rajan Bandelkar said the real estate sector has changed a lot and become more organised. He said SM-REITs will benefit retail investors a lot.

Amit Kumar Kedia, Director of Kedia Corporate Advisors Pvt Ltd, gave a detailed presentation on SM-REITs.

He expected the first SM-REIT to get listed within 3-4 months.

Shrimp exporters follow robust regulatory, safety regime; aim exports worth Rs 1 Lcr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian shrimp exporters follow a robust regulatory and safety regime, as it helps them to ship quality marine products to developed regions like the US and Europe, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

India is aiming to increase seafood exports to Rs one lakh crore in the next two years by increasing its processing capacity and shifting to higher value-added products, the official added. Debunking certain reports of poor working conditions and safety standards, the official

said India's 548 seafood units are regularly inspected and monitored by various government agencies.

"These units follow world-class quality and standards, and the major export destinations are developed nations," the commerce ministry official said.

Some reports that are alleging food safety and bad labour conditions in the Indian shrimp industry are wrong and baseless, the official noted.

All units are registered with MPEDA (Marine Products Export Development Authority) and FSSAI (Food



Safety and Standards Authority of India), and approved by EIC (Export Inspection Council) as mandated by the law.

The production and processing systems are regularly monitored by regulatory agencies in India and are subject-

ed to audits by inspectors of the US FDA (Food and Drug Administration), European Commission, GAC of China, Export Inspection Agency, MPEDA, etc, in addition to scores of private and certification audits.

The pre-processing and processing units follow a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point)-based food safety management system as per the US Code of Federal Regulations. To promote the safety of products, the usage of pharmacologically active substances has been banned in aquaculture since 2002.

Blackstone to invest US\$ 2 bn every year

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Global private equity major Blackstone Group is confident of investing USD 2 billion annually in India, a top official said on Wednesday.

Its chief operating officer Jonathan D Gray pitched for a slew of measures to improve the

Wants quicker M&A clearances

ease of doing business for firms like it in India, including quicker approvals on mergers and acquisitions, easier privatisation of listed companies, and improve-



ments in dispute resolution in commercial matters. The New York-based group, which has been operational in India for nearly two decades, said Indian PE invest-

ments have delivered the highest return for it worldwide, and the investment in reality, which made it the largest landlord in the country, has also delivered well.

"We plan to invest around USD 2 billion every year in India," its senior managing director Amit Dixit told reporters here.

Sensex, Nifty close lower amid profit-booking, mixed global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty settled lower for the second straight session on Wednesday due to profit-booking in select banking and auto stocks amid mixed trends from the global markets and outflow of foreign funds.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 27.09 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 73,876.82 in a volatile trade. During the day, the index oscillated between the high of 74,151.21 and the low of 73,757.23.

The broader NSE Nifty declined 18.65 points or 0.08 per cent to 22,434.65, with 30 components of the 50-share benchmark ending with losses.



"Nifty remained volatile throughout the day after an initial weak start due to negative global cues," said Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst, LKP Securities.

He further said that the index may trend towards 22,650. "Support is positioned at 22,350 on the lower end." Among the

Sensex constituents, as many as 16 stocks closed with losses with Nestle India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj

Finserve, Titan and JSW Steel being the major laggards.

Index major Reliance, Hindustan Unilever, Maruti and Tata Steel also declined due to selling pressure.

In contrast, NTPC, TCS, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance bucked the trend and ended the day in green. Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors also defied the trend.

"Market is focused on the US FED chair's speech, later today, for more hints. A statement in-line with the last policy is predicted to bring back a respite to the global market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Vistara cancels 26 flights, holds meeting with pilots to address issues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid flight cancellations due to non-availability of crew, Vistara's top officials on Wednesday held a meeting with pilots where discussions were held on new contracts and rostering issues, according to sources.

The Tata Group airline cancelled around 26 flights on Wednesday, the sources in the know said.

With a section of pilots reporting sick to protest against the revised pay structure, Vistara cancelled over 100 flights in the last two days and



aviation regulator DGCA has asked the carrier to submit a daily report on the cancellations and delays.

The sources said top officials of Vistara, including CEO Vinod Kannan, held a virtual meeting with pilots to discuss their problems.

Officials of human resources among other departments attended the meeting.

Ambani breaks into global top 10, ranked at in Forbes 2024 list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd head Mukesh Ambani continues to be the richest Indian and has now broken into the world's top 10 wealthiest persons in the latest Forbes 2024 Billionaire List.

Ambani, 66, is ranked 9th on the list with a wealth of USD 116 billion, up from USD 83.4 billion in the 2023 ranking, according to Forbes.

Gautam Adani is the second richest Indian and is ranked at No.17 on the global list. He is worth USD 84 billion, up from USD 47.2 billion in 2023 when his apples-to-airport conglomerate was rocked by a damning report by US short-seller Hindenburg Research. Adani group has denied all allegations in the report.

Adani, 61, was worth USD 90 billion in 2022 ranking.

The Forbes 2024 Billionaires List features 2,781 individuals, an increase of 141 names from last year's list. The billion-



erate was rocked by a damning report by US short-seller Hindenburg Research. Adani group has denied all allegations in the report.

Adani, 61, was worth USD 90 billion in 2022 ranking. The Forbes 2024 Billionaires List features 2,781 individuals, an increase of 141 names from last year's list. The billion-

aires, according to the list, are richer than ever, worth USD 14.2 trillion in aggregate, up by USD 2 trillion from 2023 and USD 1.1 trillion above the previous record, also set in 2021.

Two-thirds of the list's members are worth more than a year ago; only one-fourth are poorer.

Fashion and cosmetics giant LVMH's Bernard Arnault is at the top of the list with USD 233 billion wealth, followed by Elon Musk with USD 195 billion and Amazon's Jeff Bezos with USD 194 billion.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg comes next in the list with a net worth of USD 177 billion.

Ransomware attacks continue to loom large over Indian cyberspace: Kaspersky

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India, which detected over 2 lakh ransomware attacks in 2023, is likely to see similar onslaughts, cyber security firm Kaspersky said on Wednesday.

Kaspersky General Manager for South Asia Jaydeep Singh said researches conducted by the firm have shown that India is consistently among the top 12 targeted countries and territories for Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs).

"For three years in a row, file encryption has been the top problem faced by enterprises and organisations worldwide



and in India. From the basic ransomware attacks like the Wannacry in 2017, we have reached the era of Ransomware 3.0 where we see triple extortion in the form of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS),

reselling of data, and public blackmailing.

"This form of attack has a wider impact on the financial and reputation aspect of Indian companies," Singh said.

Kaspersky claims to have

detected over 2 lakh ransomware incidents on businesses in the country in 2023.

According to the company, major ransomware groups such as Fonix and LockBit targeted global as well as Indian organisations in various sectors, including manufacturing, retail, agriculture, media, and healthcare.

Singh said amid the evolving threat of ransomware against the IT and OT systems in India, Kaspersky highlights the urgent need for stronger cybersecurity defences through deploying threat intelligence capabilities.

PhonePe users can now make payments through UPI in Singapore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech firm PhonePe on Wednesday said its users can now make payments through UPI in Singapore under a pact signed by the company with The Singapore Tourism Board.

The collaboration has been built upon the existing Unified Payments Interface (UPI) linkage between India and Singapore, which allows customers to instantly make cross-border transactions between the two countries directly from their existing Indian bank accounts.

"Singapore Tourism Board



(STB) and PhonePe enter a two-year strategic partnership to promote UPI payments for Indian visitors in Singapore," PhonePe, a decacorn, said in a statement. Privately-held companies with a valuation of over USD 10 billion are termed as decacorn.

As part of the partnership, STB and PhonePe will invest in

joint marketing efforts across India and Singapore, to promote seamless UPI experiences across key tourism hotspots.

"This partnership exemplifies our dedication to enhancing the Singapore visitor experience for discerning, tech-savvy consumers," STB Chief Executive Officer Melissa Ow said.

Under the collaboration, Indian travellers can now use the PhonePe app for instant, seamless, and secure payments across over 8,000 merchants in Singapore, enhancing their experience in the island city.

NDMC's revenue collection for 2023-24 FY exceeds target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council's revenues for the 2023-24 financial year exceeded its target, with property tax collection crossing the Rs 1,000-crore mark for the first time in its history, officials said on Wednesday.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) collected a revenue of Rs 3,795.30 crore from receipt sources such as property tax, licence fees, commercial revenue (water and electricity) and parking fees, it said in a statement.







## MO BRINGS PLENTY'S NEPHEW SUSPECTED IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE

Yellowstone actor Mo Brings Plenty's nephew, who went missing recently, has been designated a suspect in a domestic violence investigation. The Lawrence Kansas Police Department said on Facebook that 27-year-old Cole Brings Plenty is a person of interest in a case involving the mistreatment of a lady.

Lawrence Police have filed an affidavit with the District Attorney seeking the arrest of Cole Brings Plenty following an altercation Sunday morning at an apartment in Lawrence. We've identified him as the suspect, have probable grounds for his arrest, and have sent an alert to local agencies. Officers responded to allegations of a female screaming for help, but the culprit left before they arrived. The investigation identified Brings Plenty, and traffic cameras showed him leaving the city shortly after the event, heading south on 59 Highway," the police department stated.

The post also stated that the claims are of domestic violence. It further stated that Cole's family had contacted police and reported him missing.

"Brings Plenty was last known to be driving the 2005 Ford Explorer bearing Kansas license plate 368PXB pictured below. If you see Cole Brings Plenty, or his vehicle, call 911 or you can make an anonymous tip to Crime Stoppers of Lawrence and Douglas County at (785)843-8477," the post added.

Mo posted a flier on social media claiming Cole was missing, hours before he was recognized as a suspect. According to the poster, Cole's cell phone is turned off, and he "missed an appointment with his agent for a TV show, which is unusual for him."

"#ColeBringsPlenty drives a white Ford Explorer, last seen March 31st leaving the Lawrence area," the picture caption reads.

## Kartik Aaryan worked 14 months on his Marathi dialect for *Chandu Champion*

Jointly produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and Kabir Khan, the upcoming *Chandu Champion* is indeed one of the biggest releases of the year. While the film is all set to bring an extraordinary tale, it will also presents Kartik Aaryan in a never seen before avatar. Given his heart and soul to perfect his character, the superstar has indeed undergone very tough preps, be it physically or personality-wise. Well, apart from getting into a shocking transformation, Kartik also focused on his Marathi language and dialect.

In *Chandu Champion*, Kartik will be seen getting into a whole different character and he is indeed leaving no stone turned to perfect it. Kartik gave special attention to his language in the film. He worked on his Marathi dialect for 14 long months. He had a language coach throughout who helped him to grab a good hold of his Marathi language. Well, this has indeed piqued the excitement to witness Kartik in this film. Jointly produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and Kabir Khan, *Chandu Champion* is set for a June 14, 2024 release, and is poised to leave an indelible mark on the hearts of audiences worldwide.



## Elnaaz Norouzi thanks Sandeep Reddy Vanga for authenticity of *JAMAL KUDU*

In the dynamic world of Bollywood, the enchanting allure of Iranian and Farsi melodies found a captivating resonance in the form of *Jamal Kudu* from director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's film *Animal*. This song has Iranian and Farsi music influences, and its rise to fame shows how music can connect different cultures. Actress Elnaaz Norouzi, who is from Iran, plays a big role in this story, representing her country proudly in the lively world of Indian movies.

Reflecting on the broader trend of Persian songs resonating across borders, Elnaaz Norouzi shared her insights, remarking, "Persian songs have always been big, influencing diverse cultures and even being remade in different languages like American hits and Indian classics. In this mix, Bollywood's rendition of *Jamal Kudu* stands out for preserving its Farsi essence. As the sole Iranian in Bollywood, this decision wasn't just about reviving a cherished melody but reclaiming cultural heritage. Thank you, Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, for your authenticity and cultural preservation."

Elnaaz's version, *Jamal Jamaloo*, has become a huge hit in the US, playing in clubs and parties from Miami to LA. Her rendition added a personal touch, infusing the track with sincerity and depth. As the only Iranian artist in Bollywood, her contribution carried a profound significance, serving as a bridge between cultures. Elnaaz's cover not only delighted audiences but also sparked curiosity, igniting a newfound appreciation for Persian musical heritage.

Through the collaborative efforts of artists like Elnaaz Norouzi and directors like Sandeep Reddy Vanga, cultural exchange becomes a celebration of shared humanity. As Bollywood continues to evolve, the enduring legacy of *Jamal Kudu* serves as a reminder of the beauty that emerges when artistic expression knows no bounds.

## Lizzo quits on 'negative energy' not music



Melissa Viviane 'Lizzo' Jefferson is putting an end to conjecture! The singer and songwriter resorted to Instagram to clear up any confusion about her previous statement, "getting tired of putting up with being dragged by everyone in my life and on the internet."

In the Insta video, she clarified, "I want to make this video because I just need to clarify — when I say I quit, I mean I quit giving any negative energy attention," and added, "What I'm not going to quit is the joy of my life which is making music, which is connecting with people because I know I'm not alone."

The 31-year-old artist has been a source of encouragement and self-love. She went on to write, "If I can just give one person the inspiration or the motivation to stand up for themselves and say they quit letting negative people win, negative comments win, then I've done even more than I could've hoped for."

Lizzo's humble thanks for her followers was palpable as she stated, "The love that I've received means more than you know."

Lizzo took to Instagram on March 29, previous to this announcement, to highlight her goals and struggles.



## Abhijeet Bhattacharya shares he 'does not care' about getting Padma Bhushan

Singer Abhijeet Bhattacharya has made headlines throughout the years for his anti-Pakistan stance, alleged sexual harassment allegations, criticism of reality show judges, and feud with Shah Rukh Khan. In a recent interview, Abhijeet was asked how he manages to laugh off his prior issues, and he mentioned paying the price for being the sole true 'desh bhakt' (patriot) in Bollywood.

"The most idiotic thing is to give up your life because of patriotism; instead, pretend to be a patriot. People are being hired to become patriotism, whereas I am the sole actual patriot in Bollywood," said the singer. Abhijeet further stated that he "does not care

about getting a Padma Bhushan".

He further shares, "No one in Bollywood is a patriot. The husband will say one thing, and the wife will mock it in parliament. Husband would seek Ram Lalla's blessings in the Ayodhya temple, while the wife and her political party will condemn such actions. I've gained and lost money because of my love for India. Now, I'll just sing and amuse them."

In his decades-long career as a playback singer, he has performed for actors such as Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Saif Ali Khan, Sunny Deol, Govinda, Sanjay Dutt, Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn, Ranbir Kapoor, and many more.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE



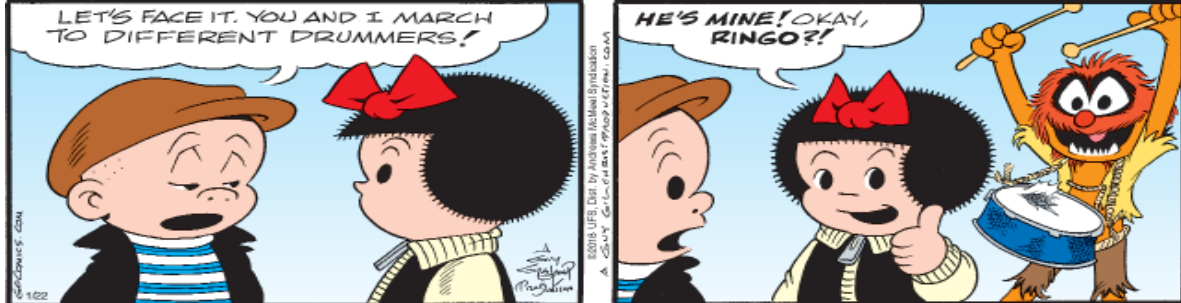
#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



#### NANCY



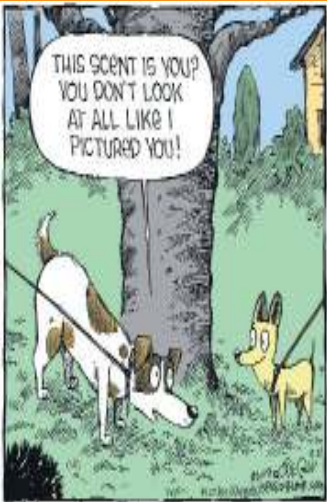
#### GINGER MEGGS



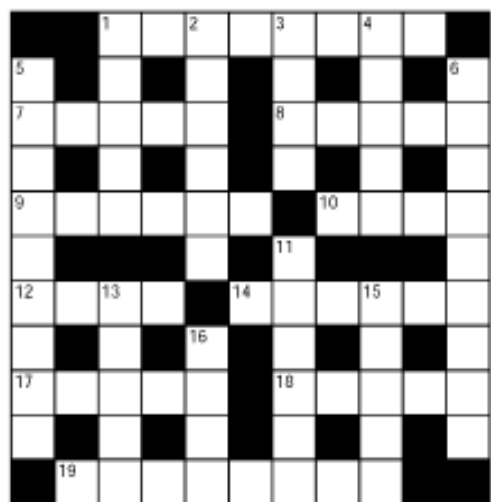
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- Beard
- Movements of the sea caused by the moon's pull on the Earth
- A sour oily fruit from a tree
- One of the continents
- An alcoholic drink
- Look at something for a long time
- Me
- A type of small bird
- A clothing size
- A chart of months and days

#### DOWN

- Broader
- A six-legged creature
- Round handle

- Lift up
- People not known to you
- Extremely frightened
- An eye's cover
- A striped animal
- Mistake
- A joint in the leg





## PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT BY TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

One of the biggest problems faced by the mankind is climate change, for which we must find a collective solution or suffer the consequences. Thus with an aim to create a climate neutral, ecological and environmentally conscious world with its initiatives has been the World Environment Organisation.

Established in 2000, they are a team dedicated to safeguarding the environment and fostering sustainability. Through the engagement of students and other volunteers worldwide, this international environmental organisation endeavours to address climate change and enhance environmental conditions for the betterment of humanity.

In a world driven by currency, the environment often takes a back seat, despite its critical role in sustaining life and economies. WEO, founded by visionary environmentalists, challenges the status quo.

Operating globally, it unites individuals to address pollution, plastic waste and advocate for sustainability. Their initiatives reminds us of our responsibility to question and act for a healthier planet, with a commitment that extends beyond rhetoric, bridging schools, startups, and investors. It facilitates partnerships, aligns capital with causes, and fosters sustainable growth. Through its efforts, it elevates environmentally conscious companies, catalysing a ripple effect that transcends financial metrics. Together, they weave a tapestry of purpose-driven prosperity, where environmental stewardship is the currency that sustains life itself. Inspiring enough, isn't it?

So this week for our weekly column of Community Wise, *The Pioneer* connects with the founder Dr Ch. Bhadra, and he shares, "Our commitment goes beyond words. We roll up our sleeves, organising cleaning drives in neglected areas like Warangal and upcoming endeavours in Hyderabad. We're actively engaged in organising pollution checks and collaborating with marine companies to integrate cleaning tech-



The World Environment Organisation is on a quest to create a climate neutral and environmentally conscious world. *The Pioneer* quickly connects with the founder of the organisation, who shares with us more in detail about their initiatives.



nologies, all in a pledge to safeguard our oceans and restore ecological balance. Our mission extends to schools, where we train principals to instill environmental consciousness in students, nurturing a generation that lives and breathes environmental responsibility."

He believes that together, we can turn the tide and leave a lasting impact on our planet. They had recently hosted the National Business Awards, where 1000 individuals, including 500 members of the Teacher Union, united to champion environmental awareness. Each teacher aimed to inspire 40 students, creating a ripple effect beyond classrooms. However, he also believed that maintaining consistent environmental efforts poses challenges. It is then that initiatives like the One-Minute Program face difficulty sustaining participation over time. Now you might wonder what is the program all about. The One-Minute Program encourages simple yet impactful actions that can benefit both the environment and our daily lives. For example; In just a minute, you can make a difference by turning off lights when not needed, and thus similarly, it takes a minute for one to opt for a jute bag instead of plastic.

So that makes it obvious that the solution may lie in integrating environmental consciousness into daily routines, fos-

tering lasting change. Businesses offering preservative-free millets contribute positively to the environment and promote healthier choices.

"We conducted an entertainment event that showcased environmentally supportive short films. Our initiative to replace plastic with steel items in 80 schools is underway. Additionally, we've launched the 'A Minute a Day' program. We partner with individuals passionate about the environment, acting as a conduit between them and employers. For instance, a Kerala-based company collaborates with us to recruit employees, fostering mutual benefits. Principals play a pivotal role by identifying students keen on volunteering, further amplifying our environmental initiatives," he shares.

The organisation, with a team including vice-president Prasanth, general secretary Nikal Sai, joint secretary Rajesh, and treasurer Md. Rizwan, along with their volunteers, will be organising the below upcoming events:

**Environmental June:** Throughout June, environmental advocates, policy-

makers, and industry experts will convene during Environmental June. This event focuses on sustainable practices, climate action, and environmental stewardship. Attendees will explore strategies to address pressing environmental challenges and promote a greener future.

**Sustainable Music Event:** The Sustainable Music Event promises a harmonious blend of music and eco-consciousness. Artists, music enthusiasts, and sustainability advocates will come together to enjoy performances while raising awareness about environmental issues. From eco-friendly stages to waste reduction initiatives, this event aims to set a positive example for the entertainment industry.

**School Environmental Programs (September):** As September approaches, the spotlight shifts to school environmental programs. Educational institutions will collaborate with environmental organizations to implement impactful initiatives within schools. These programs may include workshops, tree planting drives, waste reduction campaigns, and fostering environmental literacy among students.

Apart from these, the team at WEO is also going to organise the prestigious International Business Awards in July. This global event celebrates excellence, innovation, and impactful contributions across industries.

## ROAD TO RECOVERY POST-COLON SURGERY

Colon cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, begins in the colon or rectum, the two of which are part of the digestive system. It usually starts as small, noncancerous clusters of cells called polyps, which may lead to cancer. If left untreated, these tumors can spread to other parts of the body. Changes in bowel patterns, blood in the stool, discomfort in the abdomen, and unexplained weight loss are some of the symptoms of the disease.

Early detection through screening tests like colonoscopy can greatly improve the chances of successful treatment. Undergoing colon surgery, whether for colon cancer or other gastrointestinal diseases, is an important step toward healing and better health. The success of surgery goes beyond the operating room; it is heavily dependent on the quality of post-operative care and the patient's dedication to recovery. These surgeries remove tumours, polyps, or damaged sections of the colon while keeping it functional. While surgery is important, the recovery time is important for long-term success and well-being.



To better understand the key to recovery, below are some essential ways for post-operative care:

**Follow post-operative instructions:** It's important to follow the surgeon's and the medical team's post-operative instructions to the point. These instructions usually cover wound care, food restrictions, giving medications, and activity limitations. Neglecting or failing to follow these recommendations could lead to issues and extend the healing period.

**Effectively manage pain:** To maintain comfort and encourage healing during the recovery phase, pain management is important. Painkillers will be prescribed by the doctor to help with discomfort. It's important to take these drugs as prescribed and to let the doctors know right away that you notice any concerns or negative effects. Also, complementary, and additional pain relief can be obtained from alternatives to drugs such as guided visualisation, heat therapy, and relaxation techniques.

**Proper diet:** Sufficient water and nourishment are necessary for the recovery after colon surgery. But initially, certain changes in diet could be required, like switching from clear

liquids to solid foods gradually as allowed. To support the repair of tissues and increase immunity, a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and whole grains must be consumed in a balanced manner. Also, drinking lots of water to stay hydrated helps avoid constipation, which is a typical side effect following colon surgery.

**Physical activity:** Rest is important during the initial phases of recovery, but to improve circulation, avoid blood clots, and rebuild strength, one must return to physical activity. As accepted, progressively increase the intensity and length of the activities. Gentle activities to start with include quick walks and mild stretching exercises. However, until the doctor gives the all-clear, patients must refrain from hard lifting and challenging activities.

**Attend follow-up sessions:** It's necessary to keep track of progress and address any issues or complications that may surface throughout the recovery by scheduling follow-up meetings with the doctor. Make sure that show up for all of the appointments on time, and be honest with the doctors about the signs, your experience recovering, and any doubts or questions they might have.

(The author, Dr. Aniket Paygude is a Consultant: Surgical Gastroenterology, at Manipal Hospital, Baner, Pune)

## Rashi Mal on the quest for 'good work' she resonates with

Rashi Mal, who dons multiple hats of being an actor, singer, and also a dancer, gets candid with *The Pioneer* for a quick fun chat on her journey, her recently released EP, and more.

TEJAL SINHA

A multifaceted performer—Rashmi Mal is that one talented bunch of star, who has been renowned for her skills, be it as an actor, singer-songwriter, or even a dancer. Now what sets her apart—she has been equally involved in working towards mastering all her skills. Making it obvious, she has had an interesting journey so far, wondered how? She has had the privilege of working with some of the best names out there while she continues to make her own place. It has not been devoid of challenges, but looking back at how far she has come, she says, it has certainly been rewarding.

"The arts in totality have been my first love," shares the *Helicopter Eela* actress as she continues, "Acting, dancing, and singing each occupy an important place in my life. Acting gives me emotional liberation, dance gives me physical expression, and singing gives me a voice. So each liberates me in a very different way. They are all different facets of self-expression at the end of the day."

Rashi hails from a family with no background in either of the skills she has mastered, yet she has been so proficient in the same. Having the privilege of working with good people, just like many others, she shares, she too has made mistakes. However, she managed to learn quickly and with each step, moved on to bigger and better things.

"It definitely takes time to understand how this industry works. There is no fixed path to follow and talent is viewed subjectively by each person. There are also so many more considerations than just your talent," she recalls

adding that the initial challenges she has been through are to be seen. For instance; to show people what you have to offer as an actor or as a performer. However, in this profession, "you constantly have to reinvent yourself and compete for eyeballs in a way, no matter what level you reach. But once people become acquainted with your work and what you can do, it does become a little easier."

For the unaware, she has been a part of TV shows like *Gulmohar Grand*, which still hold cult status, and now she has eventually explored different mediums to movies. Rashi says she enjoys all the mediums. "The movies are magical and grand, television has tremendous reach, the web allows you to experiment a lot more, which is why, as you see, I have not shied away from any platform. I look for good work that resonates with me. I like working with people who care about what they do. The rest is incidental."

Rashi Mal, who captured people's hearts with her portrayal in the 2013 smash series *Paanch: 5 Wrong Make A Right*, returned to the big screen in 2018. She played Riddhi Sen's onscreen girlfriend in the 'adventurously humorous' flick in *Helicopter Eela*. She has had the pleasure to not only work with Kajol in the film, but also, with Bollywood's darling couple Alia and Ranbir, Amitabh Bachchan, and the cast of *Brahmastra* in the film. "Working with people who are good at their jobs

elevates your own work," she says adding, "You bring your best foot forward to match theirs. These are all people I have grown up watching. I consider myself lucky to now be a part of this artistic tapestry I admired from afar for so long."

Apart from her acting, as a matter of fact, singing was the first art form she fell in love with but was the last addition as far as formal training went. "I was always that kid at family functions who was asked to sing. I have been training my voice in Western classical techniques for several years now and have also studied songwriting at Berklee College of Music. I have also previously been one half of the musical duo Sachhi Savitris and have written, sung, and composed for films, ads, and for my own songs," says the Misaal singer.

Recently, she has also announced her first Extended Play, *Rashionality CH.1*, which is her virtual alias, including that on her social media. "I felt it lent itself well to my Musical persona as well. CH.1 because I feel I am still in the 1st chapter of my musical journey. This is my first EP, so it is very close to my heart. Each of the 3 songs is personal and heart-felt."

### RASHIONALITY CH.1 HAS 3 SONGS REPRESENTING 3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF LOVE

**Yoon Hi:** This song is everything good about romance—the anticipation, the butterflies and the contentment that comes with being with your perfect someone.

**Chalo:** This is her love letter to self. For all those times when you are feeling down and lost, this is the song to get you up and get you moving again.

**Naariyan:** This is her love letter to all the women, to remind them of their own power and to honour all the strong women who came before to afford us the lives we now live.

"I write from experience," shares the *Buri Buri* singer, as she speaks of her song-writing process. "I am a sensitive person whose emotional intake from the external world is emotionally higher than that of the average. So songs become one of the mediums of self-expression that help me channel and release these emotions healthily."

Her most challenging project as an actor, she says, was that of Samaira Jal in the series *Hindmata* (Eros). "I had to tread a fine line between ditzy and naive, being selfish yet likable. The brief was Alexis Rose from *Schitt's Creek* meets *Legally Blonde*. So it was challenging but also super fun to play a protagonist who was so complex yet super so glamorous," she says adding, in singing, "my most challenging project was writing and singing the song *Baaton mulakaton main* for my film *Culture Vulture* because the song had to fit a specific context and it had to represent the voice of the character I was playing. It was challenging but also super exciting."

On the work front, she has two films slated for release: *Culture Vulture* with Nagesh Kukunoor and Suchitra Pillai, and *Death in the City* co-starring Javed Jaffrey. Meanwhile, on the musical front, she has two songs up for release; one from the film *Culture Vulture*, and *Baaton Mulakaton main*, an independent original called *Stay* (English) or *Na Jaa* (Hindi). The same song will be released in 2 languages, and so she is all excited for the same.

"I don't think any of the characters I have played so far have been exactly like me and yet they all have something of me. You always find something to relate to in each part and each story. It is about taking that one trait, that one emotion and amplifying it," says the talented star on the concluding front.





# Rayudu blames RCB title drought to senior players

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

If a title triumph has eluded Royal Challengers Bengaluru since the inception of the Indian Premier League (IPL), it is because highly-paid international stars have always buckled under pressure, leaving the juniors to do all the heavy lifting, says former India batter Ambati Rayudu. Rayudu, who has won multiple IPL trophies with both Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings, didn't take any names but probably he was hinting towards team's three premier batters - Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell and Faf du Plessis. RCB have lost two out of their three IPL games this season and while Kohli has scored 203 runs at a strike-rate of 140 plus, he hasn't exactly set the stage on fire during Powerplay. Du Plessis has managed 65 runs in four games while



Maxwell has contributed only 31 runs so far in as many games. "RCB's bowlers always

concede over par runs and their batting unit performs under par," Rayudu told Star Sports after RCB lost to LSG

on Tuesday. "Who are all batting in pressure situations? The young Indian batters and

Dinesh Karthik. The big international names, who are supposed to take the pressure, where are they? All

are back in the dressing room," Rayudu said. He was referring Mahipal Lomror, who has come in as Impact Sub in a few games and scored at a strike-rate of 230 plus and Karthik, whose cameo was instrumental in their only win of the season so far against Punjab Kings. Rayudu termed it as a convenient option for senior batters, who are consuming all the Powerplay overs, where scoring runs is easy with field restrictions in place. "Sixteen years. This is the same story of RCB, when there is pressure, no big name is ever found standing. All youngsters are playing at the back-end and all the big guns bat at the top of the order and they whip off the cream from the cake and that is the reason this team has never won IPL," said the 38-year-old firebrand batter, who played 55 ODIs and six T20Is for India between 2013 and 2019.



## Mayank impresses all with raw pace, accuracy

SAMAR PANDEY ■ NEW DELHI

The sensational 21-year-old Mayank Yadav from the Lucknow Super Giants has stormed into the limelight of the Indian Premier League with an extraordinary start to his career. With two consecutive Player-of-the-Match awards in his first two IPL games, Mayank has already carved a place for himself in elite territory, showcasing his exceptional talent and skill on the ground. Mayank has also etched his name in the IPL record books by consistently bowling deliveries exceeding the 155 kilometers per hour mark. His lightning-fast pace was evident in his delivery clocked at 156.7 kilometers per hour, which stands as the fourth fastest in the history of the IPL.

Mayank's recent match-winning performances against the Punjab Kings and the Royal Challengers Bangalore have been nothing short of sensational. His searing spell of 3 for 14 in four overs at the Chinnaswamy Stadium left the opposition batsmen in awe, including the dismissals of hitters like Glenn Maxwell and Cameron Green, as well as the well-set Rajat Patidar. Reflecting on his early success, Mayank expressed his delight in contributing to his team's victories and emphasised his long-term aspiration to excel for his country. Despite his individual achievements, Mayank remains focused on the collective goal of winning matches for his team, highlighting his maturity and dedication to the sport. Speaking about his favourite wicket, Mayank recalled the dismissal of Cameron Green, where a lightning-fast delivery rattled the stumps and cleared the boundary on the first bounce, showcasing the sheer pace and power of his bowling. Mayank attributed his ability to bowl at such high speeds to a combination of factors, including his disciplined diet, sleep, and his training regimen. He emphasised the importance of maintaining perfection in every aspect of his preparation, including post-match recovery routines such as ice baths. KL Rahul, captain of the Lucknow Super Giants, has praised Mayank for his remarkable perseverance and dedication. He highlighted Mayank's resilience in overcoming previous injuries and his continuous pursuit of self-improvement. Fellow teammate Quinton de Kock praised Mayank's express pace and simplicity in approach, highlighting his ability to remain focused and deliver under pressure. Despite his youthful age, Mayank has shown maturity beyond his years, earning the respect and admiration of his peers and opponents alike. RCB captain Faf du Plessis acknowledged the challenge of facing a young fast bowler with a unique action, noting the difficulty for batsmen to judge and adjust quickly. Du Plessis commended Mayank's pace and accuracy, underscoring his potential to become a formidable force in the cricketing world. As Mayank continues to make waves in the IPL with his exceptional performances, cricket fans eagerly anticipate witnessing his continued growth and success on the international stage. With his raw talent and determination, Mayank is assured to leave a permanent mark on the world of cricket for years to come.

## Mavi ruled out of IPL due to injury

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants' pacer Shivam Mavi has been ruled out of this season's Indian Premier League after he failed to recover from his rib injury. The 25-year-old, who last played competitive cricket in August 2023, missed the entire domestic season for Uttar Pradesh but did turn up for Lucknow Super Giants' pre-season training only to be told that he would not play any part in this edition. He had suffered a rib stress fracture in August last year. "The talented right-arm fast bowler joined us after the auction in December and has been part of the camp from pre-season. He has been a key part of the squad for the season, hence we as well as Shivam are disappointed that his season has come to an end so soon," the press release from LSG stated. Mavi, who has played six T20



Internationals for India, also didn't get to play a single game for Gujarat Titans in 2023, and in the last auction, LSG roped him for Rs 6.4 crore to fill the void created by Avesh Khan leaving for Rajasthan Royals. "The franchise will continue to support Shivam and is committed to aiding him in his recovery process. We wish him a swift and complete return, and are sure he will be back fitter and stronger," LSG

stated. Mavi, on his part, vowed to come back stronger. "I thought I will play matches and do well for my team but unfortunately I have to go because of injury. A player needs to be mentally strong and also know what are the areas one needs to focus on during rehabilitation. We have a good team here," he said in a video posted on LSG's official 'X' handle.

## Suryakumar clears most fitness tests, to play either on April 7 or 11

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians will soon get the much required batting boost as the world's No.1 ranked T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav has cleared almost all the fitness tests at National Cricket Academy and is very close to playing his first IPL game of the season. Suryakumar had undergone multiple surgeries — one for grade 2 ankle tear and another for sports hernia — and he last played in the T20 series in South Africa. "Surya has cleared all but one routine tests which are mandatory to get RTP (Return To Play) certificate from the NCA. There is one more test left to be conducted on Thursday, after which a clearer picture would emerge," a senior BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity. "He is batting comfortably and has done all simulations," he added. Asked if Suryakumar will be



able to play the Mumbai Indians' home game on April 7 against Delhi Capitals, the source said: "The clearer picture will emerge after tomorrow's tests. There's still three days before the next game but since it's a comeback after a long time, it could also be April 11 at home against RCB." The swashbuckling batter has been MI's most prolific performer for the past four to five seasons and his absence from the playing XI has been felt by the team that has lost its

first three matches this season. His replacement Naman Dhir, the player from Punjab, is yet to measure up and beleaguered skipper Hardik Pandya would certainly need 'Mr 360 degree' to stem the rot. As far as the BCCI's medical team is concerned, the clear mandate was to ensure that India's premier T20 batter is completely fit for the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies, and also make sure that there are no premature breakdowns during the IPL.

## Could have been handled better with clear communication

### SHASTRI ON PANDYA CAPTAINCY ROW

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India coach Ravi Shastri feels the fan backlash towards Hardik Pandya could have been avoided had Mumbai Indians shown "clarity in communication" while announcing him as captain. Shastri also advised Pandya to stay calm and weather the storm with solid performances. "This is not the Indian cricket team that's playing. This is franchise cricket. They have paid top dollar. They are the bosses. It's their entitlement as to who they want as

captain. Okay, where I think this could have been handled better was with more clarity in communication," Shastri told Star Sports' "Cricket Live Show". "If you wanted Hardik Pandya as captain, then say that we are looking at the future. We are looking to build. Rohit has done a fabulous job, as everyone knows, and we want him to help out Hardik in these next three years as the team progresses. "That communication, that clarity should have come out a little more for all this to die down. So it's not a case of you saying, 'No, we don't want



Rohit Sharma,' or 'He was treated badly,' and all the things that are coming out in social media," he added. Shastri expects the tide to turn once Mumbai Indians start winning. The team is currently on a three-match losing streak. "So, my advice to Hardik would be to be calm, patient, ignore, and just focus on your game. Get a couple of performances going. Mumbai Indians is a terrific side. If they get on a roll, they win three or four matches on the trot, everything will subside," he said. "At the end of the day, nothing beats

results. You win matches, and things will change. There's a lot of bull crap out there as well. You know, and some of the stories are just planted. A lot of it is just planted on other people's names, including my name," he added. Former Australia batter Matthew Hayden also felt that fans' affection for Rohit is understandable given his 11-year tenure as MI captain. "See the fans are the biggest stakeholders in this and they often don't have the politics, the insights, but they want to understand this, they love Rohit Sharma."

## Punjab Kings batters to face different challenge against Gujarat Titans

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Bruised by Mayank Yadav's scorching pace, Punjab Kings' batters will face an altogether different challenge when Gujarat Titans' bowling unit tries to take the pace off deliveries on a slightly tricky Motera track in their IPL match here on Thursday. The Kings have lost their last two away games and another slip-up against Titans will lead to further loss of momentum which tends to shift very quickly due to lack of turnaround time. Titans, on the other hand, are brimming with confidence after beating Sunrisers Hyderabad comprehensively by seven wickets in their last game. In the previous match, Kings were completely undone by

Mayank's speed and most of their top-order batters looked ill-equipped to face the fast bowler, who was regularly clocking 150 clicks and more importantly, aiming to bowl into the body of the batters. However, the scenario will be completely different when veteran Mohit Sharma comes calling at the back-end, presenting a palate of variations. Mohit uses knuckle balls, slow bouncers and wide yorkers to good effect and this year's IPL trend has shown that save Mayank, all speedsters, who have been able to take pace off their deliveries, have been more successful. It will pose a different kind of challenge for the likes of Shikhar Dhawan, Jonny Bairstow and Jitesh Sharma, all of whom like



the ball to come on to the bat. If Liam Livingstone is unavailable for Thursday's match after sustaining a hamstring niggle in

the last game, it will spell doom for Punjab as they would then happen to lose their key enforcer during the death overs.

Punjab will also have to deal with the accuracy of the incomparable Rashid Khan and the guile of Noor Ahmed, former's left-arm alter-ego. The third Afghan in the line-up, Azmatullah Omarzai's all-round skills will also be a challenge for the team. More than Punjab's batting, it is their bowling, especially at the death, that has been a cause for concern. Harshal Patel, one of their million dollar buys, has had a pathetic season so far going for an economy rate of 11.41 runs per over, having bowled his quota in all three games. Equally disappointing has been leg-spinner Rahul Chahar, who has conceded runs at an economy rate of 11.37, and hasn't been able to complete his quota

of overs. Arshdeep Singh, India's designated death overs yorker specialist, has also been profligate to a certain extent and it has once again compounded Kings' worries. For Titans, the performance against defending champions Chennai Super Kings could be termed an aberration as they have executed their plans pretty well. The batting is yet to fire in unison but the bowling unit has shown its wares by defending well in opening game and restricting a rampaging SRH to a manageable score in the last game. Teams (from): **GUJARAT TITANS:** Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Robin Minz, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Mandhar, B Sai Sudarshan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay

Shankar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Shahrukh Khan, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Kartik Tyagi, Shshant Mishra, Spencer Johnson, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma and Manav Suthar. **PUNJAB KINGS:** Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Matthew Short, Prabhsimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajann, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.





# ‘I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD PLAY LEAD ROLE; WAS MORE KEEN ON WRITING’

AHEAD OF THE RELEASE OF THE UPCOMING CRIME FILM *BHARATHANATYAM*, THE LEAD ACTOR OF THE FILM, ACTOR SURYA TEJA, SHARES SOME INTERESTING DETAILS ABOUT BAGGING THE LEAD ROLE, MAKING THE WRITING RELATABLE, AND MORE.

K. RAMYA SREE

Actor Surya Teja is making his acting debut with the film *Bharathanatyam*, directed by KVR Mahendra of Dorasani. Produced by Payal Saraf, Meenakshi Goswami is playing the female lead in the film, which is set to hit the big screens on April 5.

As the release date approaches, the makers are busy promoting the project. While we recently got an opportunity to converse with the director of the film, we have today the lead actor, Surya, from the film, who narrated his journey to movies. He shared, “I always wanted to get into the film industry, not as a hero but as a writer. Even for this film, when I wrote the story, I didn’t want to play it. Any hero would’ve looked good in that character. But when I narrated the story to KVR Garu and our producer, it was they who thought I would be a good fit to play the lead role in the film. Even while writing the script, I never considered

myself; I was considering Sree Vishnu or Sundeep Kishan to play this part.”

His passion for movies grew even more because of his father, who worked as a publicity designer in the film industry for many years. “I have done fine arts and masters in painting. I write movie titles. I am experienced in designing and editing, and I got into writing after COVID,” he mentioned.

From the conversation we had with the director earlier, we learned that *Bharathanatyam* is a crime-genre film. It is a fictional story but is relatable. How did Surya make the writing relatable? He answered, “The point of this movie is what happens when a man takes a shortcut. I wrote about the struggles that were felt personally in a comical way. Commercially, this film is a very good entertainer. When I gave KVR the draft script, he was at that point looking for a crime-genre film, and he liked the story. KVR Mahendra and the team were very friendly and gave us a lot of freedom to develop the story further.”

Having learned about the story and the genre, we were wondering why they named it *Bharathanatyam*, and this actor responded by saying the film’s story would justify the title, and he asked the audience to watch the movie in theatres to know it.

Moreover, this film has some of the finest lyric writers like Kasarla Shyam, Anantha Sriram, and Bhaskara Batla on board to write the songs, and the whole journey has been very memorable. Surya is happy that a small film like this is getting a lot of positive response and support. He in fact thanked his producer for all the support he has been getting, and he is very confident that the audience, especially the family audience, will love this film because of the way it has turned out finally.

Going forward, he doesn’t mind if he is a writer or an actor; all that matters is that he is in the film industry, as the actor shared in conclusion.



## Director Trinadha Rao returns to production after 9 years

Director Trinadha Rao Nakkina had forayed into production with the 2015 film *Cinema Chupista Maava*. Although the film performed well at the box office, the director did not announce any other project as a producer. Now after almost 9 years, he has announced the details about his 2nd production venture.

He made it official on Wednesday that his next film is with actor Vikram Sahidev Lagadapati, who rose to fame as a child artist. Bankrolled under the banner Nakkina Narratives, the movie will be directed by Vamsee Krishna Malla.

With Esther Anil as the female lead, the yet-to-be titled movie officially took off on Wednesday, with actor Sundeep Kishan clapping the board and Thrinadha Rao handing over the script to the director. This is

The movie that is going to be high technically has cinematography by Maaya V. Davzand of Eagle fame, who is the music director, while Prawin Pudi is the editor and Raghu Kulkarni is the production designer. Naresh Tula and Rajendra Prasad penned the dialogues, whereas Thrinadha Rao Nakkina, Naresh Tula, and Uday Bhagavathula wrote the screenplay.

## Yash-starrer *Toxic* to begin shooting in Karnataka

A new exciting update about Rocking Star Yash’s highly anticipated pan-India films, Rocking Star Yash’s *Toxic: A Fairy Tale For Grown-Ups* is here!

According to the latest updates, the actor will soon kick-start the shoot of the mass entertainer in Karnataka.

Confirming the same, the film’s producers revealed, “Due to the lack of optimal facilities, all our big films end up being shot outside the state. Rocking Star Yash has long expressed that concern, and to change that, we at KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations are kicking-starting the shooting of *Toxic* in Karnataka. We have already erected massive sets, creating many job opportunities and avenues for people at ground level, technicians, and budding talent in the state. We are



working towards making a film of global potential. As producers, we had options from various locations in India and abroad. The film has onboarded actors and technicians from multiple industries, even international talent, and setting up a base there would have been more economical. However, Yash and KVN took the initiative to establish *Toxic* HQ in Karnataka before we shoot parts of the film in locations elsewhere, and showcase the tremendous potential of our people.” Helmed by Geetu Mohandas and Co-Produced by Venkat K Narayana’s KVN Productions and Yash’s Monster Mind Creations, *Toxic: A Fairy Tale For Grown-Ups* is one of the most interesting collaborations of all time. The film is scheduled to hit the screens on April 10, 2025.



## Chamundeswari: Chiranjeevi dutifully assumed the role of my mother’s ‘Pedda Koduku’

Megastar Chiranjeevi recently presented the book *Savitri Classics* with his wife Surekha in front of much pomp and the presence of Vijaya Chamundeswari, the daughter of Mahanati Savitri, as well as other superstars like Brahmanandam and Jayasudha, to mention a few.

Savitri’s daughter revealed some intriguing things and made some insightful remarks during this conversation.

“Megastar Chiranjeev has a habit of looking at my mother Savitri’s picture, that’s there in his bedroom, as soon as he wakes up every morning. He showed me the image to prove it because he felt I might not believe

it. He is a man of virtues and vices in addition to words. I can proudly say that he is my mother’s ‘Pedda Koduku,’ (elder son), and he has dutifully assumed that role by bringing this book to a large audience today,” said Chamundeswari, speaking at the event. During the same event, Megastar recounted how he first got to know the renowned Savitri, who was a major character in his first movie, *Punadi Raallu*. Additionally, Megastar’s wife Surekha, has a strong friendship with Chamundeswari, having grown up in the same Madras neighborhood in the past. Surekha took the interviewer role for the first time at the event, asking Chamundeswari some thought-provoking questions.

## Anjali: *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi* will be better than *Geethanjali*

Actress Anjali’s 2014 film *Geethanjali* is having its second outing now, ready for release on April 11.

Titled *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*, the second part features the same cast as the first one and its trailer was launched on Wednesday in the city. Directed by Siva Thurlapati, the movie is produced by Kona Venkat in association with MVV Cinemas. This is a big-budget horror-comedy film which has a completely different story than the first part.

Speaking at the trailer launch event, actress Anjali shared, “I loved the trailer of *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*. This movie is hundred times better than this. I wanted my 50th film to be very special. That wish was fulfilled when this movie was made. My entire team made this movie with their soul and heart. We made the film with the intention of entertaining everyone, and I thank Kona Venkat for making it happen. We also shot a special song, which we will release soon.”



## RAKESH VARRE: I left two projects for *Jithender Reddy*

Muduganti Creations production venture *Jithender Reddy*, directed by Virinchi Varma, had its glimpses released on Wednesday in a grand ceremony in Hyderabad.

Actor Rakesh Varre, who became popular after appearing in movies like *Baahubali*, *Evanikee Cheppoddu*, and *Peka Medalu*, is playing the lead role in the film. Rakesh Varre, who started off his journey as a character artist in Tollywood, is elated that he is playing the protagonist in the film. Expressing his happiness, he shared, “I started as a character artist, and got close to the audience with the



Mirchi Baahubali movies and later, got a good recognition with the movie *Evanikee Cheppoddu*.” Calling his producer Muduganti Ravinder Reddy, director Virinchi Varma, DOP Gnanu Shekhar, and Uma and Vani as the four pillars of the film, he shared, “Shekhar garu suggested me for this film. Having already accepted two films, I liked the story told by Virinchi Varma and decided to leave those films aside to do this film. Producer Ravinder Reddy’s eagerness to tell the story of his elder brother *Jithender Reddy* to the people was very much appreciated. I hope that the audience will like this movie and it will be a success.”

## ‘I AM DEDICATING FAMILY STAR TO MY FATHER’

Actor Vijay Deverakonda and Mrunal Thakur starrer *Family Star* is all set to hit big screens on April 5.

It is reported that the film cleared its censorship formalities on Wednesday, where it got a U/A certificate. However, the board members have suggested 5 cuts. The film will have a total runtime of 2 hours and 43 minutes. Meanwhile, the lead cast, director, and producer are very busy promoting the film. They have been attending many events to let people know about the film.

Actress Mrunal Thakur, who made her debut in Tollywood with *Sita Ramam*, has instantly become popular among the Telugu audience, and her second outing, *Hi Nanna*, too, was widely appreciated by the people. She shared, “I am dedicating the movie *Family Star* to my family star - my father.”

The actress, who is extremely happy with the response she has been receiving from the Telugu audience, expressed, “You all have accepted me as a Telugu girl. After *Sita Ramam* and *Hi Nanna*, you are now showing your support for *Family Star* is incredible. Thanks to Director Parasuram for giving me such a great opportunity. Acting as this character was difficult for the first 15 days. After that, I felt happy, realizing no one could do this character better than me. Everyone loves Vijay. I really enjoyed acting with Rohini Bamma, and we all had lots of fun shooting with the kids in the film.”

