

'Iran & Israel told to calm down'
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REDEFINING MEN THROUGH TAILORED COSMETIC PROCEDURES
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'My character reflects the challenges of nepotism in LOVE GURU'
 P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
KCR kept the self-respect of Telangana at the feet of Modi. KCR has been saying that BRS votes should be transferred to the BJP. He said that Revanth Reddy should be toppled within 100 days. Why is KCR not saying anything about toppling Modi who has been in power for the last 10 years?
 - A. Revanth Reddy, CM, TG P4

DON'T MISS...
Rs 2L reward announced for...

In response to the recent attack on Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy involving a stone-hurling incident within the jurisdiction of Ajith Singh Nagar Police Station on April 13, officials from the NTR District Police Commissionerate have announced a reward of Rs 2 lakh for persons providing accurate information and video evidence leading to the arrest of the perpetrator(s). Assuring the confidentiality of informants, police authorities have emphasised their commitment to maintaining the privacy of those who come forward with...

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2 brain systems in disorder in...

Two brain systems have been found to function improperly in people experiencing psychosis, where they have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not, according to a new research led by Stanford University, US. These systems were found to be - one, a 'filter' directing attention towards what is important externally and internally, and two, a 'predictor' involved in anticipating rewards. The filtering system, or the salience network, helps us dismiss irrational thoughts so that...

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'Malpractices by candidates fear...

Malpractices by candidates during online assessments is one of the biggest fears among recruiters and talent acquisition (TA) specialists, a report said on Monday. Fraudulent practices by candidates during online assessments have emerged as the biggest fear of the participants (39 per cent), followed by anxiety over finding the right candidate for a role (37 per cent), according to a report by AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro. The lack of effective tools to gauge specific skills has emerged as the...

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RR brace for Narine spin treat as KKR...

Rajasthan Royals' star-studded batting will face the serious challenge of decoding Sunil Narine's mystery at Eden Gardens when they take on two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders in a top-of-the-table IPL clash here on Tuesday. Narine, who is one month shy of turning 36, had played a pivotal role in KKR's twin triumphs under former skipper Gautam Gambhir in 2012 and 2014. Ever since joining the side way back in 2012, Narine has sizzled at Eden Gardens with his crafty bowling...

-SPORTS

None can stop our win: Jagan

PNS ■ GUDIVADA

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has said that the attack on him has only fortified his resolve to serve the people. Addressing his first public gathering in Gudivada since the assault on him during his 'Memantha Siddham Yatra', near Vijayawada, he said, "While the wound on my forehead may heal in 10 days, the scars inflicted by Chandrababu on the poor will endure a lifetime," Chief Minister Jagan remarked.

Facing criticism and Opposition from various quarters, including Chandrababu, the media, and political rivals, Jagan remained undeterred. "Attacks from all sides only affirm our proximity to victory. They are distant from it, while we stand on the brink," asserted CM Jagan. Emphasising his commitment to the welfare of the people, Jagan urged his supporters, "Are you ready to stand with me for another five years, to fight for the future of the underprivileged and to uphold our ongoing initiatives?"

Reflecting on his government's accomplishments, Jagan highlighted the transformative changes brought about, contrasting them with the unfulfilled promises of his predecessor. "We have made significant strides, providing essential services to farmers, ensuring free electricity during the day, and securing land rights for millions," he stated.

"In the past 58 months, we've witnessed tangible progress in every corner of the State. Our initiatives,

Reaffirms commitment to welfare of people

- The CM reaffirms his commitment to the welfare of the people, calling for continued support from his followers to fight for the underprivileged and uphold ongoing initiatives.
- Jagan highlights the transformative changes brought about by his government
- Jagan outlines the significant progress made in healthcare, education, and economic development
- The CM criticises the failure of previous governments, particularly Chandrababu Naidu's, to fulfil key promises made to the people, contrasting them with his own administration's track record of fulfilment.



'While the wound on my forehead may heal in 10 days, the scars inflicted by Chandrababu Naidu on the poor will endure a lifetime.'

"WE HAVE MADE LONG STRIDES, PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO FARMERS, ENSURING FREE ELECTRICITY DURING THE DAY, AND SECURING LAND RIGHTS FOR MILLIONS."

including generous pension schemes and infrastructural developments, underscore our commitment to the people," added Chief Minister Jagan. Furthermore, Jagan outlined his administration's efforts in healthcare, education, and economic development, including the establishment

of medical colleges and industrial corridors, and consistently topping the 'Ease of Doing Business' rankings. Recalling Chandrababu's unfulfilled pledges from 2014, Jagan criticised his predecessor's failure to deliver on key promises, such as farm loan waivers and unemployment

benefits, contrasting them with his own administration's track record of fulfilling 99% of its manifesto commitments. Chief Minister Jagan reiterated his dedication to the people of Andhra Pradesh, promising to continue striving for their welfare and progress.



'CM enfeebled irrigation projects in North Andhra'

PNS ■ RAJAM

Nara Chandrababu Naidu, on Monday, said this public tsunami reflects the fact that the victory in these elections is that of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Naidu said that the Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy, has debilitated the irrigation projects in North Andhra. The TDP during its regime has spent Rs 1600 cr on these projects while Mr Jagan has spent a mere Rs 594 cr in these five years on these projects, he said.

Naidu asked the people why the YSRCP leaders, Vijayasai Reddy and YV Subba Reddy are ruling the roost in North Andhra. Mentioning Saturday's incident in which a stone was pelted at CM Jagan, the TDP supremo felt that in the name of stone-pelting CM Jagan is playing a high drama.

Continued on Page 2

'25,000 constables will be recruited'

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a move aimed at tackling unemployment and championing welfare programmes, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N Chandrababu Naidu, addressing a meeting in Vizianagaram on Monday, pledged to initiate the recruitment process for 25,000 police constables once the TDP alliance assumes power in Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, he outlined plans to address vacancies through the establishment of a Mega District Selection Committee (DSC), showcasing the party's commitment to providing employment opportunities.

Continued on Page 2



Stone used in attack on CM yet to be identified: CP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata has disclosed that despite efforts, the specific stone used in the attack remains unidentified. Following the announcement of a Rs 2 lakh reward for information, authorities have yet to pinpoint the exact stone involved.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Kanti Rana Tata noted the confiscation of multiple stones from the scene, yet determining the exact stone used poses a challenge. In their investigative efforts, 52 persons were questioned, with several of people with prior criminal records being detained.

To expedite the search for the perpetrator, eight specialised teams have been deployed by the district police.

Despite stringent security measures encompassing a deployment of over 1,400 police personnel, including units such as APSP patrols, CM security group,

Continued on Page 2

ATTACK ON CM

Sajjala dismisses claims of security lapse

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has asserted that the overwhelming public support for the 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra has rattled the Opposition.

Responding to criticism regarding the incident involving CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, Sajjala dismissed claims of a security lapse as a mere attempt by the Opposition to deflect attention from the matter. He said that the Opposition's unified stance on the issue suggests their fear of being implicated.

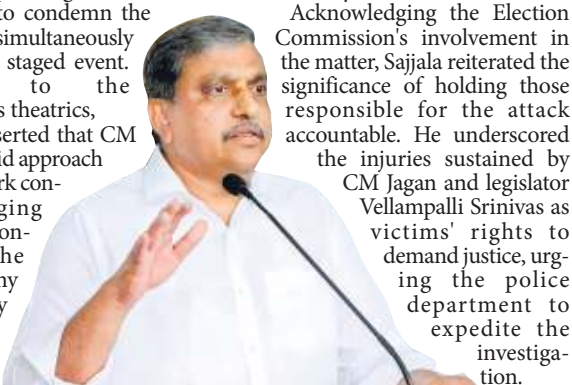
Sajjala challenged the notion of self-inflicted attacks and highlighted the consistent narrative among opposition leaders regarding the incident. He criticised their contradictory statements, pointing out that while they claim to condemn the attack, they simultaneously label it as a staged event.

Contrary to the Opposition's theatrics, Sajjala asserted that CM Jagan's candid approach stands in stark contrast, urging sceptics to consider the absence of any public display of injuries. Drawing parallels to

past incidents, Sajjala referenced Chandrababu Naidu's theatrical response to the Alipiri incident, suggesting a pattern of attention-seeking behaviour by the Opposition. He attributed the opposition's desperation to the overwhelming public support for the ongoing 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra, alleging their involvement in orchestrating the attack on CM Jagan.

Sajjala criticised the Opposition's attempts to manipulate the narrative by calling for a CBI probe and the transfer of senior police officials, dismissing them as diversionary tactics. He stressed the need for a thorough investigation into the attack and emphasised the responsibility of the security department to address pertinent issues such as power outages and security measures.

Acknowledging the Election Commission's involvement in the matter, Sajjala reiterated the significance of holding those responsible for the attack accountable. He underscored the injuries sustained by CM Jagan and legislator Vellampalli Srinivas as victims' rights to demand justice, urging the police department to expedite the investigation.



Speed up probe, CEO Meena tells CP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena has directed Vijayawada CP Kanti Rana Tata and IG Ravi Prakash to speed up the investigation of the case related to the stone pelting on Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy near Daba Kotla Center, Ajit Singh Nagar of NTR District on Saturday. He met both the police officials in his chamber at the Secretariat on Monday and reviewed the progress on the case.

He reviewed with the police officials how such an incident took place in the 'Memantha Siddham' bus trip organized by the state Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, how the accused were



allowed to attack and how the accused managed to attack with stones despite full security. He inquired about the progress of the investigation of some of the accused who have already been detained in connection with this incident and the matters that have

come out in the investigation. He ordered that the investigation related to this case should be expedited and a comprehensive report be submitted as soon as possible. During the visits of the Chief Minister of the state along with other prominent persons, he stressed the need to take strong measures to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities and inquired about the measures taken at the state level.

Vijayawada City Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata explained to Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena about the antecedents of the incident and the progress of the ongoing investigation through video visuals and photographs.



No YSR mark on Jagan rule: Sharmila
 P3

AP, TG review vigil at borders for polls



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Telangana (TG) are pooling their efforts to ensure the upcoming general elections proceed smoothly, with transparency and peace being top priorities.

A collaborative meeting was organised at the Telangana State Secretariat in Hyderabad, chaired by AP Chief Secretary Dr. KS Jawahar Reddy and TS Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, addressing inter-state election affairs. The attendees included Telangana State DGP Ravi Gupta, Additional DGs Shivdhar Reddy, Mahesh Bhagwat, AP's Additional DG Dr Shankabrata Bagchi, Special Principal Secretary of Commercial Taxes and Excise Department Dr Rajat Bhargava, Telangana PCCF RM Dobriyal, AP PCCF Chiranjeevi Chaudhary, and other officials.

Dr. KS Jawahar Reddy highlighted the significance of synchronised efforts, especially since AP faces

simultaneous elections for the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha seats on May 13. 'Operation Parivartan', a focused initiative to curb illegal activities like liquor and drug trafficking in AP, has shown promising outcomes. Over 129 integrated checkpoints have been established along various state borders, intensifying surveillance to thwart illegal activities such as illicit liquor transportation and vote-buying schemes. CS Jawahar Reddy emphasised the effective collaboration between enforcement teams from both states.

Echoing this sentiment, Telangana Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari emphasized the prior coordination with district collectors and senior officials to ensure a well-organized polling process on May 13. Stringent measures have been implemented to halt illegal activities, including the smuggling of liquor, drugs, and other items.

Continued on Page 2

Political future of Lokesh, Pawan at stake

SNCN ACHARYULU

■ HYDERABAD

Can Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy prevent his hard critics from not entering into the Assembly and also into the Lok Sabha? TDP general secretary and former minister Nara Lokesh, Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan, former MP Sujana Chowdary and Raghurama Krishnan Raju (if he will be given Assembly ticket by the TDP) are strongly planning to enter into the Assembly.

In the first attempt, Lokesh and Pawan Kalyan failed in the 2019 Assembly elections in entering the Assembly. Lokesh had become a minister as an MLC and stepped into the

Assembly. But he wants to enter into the Assembly as an MLA. Now Lokesh is contesting from Mangalagiri in the present Assembly elections where he was defeated in the previous elec-

tions. Pawan Kalyan was defeated from Bhimavaram and Gajuwaka constituencies in the previous Assembly elections. But in the present Assembly elections, Pawan Kalyan is contest-

ing from Pithapuram Assembly constituency. In the election campaign Pawan Kalyan is begging the voters to send him into the Assembly once.

Sujana Chowdary is contesting

for the Assembly as a BJP candidate for the first time. He is contesting from Vijayawada West Assembly constituency. MP Raghurama Krishnan Raju strongly desires to contest to the Lok Sabha or the Assembly. But he has no chance for contesting the Lok Sabha polls and there is speculation that he may be given Undi Assembly ticket by the TDP, which is being represented by TDP sitting MP Ramaraju. Meanwhile, former MP CM Ramesh who belongs to Kadapa district is contesting from Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat. These all are hard critics of CM YS Jagan. Jagan wants that his hard critics should not enter into the Assembly. If Lokesh and Pawan Kalyan fail this time also in winning as MLAs their political future may fall in the dark.



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Jagan resumes poll campaign

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Resilient Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has resumed the 'Memantha Siddham Yatra' despite a recent attack, showcasing unwavering determination. Day 15 of the bus yatra now progresses into the Krishna district, reflecting Chief Minister Jagan's steadfast resolve.

Following the incident, Jagan thanked supporters for their overwhelming solidarity and stressed the importance of standing firm against such cowardly acts. He called upon party leaders to maintain their commitment to engaging with the public and ensuring the success of the 'Memantha Siddham Yatra'.

The gathering witnessed the presence of notable figures including K Moshen Raju, Chairperson of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council,



Ministers Jogi Ramesh and Karumuri Venkata Nageswara Rao, among others.

In a significant development, key members from

the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) officially joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Kesarapalle stay point.

Representatives from various constituencies, such as Mylavaram and Penamaluru, including BC leaders, youth wing leaders, and former TDP officials, announced

their allegiance to the YSR Congress Party, underlining a notable shift in political affiliations.

Among those who made the switch were T Venkataramana from Maddilaparva village, former ZPTC P Vijayalakshmi from Riddigudem, and youth wing leader P. Suresh Kumar Reddy, reflecting a growing momentum towards the YSR Congress Party.

Similarly, figures from Penamaluru Constituency, including Chalasani Smitha and Deveneni Gautam, along with other influential leaders, also declared their support for the YSR Congress Party, signalling a significant realignment in regional politics.

The influx of TDP leaders into the YSR Congress Party underscores a shifting landscape and highlights the growing influence of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership.

Amarnath accuses TDP of orchestrating attacks on CM

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) candidate from Gajuwaka Assembly constituency, Gudivada Amarnath, has launched a scathing attack on leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), alleging their involvement in a stone-pelting incident targeting Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy. Amarnath strongly condemned the incident, attributing it to the TDP's purported inability to tolerate Reddy's surging popularity across the state.

Speaking to the media people here on Monday, Amarnath, denounced the criticism directed at Reddy and his government by TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu during an open meeting in Gajuwaka, labelling it as unfounded and orchestrated to elicit sympathy. He drew attention to Naidu's controversial past, citing instances such as the alleged stone-pelting incident involving Amit Shah in Tirupati and reported violence against NTR, raising doubts about the TDP's moral stance. Moreover, Amarnath accused Naidu of resorting to deceitful tactics and propaganda to undermine Reddy's achievements and widespread support.

He underscored the sub-

Amarnath accused Naidu of resorting to deceitful tactics and propaganda to undermine Reddy's achievements and widespread support. He underscored the substantial turnouts witnessed at Reddy's rallies and attributed attacks on these gatherings as desperate manoeuvres to impede the momentum of the YSR Congress Party.



stantial turnouts witnessed at Reddy's rallies and attributed attacks on these gatherings as desperate manoeuvres to impede the momentum of the YSR Congress Party. Regarding Naidu's pledges to halt the privatization of the steel plant, Amarnath dismissed them as insincere, citing the TDP's historical backing of privatization endeavours.

He reiterated the YSR Congress Party's steadfast opposition to the privatization of the steel plant and its advocacy for the rights of workers.

Amarnath further lambasted Naidu's assertions regarding state development, contrasting them with the tangible

progress accomplished under Reddy's leadership, including the establishment of numerous industries and infrastructure projects. In response to Naidu's remarks concerning his political trajectory, Amarnath staunchly defended his family's legacy and accused Naidu of opportunistic entry into politics. He asserted that Naidu's fabrications and manipulations would fail to sway voters in his favour.

As the political climate intensifies in Andhra Pradesh, Amarnath's statements provide insight into the escalating competition and rhetoric surrounding the forthcoming elections.

Bandaru likely to sever ties with TDP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP), senior leader Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy, hailing from Visakhapatnam district, is on the brink of stepping away from party engagements or potentially severing ties altogether. Murthy's decision comes amidst a brewing confrontation over ticket allocation, particularly in the Pendurthi constituency, where his aspirations clash with the party's strategic alliances.

Murthy, who had set his sights on securing the TDP ticket from Pendurthi, found himself at odds when the constituency was allocated to the Jana Sena Party as part of an electoral pact. Despite efforts by TDP President N Chandrababu Naidu to broker a resolution, Murthy remained steadfast in his demand, leading to a tense exchange during Naidu's recent visit to Visakhapatnam.

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During discussions, Naidu explored alternative options for Murthy, including relocation to Madugula or involvement in alliance activities. However, Murthy's refusal to cooperate, coupled with his insistence on Pendurthi's candidacy, escalated tensions, prompting Naidu to reprimand him for defiance.

As Murthy deliberates his next move, the TDP faces internal turmoil amidst efforts to reconcile dissent within its ranks. In a bid to placate dis-

gruntled members, Naidu has conferred special roles and responsibilities to rebels across various constituencies. This strategic move aims to consolidate support and bolster the party's prospects in the upcoming elections.

Key appointments include Mallela Rajesh Naidu as party observer in Guntur (West), Y Prabhakar Chowdary as TDP state general secretary, and Nimmala Kishappa as TDP in-charge of Anantapur Lok Sabha constituency, among others.

Moreover, former minister Dadi Veerabhadra Rao assumes the pivotal role of overseeing Election Commission affairs and press briefings at the TDP central office, with his son, Dadi Ratnakar, appointed as TDP state executive secretary.

As the political landscape evolves, the TDP grapples with internal dissent and strategic realignments, setting the stage for a tumultuous electoral battle ahead. Stay tuned as developments unfold in this unfolding political saga.

AP, TG review...

Continued from Page 1

Maintaining peace and security remains a priority, with the joint efforts of both states' governments reinforcing the environment until the conclusion of polls. Shanti Kumari stressed the need for heightened vigilance at border checkpoints to deter smuggling activities from neighbouring states like Goa and Karnataka.

Telangana's government has already established 36 interstate checkpoints through the police department, with an additional three by the excise department. Furthermore, 224 enforcement teams and seven check-posts by the Commercial Taxes department are operational, complemented by 24-hour patrolling efforts. Shanti Kumari assured that Telangana maintains a strong security posture, with coordinated efforts among state police and central forces to counter any potential threats, including activities by Maoist groups from Chhattisgarh.

Decline in Maoist violence raises hope for peaceful polls

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As Andhra Pradesh prepares for the upcoming Lok Sabha and assembly elections, a notable decline in Maoist incidents since 2019 has sparked optimism among officials and citizens alike. Despite this positive trajectory, security forces are maintaining vigilance, particularly in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected areas, to ensure a tranquil polling process.

Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reveals that 38 districts across 10 states are classified as LWE-affected, with Andhra Pradesh witnessing concentrated Maoist activities, notably in specific pockets such as Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) and Parvathipuram Manyam districts. ASR, bordering Odisha, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh, emerges as the most affected LWE district in the region.

The Araku Lok Sabha constituency, comprising LWE-affected assembly segments, is slated for polling on May 13. Approximately 260 polling stations in LWE-hit locations are

set up, with the ASR district alone accounting for over 90% of these stations. Speaking to The Pioneer, Tuhin Sinha, Superintendent of Police for the ASR district, highlights significant development efforts, anti-Maoist operations, and surrenders by ultras as pivotal factors contributing to a transformed landscape, potentially boosting voter turnout in the forthcoming elections.

In the 2019 elections, voter turnout varied across LWE-affected areas, with some polling stations experiencing lower participation due to their distance from villages. However, ASR and Manyam districts witnessed minimal Maoist-related violence during the polls, indicating a positive trend attributed to enhanced security measures and development initiatives. Recent years have seen a decline in LWE cadre strength, from 150-200 in 2019 to 50-60 in 2023. This reduction, coupled with robust security arrangements, diminishes the potential impact of Maoist calls for election boycotts on voter turnout.

Stone used...

Continued from Page 1

Octopus, anti-sabotage teams, and access control parties, the assailant remains at large. Commissioner Rana Tata highlighted the densely populated nature of the attack site, necessitating the removal of electric and cable wires for safety following inspections conducted by the VMC, electricity, and the police departments.

Authorities are reviewing 24 CCTV recordings and mobile phone footage from the vicinity as part of their investigation. Commissioner Rana Tata speculated that the assailant likely took advantage of dark spots between Vivekananda School and Ganganamma temple to launch the attack, resulting in injuries to Vijayawada legislator Vellampalli Srinivas before fleeing. A case has been formally registered under IPC Section 307 in connection with the incident.

Sribharat stresses 'urgent need for development' in Visakha rally

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to galvanise support, M Sribharat, the alliance parliamentary candidate representing TDP, BJP, and Jana Sena, spearheaded a dynamic campaign rally in Visakhapatnam. Standing at the heart of the 104 Industrial Area on a Sunday morning, Bharat delivered a resounding call to action, echoing the urgent need for development in the city.

With a candid assessment of the current state of affairs under the governance of the YCP, Sribharat minced no words in expressing his concerns. Addressing a diverse audience, including members of the Three Star Walker Association, he shed light on the alarming rise of incompetence and attributed it to the lack of effective participation from educated and high-ranking individuals in the electoral process.



Recognising the pivotal role of informed citizens in shaping the

destiny of Visakhapatnam, Sribharat rallied for a renewed commitment to democratic engagement. Amidst a solemn tribute to Ambedkar, the members of the Walkers Club adorned his portrait with garlands, symbolising their unwavering dedication to the principles of freedom and equality.

Propelling his vision for inclusive growth, Sribharat outlined a comprehensive array of welfare

schemes slated for prioritisation under the coalition government. Furthermore, he extended an earnest invitation to members of the Walkers Association to voice their local grievances, assuring swift and effective redressal. The campaign rally witnessed a notable presence from Visakhapatnam TDP general secretary Polamarashetty Srinivas, alongside enthusiastic participants from various colonies.

'CM enfeebled irrigation...

Continued from Page 1

Observing that had he continued in power the Bhogapuram airport would have been completed by now, Naidu promised that the companies that are closed now will be reopened to employ the local youth once the TDP allied NDA forms the coming government in these elections. On observing the resounding response from the public, the TDP supremo is confident that it is the NDA that is coming to power in these polls.

Holding CM Jagan squarely responsible for not completing the Bhogapuram airport, Naidu said that while several industries were set up in North Andhra during the TDP regime, CM Jagan has turned this region as a ganja hub. What is the fate of Girijan

University now, he asked and felt that if all the projects that were taken up during the TDP regime had been completed the region would have developed much better than Hyderabad.

CM Jagan has affection only towards the lands in Visakhapatnam but not on the people, he said, adding that even the welfare schemes for Backward Classes (BCs) that were implemented during the TDP rule have been withdrawn by this Chief Minister. Women too are the sufferers as the prices of all the commodities are skyrocketing now, Naidu said.

Naidu promised to complete all the pending projects in the North Andhra region, including the Palakonda road, the outer ring road for Rajam and Thotapalli project canals.

'25,000 constables will be...

Continued from Page 1

The welfare of farmers and the underprivileged also featured prominently in Naidu's agenda. He reiterated the implementation of the Annadatha scheme, promising an annual financial support of Rs. 25,000 to each farmer. Furthermore, he assured a monthly pension of Rs 4,000 for the impoverished segments of society, emphasizing the TDP's dedication to social equity and economic empowerment.

In a scathing critique of the current administration, Naidu lambasted the policies of the ruling Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), accusing them of squandering public funds through excessive taxation. He derided what he termed as the "demonic rule" prevailing in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of the YSRCP, citing dissatisfaction among the populace.

Underscoring the determination of the people to effect change, Naidu rallied support for the TDP coalition, urging constituents to unite under the party's banner in the upcoming elections. He called upon voters to reject the status quo and embrace a vision of progress and prosperity under the TDP's leadership. As the elections campaign gains momentum, Naidu's impassioned address signals a renewed vigour within the TDP, setting the stage for a dynamic political landscape in Andhra Pradesh.

'AP will benefit if BJP is voted to power'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP State Election Coordinator, Perala Chandrasekhar, extolled the BJP's election manifesto, foreseeing significant benefits for Andhra Pradesh if the party were to assume power. Chandrasekhar said that the BJP is committed to realising the dream of providing homes for the underprivileged.

Addressing the media at the party's state office in Vijayawada on Monday, Chandrasekhar highlighted key promises of the BJP manifesto, including the provision

of free rice for 80 crore impoverished individuals across the nation.

He emphasised the broad-ranging benefits for farmers and professionals from various castes under the BJP's proposed policies.

Chandrasekhar asserted that a BJP-led government, symbolising a 'double-engine' administration, would usher in advantages for all sectors of society.

Moreover, Chandrasekhar raised concerns about alleged electoral malpractice by the incumbent YSRCP, accusing it of orchestrating fraudulent voting schemes.

He called upon the Election Commission of India (ECI) to intervene and thwart such activities to ensure fair and transparent elections.

Chandrasekhar reaffirmed the BJP's commitment to supporting the Muslim and Christian communities, while vehemently refuting accusations of communal and religious bias levelled against the party.

BJP State vice president V Suryana Narayana Raju and Minority Morcha State President SK Baji underscored the party's inclusive stance.

STONE ATTACK ON CM

Rs 2L reward announced for information on culprits

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the recent attack on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy involving a stone-hurling incident within the jurisdiction of Ajith Singh Nagar Police Station on April 13, officials from the NTR District Police Commissionerate have announced a reward of Rs 2 lakh for persons providing accurate information and video evidence leading to the arrest of the perpetrator(s).

Assuring the confidentiality of informants, police authorities have emphasised their commitment to maintaining the privacy of those who come forward with pertinent details. Over the past three days, various units within the police department have been actively involved in the investigation, resulting in the apprehension



and subsequent interrogation of three suspects at an undisclosed location.

To bolster their efforts, the NTR police have launched an initiative offering a cash incentive for credible information supported by video footage of the incident. While acknowledging the absence of conclu-

sive video evidence thus far, officials have reconstructed the scene near Vivekananda School in Ajith Singh Nagar.

Despite having gathered preliminary information regarding the attack, authorities are appealing for additional video evidence, specifically, footage captured during the

'Memantha Siddham' Bus Yatra at Ajith Singh Nagar and any recordings related to the stone pelting incident involving YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Individuals possessing relevant videos are encouraged to submit them to aid in the apprehension of the perpetrator(s).

The NTR police urge the public to share accurate information about the attack directly or via WhatsApp. Those seeking further information or wishing to provide leads can reach out to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kanch Srinivasa Rao, and Additional DCP - Taskforce R Srihari Babu. Additionally, individuals may visit the Commissioners' Task Force Office located near Netaji Bridge Road, adjacent to the Veterinary Hospital in Labbipet, Vijayawada.

CM fulfilled all needs of people: Kodali

PNS ■ GUDIVADA

Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao (Nani), the former minister and MLA of Gudivada, has expressed his gratitude towards Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Memantha Siddham public gathering in Gudivada on Monday. He affirmed that the Chief Minister has successfully met the needs of every segment of society, ranging from schoolchildren to senior citizens, under the governance of the YSRCP.

Addressing the enthusiastic crowd, Nani lauded the Chief Minister, emphasizing the profound trust the people have in him. He extended a warm welcome to CM Jagan on behalf of the constituents of Gudivada and Machilipatnam.

Reflecting on the event's rescheduling, Nani marvelled at the overwhelming reception CM Jagan received despite the change. He highlighted the YSRCP government's innovative approach of bringing governance to the grassroots level

through volunteers and establishing secretariats in villages and towns, aligning with Gandhiji's vision of GramaSwarajyam.

Nani commended CM Jagan's initiatives, such as the introduction of English-medium education in government schools, along with providing essential resources like uniforms, books, and meals, akin to a paternal figure. He reminisced about the inception of Aarogyasri by Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy and lauded CM YS Jagan's expansion of the program, encompassing thousands of medical procedures through network hospitals, thus addressing healthcare needs in remote areas across the state.

Expressing confidence in CM Jagan's leadership, Nani predicted his ascension to the State's Chief Minister post within 50 days, citing the Chief Minister's steadfastness, courage, and integrity. He underscored CM Jagan's commitment to truthfulness in politics, contrasting it with the rhetoric of his opponents.

YSRCP files complaints against Balayya, Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leaders lodged two separate complaints against Telugu Desam MLA from Hindupur N Balakrishna and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan for making abusive and derogatory remarks against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in violation of the election rules. YSRCP legal cell State president Manohar Reddy with other leaders lodged two separate complaints against Balakrishna and Pawan Kalyan on Monday.

Manohar Reddy in the complaint said that Nandamuri Balakrishna continues to engage in an election campaign that is replete with personal remarks and which cannot be complete without personal attacks against our Party President Jagan Reddy and YSR Congress Party contesting candidates. He said they requested the Election Commission to look into the campaign speech of Balakrishna on 13.04.2024 at the Kadiri Public Meeting in their official political campaign for the violations of the Model Code of

Conduct and take appropriate action. Similarly Manohar Reddy stated that Pawan Kalyan has drawn alarming parallels between the incident in Sri Lanka, where anti-government protesters overran and ransacked the Sri Lankan President's official residence, and the residence of CM Jagan in Tadepalli. He pointed out that these remarks are not only inflammatory but are also designed to incite the public and the party's cadre to engage in extrajudicial actions against CM Jagan at his home. It is important to note that such comments exceed the bounds of acceptable political discourse and are likely to provoke attacks on Jagan Mohan Reddy and his family. Manohar Reddy stated they requested the Election Commission to look into the campaign speech of Pawan Kalyan on 14.04.2024 in the Tenali Assembly constituency in the Guntur District and the violations of the Model Code of Conduct by making inflammatory and personal remarks and take appropriate action.

Rs 125.97 crore seized in crackdown on illicit activities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Enforcement units across the country have achieved a significant milestone with a record seizure totalling Rs 4,658.16 crore, underscoring a robust crackdown on illicit activities. In this nationwide effort, the Andhra Pradesh State units have contributed notably, seizing Rs 125.97 crore within their respective jurisdictions, marking 8.15% of the total value seized nationally. With the 2024 General Elections in progress, the Election Commission of India (ECI) is vigilantly addressing concerns related to financial influence.

Under the guidance of the ECI, Mukhesh Kumar Meena, the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh, is actively

directing enforcement agencies to uphold electoral integrity. Following these directives, district collectors, serving as Election Officers, are collaborating with law enforcement agencies, revenue services, tax departments, and others to combat the illegal transportation of money, liquor, drugs, and other incentives.

According to reports from the ECI, enforcement agencies have confiscated assets totalling Rs.125.97 crore between March 16 and April 13. This includes Rs.32.15 crore in cash, liquor valued at Rs.19.719 crore (equivalent to 10,22,756 litres), drugs valued at Rs.4.06 crore, as well as precious metals and other items amounting to Rs.57.14 crore and Rs.12.89 crore, respectively.

Sources within the Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer's office reveal a coordinated effort involving district collectors, Superintendents of Police, Police Commissioners, and over 20 enforcement agencies. These teams are tirelessly monitoring inter-state and inter-district borders to prevent the illicit movement of prohibited items.

CEO Mukhesh Kumar Meena regularly convenes review meetings with administrative officials and law enforcement heads, emphasizing the need for stringent security measures at all checkpoints. Through this collaborative approach, authorities aim to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process by neutralizing attempts to influence voters through the distribution of illicit goods.

Candidates contesting polls busy fixing 'muhurthams' for nominations

Election Commission to release notification on April 18

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the Election Commission of India (ECI) set to release the election notification for Andhra Pradesh on April 18, candidates of major political parties are planning to file their nominations from the same day onwards.

The fourth phase of elections will be held on May 13 for 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies. The candidates of YSRCP, TDP-JSP-BJP alliance and INDIA bloc consisting of Congress, CPI and CPM are all set to file their nomination papers before the Returning Officers. They are busy fixing a date and time to file their nomination papers and consulting with Pandits and Vedic scholars to fix the better muhurtham.

TDP, BJP and JSP candidates are plan-



NTR district Joint Collector and Returning Officer for the Mylavaram constituency, Dr P Sampath Kumar, conducting the political party leaders' meeting at Mylavaram on Monday.

Returning Officers conducted meetings of political party leaders at their respective segments.

NTR District Joint Collector and Mylavaram Assembly constituency RO Dr P Sampath Kumar, Nandigama RO, RDO A Ravindra Rao and other ROs conducted the meetings on Monday. They explained the rules and regulations about the filling of the nomination papers. Particularly, they underlined the importance of Form 2B.

Also, they explained in detail the dates of filling the nomination papers and affidavit Form 26. The ROs made it clear that at the time of nominations only three vehicles per candidate will be allowed. Similarly, they will allow only four persons in addition to the candidate to enter the RO office to file the nominations.

Rama Navami celebrations in Tirupati from tomorrow

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Sri Rama Navami celebrations at Sri Kodanda Ramalayam in Tirupati will take place from April 17 to 19. On April 18, the sacred ceremony of Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam will be conducted from 6 pm to 8 pm. Tickets are priced at Rs.1000 each, allowing entry for two individuals.

On April 19, the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Pattabishekam will be observed. Following these celebrations, the annual Teppotsavams will be held from April 21 to 23 at Sri Ramachandra Pushkarini, commencing each evening from 7 pm to 8:30 pm.

No YSR mark on Jagan rule: Sharmila

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

APCC president YS Sharmila launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, asserting that the current administration in Andhra Pradesh doesn't bear the mark of YSR but rather that of Jagan.

Speaking to a substantial gathering in Putalapattu, Sharmila highlighted the removal of YSR from various welfare schemes, alleging a deliberate attempt to erase YS Rajasekhara Reddy's legacy from the public consciousness.

Describing the present regime as one marked by violence and lawlessness, she emphasized that the legacy of YS Rajasekhara Reddy thrived under the Congress party's administration and urged the public to support Congress candidates.

Sharmila also accused both the YSRCP and TDP of offering monetary inducements for votes, urging voters to accept the money but cast their ballots for Congress instead. She alleged that these parties funded their electoral expenses through illicit means such as the liquor, sand, and mining trades.

"Consider the future of your children before casting your vote. Both Naidu and Jagan Reddy's tenures have set Andhra Pradesh back by two decades," she asserted.

Highlighting the importance of Special Category Status (SCS) for industrial growth, Sharmila claimed that the state could have seen substantial industrial development and employment generation had SCS been granted.

She also pledged to oversee the construction of a new capital city for Andhra Pradesh, criticizing both Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy for their perceived subservience to Narendra Modi. Sharmila condemned Naidu's use of '3D' graphics for the capital city project and Jagan's handling of the three-capital issue, which she argued has stalled the state's progress.

"YSR's legacy is not embodied in the YSRCP. The true heirs of YSR are YV Subba Reddy, Sai Reddy, and Ramakrishna Reddy. Jagan Mohan Reddy does not carry YSR's legacy," she concluded.

Rs 40.67 lakh in cash seized in 3 districts

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The election officials and the police seized Rs 40.67 lakh in Tirupati, Anantapur and Prakasam districts on Monday.

CI Eeshwar Reddy told the media in Tirupati on Monday that the police conducted checking vehicles. They found Rs 31.50 lakh was being taken in a car at a fish market here by Reddy Basha and Udayabanu Murthy. Since they failed to show relevant documents of the cash, the police seized the cash and handed over the same to the Income Tax officials.

In the Prakasam district, the railway circle enforcement team conducted a checking of passengers at the Ongole railway station. They found Rs 6.17,700 lakh being carried by Kaluva Ramakrishna. Since they failed to show relevant documents regarding the cash, the enforcement team seized the cash.

In the Anantapur district, the election officials conducted a checking of vehicles at the municipal office.

Swayambuvaram voters boycott polls over environmental crisis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold assertion of their rights, the residents of Swayambuvaram village, nestled within the Pendurthi Constituency of Anakapalli District, have taken a decisive step by declaring a boycott of the upcoming 2024 general elections. This resolute stance arises from decades of enduring health hazards caused by the unrelenting pollution emanating from the Paravada NTPC Thermal Power Plant. Despite numerous appeals for intervention, the villagers remain besieged by illnesses linked to environmental degradation, prompting their unified protest until a resolution is achieved.

For generations, the inhabitants of Swayambuvaram village have grappled with the detrimental effects of pollution stemming from the Paravada NTPC Thermal Power Plant. A litany of health issues, ranging from kidney, and lung, to heart diseases, has become distressingly prevalent, resulting in fatalities within the community.

Despite relentless pleas, authorities have consistently turned a deaf ear to the vil-



The decision to boycott the 2024 general elections was forged during a gathering convened at the Ram temple within the village precincts. Residents voiced their frustration at the inaction of both project authorities and governmental bodies.

lagers' demands for relocation to an area free from pollution. The worsening conditions have left the villagers with no recourse but to take a resolute stand against the apathy of those in power. The pollution not only imperils human health but also wreaks havoc on the environment, leading to damaged crops, scarcity of potable water, and even auditory afflictions due to noise pollution from the nearby Simhadri Thermal Power Station.

The decision to boycott the 2024 general elections was forged during a gather-

ing convened at the Ram temple within the village precincts. Residents voiced their frustration at the inaction of both project authorities and governmental bodies. VV Ramana Murthy, President of the Writers Academy, graced the assembly, underscoring the obligation of both the government and project administrators to address the plight of the affected communities. The villagers implore solidarity in their quest for relocation and the restoration of their once-pristine habitat.

Durga Temple earns Rs 2.76 crore as hundi income

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada has earned hundi income to the tune of Rs.2,76,11,524 in 19 days. The average income per day was Rs.16.44 lakh.

The temple authorities conducted the counting of the cash offered through hundi at the Sri Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam in the presence of Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao on Monday.

Besides cash, the devotees had offered 478 grams of gold

ornaments and 4.830 kg of silver jewellery. They also offered 1,451 US dollars, 1 Oman riyal, 20 UK pounds, 110 England pounds, 10 Australian dollars, 85 Canada dollars, 5 Euros, 110 UAE dirhams, 0.25 Kuwait dinars, 7 Qatar riyals, 8 Saudi riyals and 1 Malaysian ringgit to the goddess Kanaka Durga Devi.

The devotees also offered Rs.70,541 through e-hundi. The temple authorities, along with the Special Protection Force, One Twpolice and others participated in the counting.



Miscreants set fire to haystacks

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Unidentified miscreants set on fire to haystacks at Yedururu village in Kurnool mandal on the night of Sunday. Police said that the miscreants set fire to huge haystacks which belonged to TDP leader Vishnuvardhan Reddy.

Haystacks worth Rs 15 lakh were destroyed in the fire. The TDP leader is distributing haystacks to the farmers free of cost. Fire tenders tried to put out the flames after six hours by the time all the haystacks were gutted.

Unique millet art exhibition marks World Art Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University (AU) commemorated World Art Day with a captivating celebration that intertwined creativity and cultural exchange. The event, curated by local artist Moka Vijay Kumar, featured a one-of-a-kind exhibition showcasing art forms crafted entirely from millets at the AU Art Department in Sivajipalem. This distinctive exhibition served a dual purpose: introducing students to diverse art forms while emphasising the significance of millets in both the artistic realm and human health.

Speaking during the inaugu-

ration ceremony, Prof A Narasimha Rao, Principal of AU Arts Commerce College, underscored the importance of art and innovation in today's society. Artist Vijay Kumar commended Dr. Rao's dedication and acknowledged the collaborative efforts undertaken over the past year to promote the nutritional benefits of millets on a national scale.

Encouraging students to explore unconventional artistic mediums, the exhibition centered on the utilisation of Chandanga millets to create colourless art pieces, thus challenging traditional norms. The head of the department lauded this initiative for enriching stu-



dents' artistic knowledge and fostering their creative spirit.

Millet artist Vijay Kumar also delivered a presentation during the event. He provided insights into the UN's declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets and highlighted

the extensive efforts undertaken to raise awareness through artistic expressions. He specifically mentioned the screening of his films at G20 conferences held in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and New Delhi, signifying the global importance

of millet advocacy. The exhibition served as a valuable educational platform for students and city residents alike. It aimed to raise awareness about the nutritional value and versatility of millets, promoting sustainable practices

and healthy living. Faculty, staff, and art enthusiasts actively participated in the programme, solidifying the mission of integrating art with social consciousness.

In recognition of his contributions, artist Vijay Kumar was felicitated by the department. This served as a token of appreciation for his dedication to promoting art and nutritional awareness through innovative means. The World Art Day celebration at Andhra University not only showcased the ingenuity of artists, but also fostered a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between art, culture, and sustainability in the contemporary world.

Chandragiri Ramalayam Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The annual Brahmotsavam at the historic Sri Kodanda Ramalayam temple in Chandragiri is scheduled from April 17 to 25, with Ankurarpanam on April 16.

On April 23, Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam will be performed from 10 am to 11:30 am, followed by Sri Rama Pattabishekam on April 26 from 9 am to 10:15 am.

Additionally, HDPP is organizing devotional cultural programs daily throughout the festival.

People's resolve would be Modi's guarantee

There are many political parties that were rejected by the people. The main party among them is the Congress. The people miserably defeated the Congress in the last two elections. Now, the Congress was limited to just two states in the country. In a straight contest between the BJP and Congress in 190 seats, the BJP secured 175 seats while the Congress had to contend with just 15 seats, winning them with a wafer-thin majority. In about 224 seats, the BJP vote share ranged between 50% to 70%.

What do the statistics decipher? It makes clear that the Congress would be nowhere near the BJP in future. What would be the value of the election manifesto brought out by such a party? The Congress has been trying to showing heaven in the palm. In spite of ruling the nation for over six decades, the party which could not bring millions of people above the poverty line is now boasting of rendering social justice to the people.

Family members of the ruling elite in the Congress,

the corrupt leaders and those who have amassed wealth illegally and those who do anything just for the sake of power have served their time for over six decades dividing the people on the lines of caste and religion. The Congress manifesto clearly indicated using minorities as vote banks by appeasing them and laws applicable to people of the nation are not applicable to them. There is no scope for the people to give credence to the promises made by such a party.

The BJP would have no purpose to play vote bank politics because the credibility that the BJP's manifesto enjoys is totally different. The election manifesto is a policy document for the BJP. It is a document that will honour the people. It is a firm resolve. That is why, the BJP intimated its plans for the next years to the people in the form of a document. Resolve means which is above making the promises and giving assurances. The BJP vowed to make India the third biggest economy in world in the next

Family members of the ruling elite in the Congress, the corrupt leaders and those who have amassed wealth illegally and those who do anything just for the sake of power have served their time for over six decades dividing the people on the lines of caste and religion.



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

It came to power with full majority. It initiated measures to implement Uniform Civil Code and did away with the practice of triple talaq. It built Ram temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya fulfilling the promise made by it long back. A magnificent Ram temple was built in Ayodhya in January this year fulfilling the long-cherished dream. Because of the zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and Naxalism, the country is able to breathe free getting rid of these evil forces. The BJP scrapped the age-old laws and replaced them with the modern laws that aide the nation's development. It replaced the British colonial Indian Penal Code with the Bharatiya Nera Samhita. The country developed from one of the five weak economies in the world to one of the five strong economies of the world. Under Modi's regime, at least 25 crore people crossed the poverty line.

Bank accounts, LPG connections, individual sanitary

latrines, clean drinking water, electricity became accessible for millions of people. There has been a perceptible change in the lives of the farmers, women, fishermen, street vendors, petty business organisations, SCs and STs and Adivasis. The MSP has increased manifold in the last 10 years benefiting the farmers.

The present manifesto has been devised to accelerate the measures initiated during the past 10 years. When Modi came to power 10 years ago, there was all-round despair among the people. In the first term of the Modi's rule, the despair disappeared as people began to feel confident of India becoming a strong economy. In the last five years, the confidence took the shape of self-confidence. The BJP released its Sankalp Patra to the people on the basis of the style of functioning of Modi in the past 10 years. It indicated the changes that are going to take place in the country in the next 25 years. The documents

declared to constitute Krushi Infrastructure Development Mission to develop agricultural infrastructure in villages. To provide free and quality health care to the aged, the Ayushman Bharat Yojna would be expanded further, declares the document.

It specified that supply of free food grains to 80 crore people of the country would continue till 2029. It also announced to supply piped supply of LPG in all main cities of the country. It announced to double Mudra loans to Rs 20 lakh. It also offered to provide free power to the poor families under PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojna.

The BJP invited suggestions from people to compile its manifesto. At least 10.5 lakh people offered their suggestions. Over 4 lakh people have sent their suggestions through NAMO mobile application. Over 50 BJP ministers categorised them and compiled the Sankalp Patra. That is why the BJP's resolve would be the people's resolve. Modi guarantee means confidence to the people.

TRULY SPEAKING

SP directs officials to check every vehicle at checkpoint

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal conducted a surprise inspection at the checkpoint on Monday and directed the officials to check every vehicle passing on the highway. The SP inspected the checkpoint, located at Vedullapalli village, and he monitored the checking of vehicles and examined the register.

The SP directed the officials to check every vehicle thoroughly and appealed to the people to cooperate with police personnel while doing vehicle checks.

Speaking on the occasion, the District SP said that strong measures have been taken to stop the transportation of cash, liquor and other goods used to tempt the people in the upcoming general elections so that the people can exercise their right to vote freely.

Accordingly, the police personnel performing duties at the checkpoints are on a constant vigil, he said adding that the police personnel at the checkpoint should do 24/7 duty and check every vehicle thor-

oughly. It is suggested that anyone who is carrying cash of more than Rs.50,000 without proper documents should be seized and handed over to the authorities concerned.

He also directed the police personnel to video graph while seizing cash, illegal liquor and other items. He warned that strict departmental action would be taken against the personnel performing duties at the checkpoints if they behaved negligently.

In the background of the implementation of the election code of conduct, people should not carry more than Rs 50,000 in cash and jewellery when going to other areas.

If people need to carry large amounts of cash for emergency medical treatment, college fees, business, weddings and other needs, they should show the relevant evidence and certification documents to the authorities. He said that CC cameras have been installed in 12 checkpoints in Bapatla district, adding that every vehicle will be checked thoroughly and their details will be recorded.



Ambati objects to Opposition calling attack on CM a drama

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Minister for Irrigation Ambati Rambabu vehemently objected to the Opposition leaders describing the pelting of stones on Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy by miscreants as a drama.

Addressing a press conference in Sattenapalli on Monday, the opposition leaders unable to digest the overwhelming response to the 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra, being taken out by Jagan Mohan Reddy, were describing the attack as a drama and he made it clear that there is no need to the YSRCP to enact such dramas as people are with them.

"The YSRCP has never resorted to such drama politics earlier and will not do so in the future. People have been watching Jagan Mohan Reddy for a long time and they know



who enacted dramas for sympathy. Jagan Mohan Reddy has emerged as the most popular Chief Minister in the country," Ambati observed.

Taking a dig at the TDP, Ambati said that the TDP leaders invested huge money in real estate hoping for whopping profits, if Naidu voted to power again in 2019. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced establishing three capital cities which led to the crumbling of

real estate in the region incurring huge TDP supporters losses, he said, adding that irate realtors are spreading falsehood against Jagan Reddy and YSRCP. Ambati slammed.

The TDP-JSP-BJP alliance miserably failed to gain people's support. The people of the state did not accept the alliance. The leaders of the alliance are at a crossroads, he flayed, adding that Pawan Kalyan does have political sense.

Ambati took strong exceptions to the ridiculous comments of Pawan Kalyan on the attack on Jagan Reddy and subsequent injury. He predicted that if Nandendla Manohar was elected to the Assembly in the next elections from Tenali, there would be no development.

The minister also strongly objected to Chandrababu Naidu for calling the Chief Minister a psycho, stating that the real psychos are the TDP leaders.

"If you throw stones at Jagan Mohan Reddy, people throw votes on him. The people will respond appropriately against the TDP and JSP's selfish politics and teach them a lesson in the elections. Jagan Mohan Reddy is a people's leader and the people have full clarity on how to make Jagan Reddy the Chief Minister once again," Ambati Rambabu asserted.

MACABRE MISHAP

Car driver moves 18 km unaware of victim's body on top of vehicle

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

In a startling incident on Sunday night, a car collided with a motorcycle in Y Kothapalli village, resulting in the tragic death of the motorcyclist. The impact of the collision caused the body of the victim, identified as Jinne Yerru Swamy (35), a tractor mechanic, to land on the roof of the car. The driver, apparently unaware of the situation, continued to drive for about 18 km with the body atop the vehicle.



According to reports, Swamy was en route to Anantapur on his motorcycle when the speeding car, travelling towards Kalyandurg, struck him, leading to his instant death.

The residents of Hanimreddipalli in Beluguppa mandal noticed the body atop the car and intervened, prompting the driver to flee the scene. The car, originating from Bangalore city, was reportedly driven by a person under the influence of alcohol, according to eyewitnesses.

Authorities have initiated an investigation into the incident and are actively searching for the driver.

2 bike lifters held with 10 vehicles

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police arrested two notorious bike lifters and seized 10 stolen bikes worth Rs 5.50 lakh at a railway station here.

Additional SP (Crime) Sridhar Rao told the media here on Monday that the police team arrested Kumbha Gopi and Uyyala Ravi and seized 10 stolen bikes from the duo.

One of the accused Kumbha Gopi was involved in two theft cases. The police registered cases against them under Crime NO.63/2024 U/S 379 IPC.



Take steps to mitigate drinking water crisis, officials told

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials concerned to take steps to mitigate the drinking water crisis on a war footing.

The Collector held a teleconference with the officials and reviewed the drinking water crisis at the localities at various places. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that measures should be taken to ensure that there is no shortage of drinking water in the suburbs especially about Camp Bell and Pol Raju Canal in the Kaikaluru area.

The authorities should take all required steps so that even a small problem does not arise in



the supply of drinking water in summer. The authorities should take special care to ensure that tanks are filled with the Krishna and Godavari canal waters. Steps should also be taken to ensure that the water reaches the tanks in the suburbs.

Areas where there is a possibility of a drinking water crisis should be identified in advance and steps should be taken to resolve them. Actions should be taken to ensure that drinking water bore wells in upland areas are fully functional, and if any drinking water bore wells require repair, they should be repaired immediately.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh ordered the officials to take measures on a war footing to resolve any problem related to drinking water supply. The authorities concerned should monitor the mandal-level teams to take measures to prevent the drawing of water using unauthorized motors from the canals.

Collector inspects election training programme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao inspected the training programmes for Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) in the Vijayawada Central and East Assembly constituencies, conducted at the PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College and Andhra Loyola College, respectively, on Sunday.

On the second day of the training programme, Assembly constituency-level Master Trainers were given training through PowerPoint presentations and videos.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao said that POs and APOs have the key role in conducting the polling transparently with a democratic spirit. So, they should be aware of all issues related to the election and residue their responsibilities with commitment, he suggested.

He spoke about the issues that may arise during the polling, and the management of



Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) Control Units and VVPATs.

Later, he conducted mock polling. All the POs and APOs should be aware of polling station set-up, EVM, VVPAT, Marked Copy, Tender Vote, Challenged Vote, PO Dairy, PO Report and other subjects, he said.

Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner and Central constituency Returning Officer Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar, Vijayawada East RO RDO Bh Bhavani Sankar and others were present.

'KCR mortgaged BRS to Modi for Kavitha's bail'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Targeting former Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that KCR mortgaged the BRS to Prime Minister Modi for getting bail to his daughter Kavitha, who is now in jail in connection with the Delhi liquor scam.

"KCR kept the self-respect of Telangana at the feet of Modi. KCR has been saying that BRS votes should be transferred to the BJP in the state. KCR has been saying that Revanth Reddy should be deposed. Why is KCR not trying to topple Modi who is in power since the last 10 years," the CM said. Addressing the Narayanpet Jana Jataara public meeting on Monday, Revanth said that KCR did 100 years of destruction in the state in the last 10

years.

"Doras are not in a position to digest the fact that a Palamuru's son is the CM. Can only Doras sit on the CM's chair," Revanth asked.

The CM demanded that KCR should reveal how many double-bedroom houses were given to the poor in the last 10 years. "The Congress government sanctioned 3,500 houses in every Assembly constituency immediately after coming to power. We allotted Rs 5 lakh for every house. We have to give funds to BCs on the basis of their population and so the Congress government passed a resolution for a BC census," he said.

The CM said that the BRS government did not conduct recruitments to government service in the last 10 years.

Ambedkar Gurukul school students felicitated

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Collector K Madhavilatha felicitated two girl students for excelling in the Intermediate examination by securing the highest marks in the district.

The Collector felicitated Korapati Krishnaveni who secured 966 marks with the MPC group and Karuturi Sowmy who obtained 964 marks with the BiPC group. Both students studied at BR Ambedkar Gurukul School located at Gopalapuram.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector exhorted the students to strive hard to realize their dreams and reach heights.



Madhavilatha appreciated the teachers of Gurukul school on the occasion. Out of the 76 students of the Gurukul School, 23 obtained over 900 marks in the intermediate examination.

Dr Ambedkar's 133rd birth anniversary observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 133rd birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar was observed on a grand note in Vijayawada and Machilipatnam on Sunday. NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, Joint Collector Dr P Sampath Kumar, and Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar paid tributes at the 125-foot Ambedkar statue at the Swarajya Mydan in Vijayawada. Later, they performed a cake cutting at the statue. The Ambedkar birth anniversary was also observed at the NTR Police Commissionerate in Vijayawada. Admin DCP in charge Krishna Murthy Naidu, Special Branch ADPC T Kanaka Raju and others paid floral tributes to Ambedkar's portrait.

YSRCP enacting stone drama for mileage in elections: Bhanuprakash

PNS ■ NELLORE

BJP State official spokesperson Bhanuprakash Reddy has alleged that the ruling YSRCP is enacting a stone drama to gain mileage before the forthcoming elections.

Talking to the media here on Monday, he recalled that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy enacted a Kodikatti drama in the 2019 elections now he had raised curtains for the stone drama.

The BJP leader predicted that many such incidents would take place in the coming days. He raised doubts on the YSRCP version that a small stone caused injury to the Chief Minister and an MLA.

The BJP leader said that government advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy claimed

that an attempt was made on the life of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and questioned whether it is not the failure of the government in making security arrangements. Bhanuprakash Reddy said that it was a clear case of security lapse and asked what the DGP and DIG were doing without reviewing the security arrangements for the Chief Minister.

"When security could not be provided to the Chief Minister, how can they provide security to the common men?" he questioned. He found fault with the ruling YSRCP leaders for blaming the opposition leaders for the incident. He asked how they could hold the opposition leaders responsible for the incident and demanded a comprehensive investigation of the stone-pelting incident.

INDIA CORNER

8 Bangladeshi women sentence to 25 months RI for illegal stay in India

A court in Navi Mumbai on Monday convicted eight Bangladeshi women for illegal stay in India and sentenced them to 25 months of rigorous imprisonment (RI). Additional Sessions Judge KR Deshpande at Belapur also imposed a fine of Rs 11,000 each on them. The Bangladeshi women, who worked as labourers, were arrested in December 2022 from Turbhe in Navi Mumbai for staying without valid documents, according to police. Two separate FIRs (first information reports) were lodged against them. In two different sets of orders, Judge Deshpande found the accused guilty of offence under section 14(A) of the Foreigners Act, 1946, and violating the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950, and sentenced them to 25 months of rigorous imprisonment. Section 14(A) of the Foreigners Act deals with penalty for entry in restricted areas in the country.



JAISHANKAR AMID TENSIONS IN MIDDLE EAST

'Iran & Israel told to calm down'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

India is very concerned over escalating hostilities between Iran and Israel and New Delhi has told the countries to "calm down," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday, amid spiralling tension in the Middle East.



Iran carried out its first direct attack on Israel on Saturday in response to a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus on April 1 that killed seven Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards including a senior general.

"We have been telling them not to allow this (the situation) to escalate and that this is a very crucial region for the global economy," he told reporters here.

Jaishankar emphasised that the stability of the Middle East region was essential because about one crore Indian citizens live there and said, "a large part

of our shipping passes through this region and also, oil comes from there."

"This is an enormously sensitive region. So we are very concerned when there is this kind of escalation and hostilities. So our effort has been to tell both of them to calm down. So yesterday, I made a phone call to both, not only Iran (Foreign Minister) Hossein Amir-Abdollahian but also I called up my Israeli counterpart (Israel Katz)," Jaishankar said.

"We also understand that they have concerns. I'm only saying that for the rest of the world and definitely for India, we would like to find ways of de-escalating the situation," he added.

To a question on the adverse impact of the Iran-Israel conflict, Jaishankar said in a globalised world, no country can remain unaffected.

However, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the "guts to take the right decision."

IIT-M launches medical devices calibration facility

IIT Madras has launched India's first medical devices calibration facility on wheels, the institute said on Monday. Developed under its 'Anavarukkam IITM' (IIT Madras for all) initiative, the mobile facility will ensure pervasive quality healthcare irrespective of geographical locations across the country. The infrastructure available in this mobile unit includes state-of-the-art equipment to test the safety of medical devices and their functionalities as per international standards. "This will help to test and maintain medical devices that are used in a wide range of hospitals including those in villages at their doorsteps," a release here said. Maintenance and quality assurance of life-saving medical devices are of paramount importance for healthcare delivery, it said. IIT Madras Director Prof V Kamakoti launched the facility at the campus in the presence of Prof R Sarathi, Dean (Planning) and others.



TMC to release manifesto in 5 languages; in a three-cornered fight

The Trinamool Congress is set to release its manifesto in five languages this time, including the Santal language 'Oi Chiki', and Nepalese, sources said. The TMC, which is in power in West Bengal and at present the fourth largest party in Lok Sabha after the ruling BJP, Congress, and DMK, is in a three-cornered fight in the state against the BJP, and the Left-Congress alliance. Sources said the party's manifesto this time will be released in Oi Chiki, which is the script for the Santal language, as well as Nepalese, besides Hindi, English, Bengali and Urdu. In West Bengal, 5.5 per cent of the total population is tribal. Among them nearly 51.8 per cent are Santals. More than half of the total ST population of the state is concentrated in southern districts of Medinipur, Purulia, and Bardhaman and Jalpaiguri in north, Bankura, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur districts also have sizable ST population.



No provision to maintain records of applications under CAA rules: RTI reply

PNS ■ KOLKATA

There is no provision under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and its rules, notified on March 11, to maintain records of citizenship applications filed online under the law, according to an RTI reply by the Union Home Ministry.

The ministry's response came to RTI applications filed by Bangla Pokkho, an organisation that claims to work for the rights of Bengalis, seeking information on the number of people who applied for citizenship through the website provided by the Home Ministry on March 12 and 13, the two days following the notification of the CAA rules.

The Union Home Ministry in a communication (F No 26027/94/2024-IC-1, dated April 15, 2024) stated, "... that the records are not being maintained as desired by you because the Citizenship Act, 1955 & Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and

the rules made thereunder does not have the provision to maintain the records of Citizenship application received." Further, as per the RTI Act, 2005, CPIO is not authorised to create information. Hence the information sought may be treated as NIL," said the communication.

PTI possesses a copy of the communication disbursed by the Foreigners Division (Citizenship Wing) of the Home Ministry.

The RTI applications were filed by Md Sahin of Bangla Pokkho. "Such a response is ridiculous given that all CAA applications are made online and are centrally digitised," said Garga Chatterjee, general secretary of Bangla Pokkho.

Chatterjee claimed that the people may be reluctant to apply due to the mandatory requirement to declare under affidavit the applicant's country of origin and upload it on the website with documentary evidence.

India has capability to hit its targets across border: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has shown to the world that it has the power to hit its targets within and across the border in the aftermath of Uri and Pulwama terror attacks.

The terrorists attacked an army camp in the border town of Uri in September 2016, resulting in the killing of 19 soldiers. A fortnight later, the Indian Army carried out a surgical strike across the border and destroyed launch pads for terrorists.

In February 2019, over 40 CRPF personnel were killed in a suicide attack on their convoy by the terrorists in Pulwama district of south Kashmir. Twelve days after the attack, the Indian Air Force (IAF) destroyed the terrorist camp in Balakote, Pakistan.

Addressing an election rally in support of BJP candidate Jitendra Singh here, he said,



"Earlier India was considered as a soft state... India has neither attacked any country nor occupied any foreign land which is its character."

"But when Uri and Pulwama happened, India gave a strong message that we will not touch anyone but if touched by someone we will not leave them," he added.

Singh, Union Minister of state in the Prime Minister's office, is seeking his re-election for the third term from Udhampur parliamentary constituency which is going to polls in the first phase on April 19.

"We have the capability and power to hit (our targets) any-

where within and across our borders. The power of India increased in the world (after the surgical strikes)," he said, giving credit to Prime Minister Modi's leadership.

Referring to the safe evacuation of over 22,500 Indian students in the midst of war between Ukraine and Russia in early 2022, he said the fighting between the two countries stopped for over four hours after Modi established contact with the presidents of the two countries and the US.

"The concerned parents of these students started demanding for the return of their wards from the war-torn country and the government facilitated their safe return (to their homes)," he said.

The senior BJP leader said there is hardly any person in the country who had not benefited from the government schemes over the last 10 years.

"The corona vaccination was ensured to all citizens without any charge and it was possible only because of the strong leadership," he said.

INDIA bloc has nothing to do with general public: Nadda

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Launching a vitriolic attack on the opposition INDIA bloc, BJP president JP Nadda on Monday said that it has nothing to do with the general public and all parties in it are concerned only about their families.

Addressing a poll rally in Mussoorie in support of BJP candidate from Tehri Garhwal Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, Nadda said on one side there is the BJP's manifesto (Sankalp Patra) which lays the roadmap for a developed India and on the other side the INDIA bloc constituents who have their separate manifestos.

"What will they do for development when they cannot even come together," he said. Describing the INDIA bloc as a conglomeration of the corrupt who are either in jail or on



baill, he said that all they are concerned with is saving their families.

Naming Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and P Chidambaram, and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders Sanjay Singh, Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain, Nadda said all of them are either in jail or on bail.

The BJP president asked the general public whether they would vote for such peo-

ple. "They (INDIA bloc) have nothing to do with you. They are only concerned with their families and saving themselves," he said.

Nadda said that all constituents of the opposition bloc have been involved in scams be it Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Yadav's fodder scam, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav's laptop scam or the numerous scams committed during the UPA.

The BJP president said it is also a gathering of family-centred parties led by Lalu Yadav, Akhilesh Yadav, Mamata Banerjee (TMC) or Stalin (DMK).

"The only ones who care about you are your Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party," he added.

Empty rhetoric not going to work for BJP, Congress in election: Mayawati

PNS ■ PILIBHIT/MORADABAD (UP)

BSP supremo Mayawati on Monday attacked the several opposition parties, as well as the BJP, saying the old "drama and empty rhetoric" will not work in the coming election and claimed that the people are being oppressed in the name of religion and Hindutva in the country.

Addressing election rallies in Pilibhit and Moradabad, Mayawati said if the party comes to power in the Centre, it will do solid work just as it did when it was in power in Uttar Pradesh.

"In these elections, no new or old drama, rhetoric, or guarantee will work as the people of the country have understood that the numerous promises made to the poor, the weak, the middle income groups and other hard working people of 'ache din' did not reach even the one-fourth of them," the BSP president said while addressing an election rally in Pilibhit.

She alleged that the BJP is spending most of its time on making its favourite capitalists richer and giving them protection.

She alleged that it is this very patronage which bankrolls the party, as was exposed with the revelations of the electoral bond data.

The politician also criticised the Congress over its election manifesto, specifically the promise of Rs 1 lakh per year to women.

"Wherever it is in power in the states, or in the past, when it was in power at the centre, it did it give even a single rupee. They misguide



more Hindus, a Hindu candidate has been fielded and Muslim candidates where the Muslims are more in numbers,"

"But Samajwadi Party has done the opposite. Where Muslims are more in number, it has given tickets to Hindu, for instance in Moradabad. This has been the culture of the Samajwadi Party," she added.

Speaking on the free food grains distribution programme of the ruling BJP, Mayawati said she has come to know that the people from the BJP and RSS are going to villages and seeking votes on the back of free ration, which is wrong.

Modi's guarantees are false: Mallikarjun Kharge

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday said that the guarantees given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi are "false" as none of them have been fulfilled, leaving the people in "utter disarray".

Addressing an election rally organized by the INDIA bloc here to seek votes for the Congress nominee V Vaithilingam in the April 19 Lok Sabha polls, Kharge invoked the promises given by the PM regarding two crore jobs per year to the youth, which were not implemented.

"Similarly, the farmers are not getting a hike in prices for their produce or minimum support price for their crops.

The promise of every person getting Rs 15 lakh from retrieval of black money stacked abroad is also yet to be realised," Kharge said.

The Congress president said that such guarantees or promises were "false" and people "were taken for a ride." He said that the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls would be an opportunity for the people to support the INDIA bloc and "ensure protection of their fundamental rights and democracy".

Alleging that BJP had done nothing to prevent inflation, Kharge claimed that both PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are "misusing" the agencies like Enforcement Directorate, CBI and Income Tax to harass MPs and MLAs



of the opposition and pressure them to switch their allegiance to the BJP.

He added that whenever BJP could not get power, they adopted arm-twisting methods and harassed elected members of the opposition.

QUOTA FOR DISABLED IN DISTRICT JUDICIARY SC seeks replies from Centre, states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre, states, UTs and all high courts on a PIL seeking reliefs including four per cent reservation in judicial appointments in district judiciary for persons with disabilities (PwD), as mandated under a 2016 law.

The PIL also sought directions to the Centre and others to "set right" the existing judicial services rules for appointment of judicial officers as per the law pertaining to rights of persons with disabilities (PwD).

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submis-

sions of senior advocate Sanjay Parikh, appearing for the two PIL petitioners, that persons with disabilities are not getting their due in the appointment of judicial officers as mandated under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

The 2016 legislation is a special law that has been enacted to give effect to the UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular the principles laid down there for their empowerment, besides various legal provisions to promote non-discrimination and equality.

The legislature thought it fit that the reservation for PwD shall not be less than four per cent under the statutory provision, the plea, filed through lawyer Shashank Singh, said. The PIL has been filed by Renga Ramanujam and Summaiya Khan, residents of Noida in Uttar Pradesh and Bangalore, respectively. "The Petitioners are constrained to file the present petition seeking directions from this Hon'ble Court to the Respondents to set right or streamline the existing judicial services rules of different states/High Courts for appointment of judges to the District/Lower judiciary under PwD Quota as per the mandate of Section 34 read with 33 of the Rights of persons with disabilities Act 2016," it said.

DG (PRISONS) AMID ROW OVER KEJRIWAL ISSUING ORDERS

'Inmates can't sign docs political in nature'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With AAP maintaining Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is running his government from Tihar jail, top prisons official Sanjay Baniwal Monday said an inmate can only sign two kinds of documents while in judicial custody and they should not be political in nature.

In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, Director General (Prisons) Baniwal also said no distinction is made in the treatment meted out to the inmates

and it is ensured they get the same basic right.

Earlier in the day, Punjab Chief minister Bhagwant Mann met Kejriwal in the jail and alleged he was not even getting the amenities a hardcore criminal is allowed in Tihar. Baniwal dismissed suggestions the Delhi chief minister was being treated differently by the jail authorities.

"There is no distinction between a hardcore or a normal criminal. In the jail, manual which is passed by the government of Delhi, there is no distinction between the inmates.

2 brain systems in disorder in people with psychosis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two brain systems have been found to function improperly in people experiencing psychosis, where they have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not, according to a new research led by Stanford University, US.

These systems were found to be - one, a 'filter' directing attention towards what is important externally and internally, and two, a 'predictor' involved in anticipating rewards.

The filtering system, or the salience network, helps us dis-

miss irrational thoughts so that we can focus on what's real and meaningful to us, such as paying attention to traffic while driving, researchers explained.

The reward predicting system, driven by dopamine, is critical to anticipating what will be rewarding or important, they said.

Together, they malfunction in a way such that thoughts not linked to reality capture the brain's cognition networks, said Vinod Menon, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences, Stanford University, US. "This process derails the nor-



mal functioning of cognitive control, allowing intrusive thoughts to dominate, culminating in symptoms we recognise as psychosis," said Menon,

senior author of the study published in the journal 'Molecular Psychiatry'.

In psychosis, patients experience hallucinations, such as hearing voices, and hold delusional beliefs, such as thinking that people who are not real exist, the researchers said. The state is known to occur either on its own, or as a symptom of mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

For the study, the researchers analysed brain scans of people aged 6-39 years with psychosis. They found the two brain regions contributing the most to

psychosis were the anterior insula, which is a key part of the salience or 'filtering' network, and the ventral striatum, which is the 'reward predicting' one.

The findings provide a good model for understanding the development and progression of schizophrenia, according to lead author Kaustubh Supekar, clinical associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences.

"In schizophrenia, by the time of diagnosis, a lot of damage has already occurred in the brain, and it can be very difficult to change the course of the disease," said Supekar.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Damage control

World leaders scramble to soothe tempers after Iran's retaliatory attack on Israel for Damascus

The fragile peace equilibrium in West Asia has been hit once again, with Iran launching a direct attack on Israel and escalating tensions. Fresh apprehensions reverberated globally, prompting swift diplomatic action from President Joe Biden who, besides conveying to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US will not be part of any retaliatory action, has convened the G7 nations to address the urgent matter. The missiles-and-drones attack, which targeted strategic locations including military installations and civilian areas in Israel, has escalated the situation to a dangerous level. While casualties and damages are still being assessed, the brazenness of this assault has sent shockwaves across the region and beyond. Iran, a key player in the region, has often found itself at odds with Israel, citing ideological differences and regional power struggles. However, the direct military engagement between the countries represents a dangerous escalation that could have far-reaching consequences. Israel, known for its robust defence capabilities, has vowed to respond to Iran's aggression, raising concerns of a prolonged and devastating conflict. The events of April 1 in Damascus marked the onset of a fresh chapter in the ongoing regional strife between the countries. That assault, resulting in the loss of several high-ranking Iranian military officials, signified a shift from indirect hostilities to confrontation. Subsequently, Iran initiated its long-anticipated reprisal against Israel, deploying numerous drones and ballistic missiles. Despite indications of this impending attack during discreet negotiations between the US and Iran, most of the strikes were intercepted en route Israel.



Meanwhile, Israeli authorities, particularly Netanyahu, have endeavoured to depict their nation as the target of unwarranted Iranian aggression. President Biden has responded swiftly by convening a meeting of the Group of Seven (G7) nations. The G7, consisting of the world's leading industrialised democracies, serves as a forum for coordinating responses to global challenges, including security threats. Though the US may have fostered conditions conducive to Netanyahu's actions, Israel acted independently to trigger the latest escalation. Therefore, to be fair to Iran, its reaction has not been an unprovoked attack. Lately, Netanyahu has been drawing flak for his misadventures at home and abroad, and the US support for his military campaign is also waning. So he played the Iran card to win brownie points and, with Iran being the West's favourite punching bag, it bolstered Netanyahu's standing whereas a gullible Iran took the bait and allowed itself to be drawn into a war in which it had no role so far. An individual's obstinacy has now put the entire region at heightened risk of volatility. As G7 deliberates on the appropriate response, efforts must be focused on de-escalating tensions and facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties. Diplomatic channels should be utilised to engage Iran and Israel in constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to their grievances.

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PICTALK



Devotees perform 'Arghya' ritual on the last day of 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna

Avoiding icebergs in troubled times

Amid escalating unease surrounding the credibility of Government agencies, the path to assuaging these concerns and reinstating trust lies in conducting a transparent inquiry



DEEPAK SINHA

Clearly, in these dystopian times reality has come to be stranger than fiction and social mores turned on their head. In an earlier time, actions seen as abhorrent or distasteful, when caught, would be immediately disavowed. Today they are brazenly flaunted as a badge of honour and attempted to be normalised. The blatant misuse of our Central Agencies to hound and arm-twist opposition politicians, journalists, businessmen and corporates being one such. What could be more unconscionable than a politician publicly claiming personal credit for an initiative after our Supreme Court has declared it unconstitutional? That too, because it violates the citizens fundamental right to information.

In fact, not only did he attempt to justify his action using that tired old cliché, "it was for our own good", but also added to good effect that those critical would subsequently regret it. An implied threat perhaps? The reasoning in support was that we would never have come to know the specifics of political donations if not for this initiative, which while accurate, could not be further from the truth. There can be no dispute that was certainly not the intention to begin with, otherwise why the secrecy in the first place? Moreover, it was the Government's top lawyers who made every effort to convince the court that the ordinary citizen had no right to such information. While it may have just been an attempt to brazen through in view of the elections, one cannot help but feel that the Government believes it has not erred and is thus unrepentant and likely to be pushed through again. The Belgian painter and author, Erik Peevernagie, makes a very pertinent point when he writes "politicians are but tantalising storytellers, as they mix facts with fiction, grab our emotion and tell things, they want us to believe. Their factoids are unremittingly reiterated, take a life on their own and in the end become the very truth... until the bubble bursts." Unfortunately for this Government it seems that the



bubble has been pricked, if not burst, as the Supreme Court appears to have finally awakened from its deep slumber. Its actions, though still at a very nascent stage, if followed through, may help in ensuring a level playing field during the forthcoming elections and are therefore exceedingly welcome. More importantly, it has put the bosses of our public institutions, be it public sector companies, the central investigative agencies or the Election Commission on notice.

Moreover, details of alleged linkages that are emerging from the Electoral Bonds issues suggest humungous malfeasance and sordid corruption at an unimaginable scale indulged in by the richest and most powerful within the country for their own personal gain. All of this has been at the cost of the ordinary tax payer. Moreover, we have yet to learn whether foreign entities have channelled in funds through domestic players, as is a distinct possibility. Such interference, if it has occurred, should be a matter of great concern given the impact it may have on national security. In this context, the functioning of the Prime Minister's Cares Fund must also be viewed with suspicion,



IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ONLY CREDIBLE OPTION REMAINING IS FOR THE SUPREME COURT TO ORDER A JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION UNDER ITS OWN AEGIS, WHICH SHOULD BE BROADCAST LIVE TO ENSURE COMPLETE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

given its lack of transparency and the various allegations made against it.

Both these initiatives were conceived and implemented by the present dispensation in power, which in all probability, will return. It is extremely unlikely therefore, that they will undertake a credible or fair investigation of allegations made. Moreover, our premier investigative agencies also find themselves under a cloud for their acts of omission and commission. For example, the Enforcement Directorate has since 2005 registered approximately 5900 cases. It has completed and filed chargesheets in only 1142 cases and disposed of just twenty-five of these, with twenty-four ending in convictions.

What is worse is its biased actions in investigating politicians. As media reports show, since 2014 the Directorate has probed 121 prominent politicians of which 115, or 95 per cent, belong to the opposition. As per these same reports the Central Bureau of Investigation mirrored the pattern followed by the ED. In these circumstances, the only credible option remaining is for the Supreme Court to order a judicial investigation under its own aegis, that

should be broadcast live to ensure complete transparency and accountability. One does not need to be a soothsayer to suggest that if such a strict and non-partisan step is not initiated at the earliest, we will always remain at the mercy of leeches who will suck the life blood out of our democratic norms, right to good governance and the rule of law.

Finally, from the proceedings in Supreme Court on the Electoral Bonds case one can infer that the manner in which the Chairman, State Bank of India, used the resources entrusted to him by the depositors to defy and hamper the directions of the Court render him patently unfit to hold that appointment.

Just because the party in power appoints him and others to head public institutions and agencies, they cannot see themselves as mere factotums of those who appointed them and do their bidding. One expects far more of them, not least to show integrity of character and follow rules without fear or favour.

(The author, a military veteran, is a visiting fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a senior visiting fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICAL CHESSBOARD

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Battle lines drawn in western UP", published on April 13, this is my response. In the heartland of Uttar Pradesh, a political battlefield is shaping up unlike any seen before. With the looming Lok Sabha elections, Western Uttar Pradesh finds itself in the eye of the storm, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vigorous campaigning seeks to consolidate Hindu votes against a backdrop of shifting alliances and historical legacies. The region's intricate social fabric, woven by dominant communities like the Jats, Muslims and Dalits, carries the weight of political dynasties and ideological realignments. From the legacy of Charan Singh's Kisan politics to the emergence of new power centres like the BJP and BSP, each move on this electoral chessboard is strategic, aiming to capture seats and the narrative of Uttar Pradesh's political future.

As the BJP navigates through the complexities of caste dynamics and minority representation, the challenge lies in maintaining its Hindu vote bank while facing the formidable opposition bloc, now bolstered by the BSP's calculated manoeuvres. In this high-stakes game, the fate of Uttar Pradesh hangs in the balance, awaiting the verdict of its diverse electorate.

Abhijeet Nand | Bhopal

EXPLORING HUMAN LEARNING

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Education's cultural impact is profound", published on April 12, this is my response. The enduring belief that "man is a learning animal" has shaped civilizations, but a deeper examination reveals nuances. While youth and adulthood foster comprehensive learning, its impact wanes with age. The persistence of certain knowledge over time underscores the need for continual renewal and tailored educational approaches. In India, where knowledge, behaviour and spirituality form the essence of personality, there's a call to integrate these elements into education. To achieve this, the curriculum must evolve to address lifelong learning

Urban farming



Apropos the news article, "Cultivating sustainability through urban farming", published on April 11, this is my response. The Pioneer's succinct write-up of urban farming as a climate change solution is commendable. Climate change's urgency demands immediate action and urban farming offers a multifaceted response. It not only addresses food security but also mitigates environmental degradation and fosters community cohesion. The article rightly emphasises the need for supportive policies to scale up urban farming initiatives. Governments must incentivise and facilitate urban agriculture to make it accessible to all communities. Additionally, community engagement plays a pivotal role in its success, fostering social bonds and economic opportunities.

Urban farming's transformative potential lies in its ability to convert urban spaces into sustainable ecosystems. By repurposing vacant lots and rooftops, cities can combat the urban heat island effect and reduce carbon emissions from food transportation. In essence, urban farming represents a promising pathway towards a more resilient and sustainable future. Its integration into policy frameworks and community initiatives is crucial in tackling the imminent challenges of climate change.

Shihaab Khan | Hyderabad

A CHAMPION OF JUSTICE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A harbinger of justice and equality", published on April 13, this is my response. The legacy of Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's history, continues to inspire millions worldwide. His tireless efforts towards social justice, equality and inclusivity have

left an indelible mark on the nation's conscience. Born into poverty, Dr Ambedkar overcame numerous obstacles to become an intellectual powerhouse and a relentless advocate for the oppressed.

His vision of a just society, rooted in education and empowerment, remains as relevant today as ever. Dr Ambedkar's emphasis on dialogue, non-violence and co-existence underscores the path towards societal harmony. His contributions to India's legal framework, particularly in labourrights, are foundational to the country's progress. As we commemorate his birth anniversary, let us not only honour his memory but also recommit ourselves to the ideals he espoused. Let us strive for a nation where every individual, regardless of caste or creed, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. Dr Ambedkar's teachings resonate as a beacon of hope, guiding us towards a democratic, secular and inclusive future.

Priyanka Sharma | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Screenwriters as architects of emotion

They are the true magicians. Their contributions extend far beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives

The magic of cinema is not just seen; it's heard in the echo of words that linger long after the screen goes dark. Screenwriters, the unsung architects of these moments, weave dialogues and scenes that shape our emotional landscapes, often becoming a part of our very identity.

Take the classic scene from 'Deewar', where Amitabh Bachchan, embodying the success and arrogance of his character, delivers the powerful lines, "Aaj mere paas gaadi hai, bungla hai, paisa hai... tumhare paas kya hai?" To this, Shashi Kapoor responds with the iconic, "Mere paas, maa hai." This exchange transcends its cinematic origin, showcasing the screenwriter's ability to capture the essence of human values and emotions in a few, yet profound, words. This is the essence of screenwriting—not just creating dialogues but sculpting moments that become landmarks in cinematic history. It's about crafting narratives that engage, entertain and evoke a spectrum



of emotions, from the laughter that bubbles up during the light-hearted moments in '3 Idiots' to the tears that unknowingly fall for the poignant scenes in 'Taare Zameen Par'. Screenwriters delve into the depths of the human experience, drawing upon themes of love, loss, victory and defeat to create stories that resonate across cultures and generations.

Through their words, characters come to life, embarking on journeys filled with challenges, joys, sorrows and ultimately, growth. Movies and shows like 'Mohabbatein' and 'Maharani' which challenge the values of "Parampara, Pratishta, Anushasan," not only entertain but also inspire reflections and conversations among audiences. In the realm of cin-

ema, screenwriters are the true magicians, crafting the spells of dialogue and narrative that enchant us, make us reflect and sometimes even change our perspectives. Their contributions go beyond the screen, touching hearts and shaping societal narratives.

As we recount memorable lines or find solace in the cinematic moments that have moved us, let's remember the architects behind these emotions—the screenwriters. Their mastery over words and their deep understanding of the human condition empower them to create stories that entertain, enlighten and endure.

In celebrating their craft, we acknowledge the profound impact of their work, not just on cinema, but on culture and society at large. For in the hands of a skilled screenwriter, words become the bridge between the world of the film and the heart of the viewer, making the cinematic experience truly unforgettable.

(The writer is Co-Chair, Media Sub Committee, SWA; views are personal)



PAWAN SONY





FIRST COLUMN BALANCING WELLBEING IN WORK AND LIFE

In the intricate dance of work and life, boundaries save individual sanctuaries



SAKSHI SETHI

Boundaries serve as the invisible fences that portrays an individual's personal as well as professional spaces, safeguard the individual wellbeing and preserve harmony in their interactions. Be it in the workplace or in life, setting and maintaining boundaries is paramount for fostering healthy relationships, achieving balance and nurturing self-respect. In today's world, where the pace of life is often hectic and boundaries can easily be overlooked or disregarded, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is essential for promoting individual well-being, healthy relationships and a more compassionate and equitable society. Moreover, boundary setting is an indispensable aspect of both the workplace and life at large.

When talked about the workplace, setting boundaries are essential for maintaining professionalism, productivity and helps the employees reduce misunderstandings, conflicts and instead maintain a healthy work-life balance, prevent burnout and improve job satisfaction. It also promotes efficiency, prevents distractions, safeguard individuals from exploitation, harassment and undue stress.



In a competitive and demanding work environment, it becomes crucial to set limits on workload, deadlines and expectations to prevent over-commitment and exhaustion. Numerous studies have also highlighted the importance of setting boundaries to maintain a healthy work-life balance. By defining clear limits on workload, working hours and availability, employees can better manage their work-related stress and maintain a positive attitude towards their jobs. In doing so, they can protect themselves from intrusive inquiries or demands that encroach upon their emotional well-being. Furthermore, boundary setting cultivates respect and professionalism in workplace dynamics and encourages others to treat self with similar respect. By clearly communicating the expectations and limits, the individual establishes a culture of mutual respect and accountability in the workplace. When individuals assert their boundaries assertively yet respectfully, it communicates self-confidence and self-worth, fostering a culture of mutual respect and dignity. Respect for boundaries encourages open communication, empathy and understanding, strengthening interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Beyond the workplace, boundary setting is equally indispensable in personal relationships and daily life too. In interpersonal relationships, boundaries define acceptable behaviours, emotional intimacy and personal space. Healthy boundaries empower individuals to prioritise their needs, values and aspirations, fostering relationships based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Whether it's setting limits on time spent with certain individuals or communicating preferences regarding personal space, boundaries nurture healthier and more fulfilling connections. Remember, setting boundaries is not about being selfish or uncooperative rather it's about taking care of individual self and ensuring that one can perform their best while maintaining the individual well-being. When done thoughtfully and respectfully, setting boundaries can strengthen the individual's professional relationships and enhance their effectiveness at work. Remember, boundaries are never about telling other people what they can and cannot do. It is about telling people what they will and will not do. Setting boundaries is an act of self-love and self-respect which is essential for individual wellbeing. Setting boundaries around leisure time, self-care routines and social engagements will allow an individual to recharge, replenish their energy and cultivate resilience in the face of challenges. By honouring their boundaries, individuals assert their agency and reclaim control over their time, energy and emotions.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Challenges galore for NATO@75



K S TOMAR

The alliance confronts formidable challenges amidst mounting criticism from European nations and the surge of right-wing nationalist movements



One of the biggest challenges being faced by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on its 75th anniversary pertains to combating and addressing the severe criticism from some European countries and the spread of right-wing nationalist movements. Hence, it needs to adopt a cautious and balanced approach to stay relevant in the 21st century. **Challenges ahead to stay relevant:** NATO, with 32 member states and five aligned nations including Japan, New Zealand, Israel, Australia and South Korea, must enhance defence capabilities and security arrangements to ensure mutual trust and better cooperation. NATO also called Washington Treaty, was created on April 4, 1949 to counterweight to Soviet military forces stationed in Central and Eastern Europe after world war 2nd, has traversed a hazardous journey and sustained faith of security and protection from aggressors hinges on its commitment to stay united and germane. Secondly, NATO's military potential is being perceived as a tool and weapon of the United States to ensure its hegemony over nations that do not pose military threats. There is a calamitous need to dispel such impressions of supremacy, evident from its 200 military interventions worldwide in 75 years, including 20 major ones like the questionable outcome of combating terrorism in Afghanistan, unlawful interference in Syria, invasion of Iraq, bombing of Yugoslavia, destabilisation of Libya and the creation of ISIS. Thirdly, as a parting gift, NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg has proposed a \$100 billion package of military aid to Ukraine for five years, aimed at avoiding a potential halt in aid if Trump wins the 2024 American presidential elections. Former President Trump has made it



NATO MUST ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY THAT WILL BE PRODUCTIVE AND FRUITFUL ONLY IF IT INTEGRATES ITSELF WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, BESIDES STRENGTHENING ITS MILITARY CAPABILITIES

clear to keep his country away from such conflicts and he is seen as pro-Putin, which might upset NATO. Experts feel that NATO members should get this proposal approved at the upcoming meeting in Washington and counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine. **NATO Needs Reforms:** Foreign policy experts argue that NATO needs to focus on non-traditional threats such as terror attacks, disinformation campaigns, cyber assaults and risks to disrupt supply chains to preserve its allies. Otherwise, it will lose its credentials and effectiveness. Secondly, NATO must adopt a comprehensive strategy that will be productive and fruitful only if it integrates itself with international organisations besides strengthening its military capabilities. Thirdly, it should put in place an effective mechanism to foster a shared sense of purpose and make relentless efforts to ensure cohesiveness and unity among the member states. Consensus-building should be the primary motto of the alliance, guided by essential elements like discussion, dialogue, unified planning and political alignments. Fourthly, transparency is obligatory to create mutual trust and internal synergy, as well as to improve coordination among the five main policy formation committees, including the executive working group, political committee, policy formalisation group, military group and senior resource board. Why did India reject the US offer to be part of NATO? From the Indian perspec-

ive, experts say that India has already rejected the US offer to be part of an alliance to safeguard against Chinese aggression. India is capable of independently countering such threats and, therefore, does not need the assistance of a military grouping like NATO. If India joins NATO, it will pave the way for the US to establish military bases, which is unacceptable to Delhi. US allies like Australia, Israel, Japan and South Korea have permitted military bases, but India cannot allow the infringement of its sovereignty and degradation of its positioning in the world arena. While maintaining strategic autonomy, India will never jeopardise its age-old trust-worthy ties with Russia, which is at odds with America and its allies after the Ukraine conflict. A United States Congressional committee had recommended that the US should strengthen NATO Plus to safeguard borders from China and enhance its capabilities to counter Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region hence it warrants India's inclusion in the organisation. The successes and failures of the organisation go hand in hand, but conflicts' contamination is spreading among major powers and frozen encounters may always heat up in the future, attributed to growing state brittleness and spill-over threats, thereby disturbing the world order. The recent Global Risk Report has come out with curious findings pertaining to the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) which is the culmination of the analysis of fifteen hundred global experts who have investigated the global

risks through three time frames to support decision-makers responsible for balancing current crises and long-term policies and priorities. One major failure of NATO relates to the lack of allocation of 2 per cent of funds by defence ministers of state members of their GDP agreed upon in 2006 towards security — related expenditures, especially when the United States accounts for two-thirds of the alliance's spending, which needs to be shared by other nations in the organisation. NATO had focused on restricting communism, discouraging militant nationalism and controlling the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but now the situation has become volatile in post-Cold War era as Russia has indulged in annexing neighbours, posing a threat to other smaller nations as well. Analysts feel that as NATO celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, it stands at a vintage point of passing through a litmus test of its core mission of safeguarding the security and freedom of its members, based on a principle-oriented international order and mandate. Trump's potential return to the White House may jeopardise the existence of NATO as it may encourage aggressors like Putin and give a boost to China's over-ambitious expansion policy to annex Taiwan in the future. Trump may encourage Putin to continue his onslaught on Ukraine, putting Europe's security at risk. *(The writer is a political analyst based in Shimla; views are personal)*

A call to vote responsibly beyond party lines

With focus on accountability and progress, it's imperative to scrutinise governmental performance across key sectors

India is undeniably a youthful nation, with a significant portion of our population comprising the younger generation. Every year, countless young individuals come of age, reaching 18 years and gaining eligibility to vote. This message is directed not only to those who have recently attained this milestone but also to those who did so in the past few years. With the power to vote comes a profound responsibility—the responsibility to elect leaders who possess the competence and integrity to effectively govern our nation.



RAVI KOCHHAR

As citizens, it is imperative that we transcend party lines and critically evaluate the progress of our nation. Are we moving in the right direction? Are there tangible improvements

in various sectors? Are we receiving value for the taxes we pay? These are fundamental questions we must ask ourselves as we assess the state of our nation. While political parties often prioritise winning elections, it is our duty as responsible citizens to vote for candidates who prioritise the welfare of the people and deliver on their promises. Over the past 75 years, India has made remarkable strides, earning recognition as a responsible global player. Whether it's our nuclear capabilities or our humanitarian efforts during crises, we have demonstrated our commitment to progress and compassion. The electoral process grants us the opportunity, every five years, to hold our leaders



accountable for their actions. We must evaluate their performance across various sectors, including:-
1. Infrastructure Development: Assess the improvement in infrastructure, particularly in terms of connectivity by rail, road and

waterways, which directly impacts ease of doing business and facilitates movement across the country.
2. Industrial Growth and Policies: Evaluate the government's plans and policies for industrial growth and decision-making processes, ensur-

ing there is no policy paralysis hindering progress.
3. Impact on Poor and Middle Class: Examine how Government policies impact the poor and middle class, with a focus on initiatives aimed at upliftment and improvement.
4. Healthcare Sector Performance: Evaluate the government's performance in the healthcare sector and assess the affordability and accessibility of healthcare for all citizens.
5. Education and Skill Development: Analyse initiatives in education and skill development, focusing on improving literacy rates, bridging urban-rural gaps and empowering the youth.
6. Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity: Assess improvements in digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly

in urban-rural sectors and how they benefit citizens.
7. Agriculture and Rural Sector: Review Government initiatives in agriculture and rural development and their impact on rural communities.
8. Transparency and Accountability: Ensure transparency and accountability in public administration, with efforts to curb corruption and promote good governance.
9. Foreign Policy and International Relations: Evaluate the government's performance in foreign policy and international relations, considering India's standing on the global stage. Remember, our national identity, symbolised by our flag, transcends religious and caste divisions, uniting us as one nation. As we exercise our

right to vote, let us remember the significance of our national flag and the unity it represents. Your vote holds immense power. History has witnessed elections being decided by a single vote. Therefore, before casting your vote, consider crucial factors such as the government's performance and policies, rising above religious and caste affiliations for the greater good of the nation. While this list is not exhaustive, it underscores the importance of informed decision-making and prioritising the wellbeing of our nation. Let us unite in our commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous India. *(The writer is group VC Amity University; views are personal)*

MONEY MATTERS

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) opens new delivery centre in Brazil

Major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday announced a new delivery centre in Londrina, Brazil, to help Brazilian organisations in their technology transformation with a focus on digital transformation, artificial intelligence and cognitive business operations. The new centre will create more than 1,600 new job opportunities over the next five years, contribute to the local economy and strengthen TCS' presence in the region, a company statement said. "The delivery centre will specialise in key areas, such as business transformation, artificial intelligence, and cognitive business operations, offering a comprehensive suite of IT services to clients in Brazil and around the world," it said. TCS Brazil Country Head Bruno Rocha said the company is aiming to double the number of associates in key areas like cybersecurity, cloud, cognitive business operations, information technology infrastructure services, artificial intelligence and automation.



Byju's India Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Arjun Mohan quits; rejig announced

Arjun Mohan, CEO of India operations of Think and Learn, which owns Byju's brand, has resigned from the beleaguered firm, which on Monday also announced a business rejig consolidating its operations into three verticals. Mohan had joined Byju's in July last year as the CEO for international business after quitting rival UpGrad in February as CEO. Later, he was given charge of India operations in September after Byju's then CEO Mrinal Mohit resigned. After taking over the charge, Mohan undertook restructuring of the organisation which led to layoffs of around 4,000 employees at Byju's. Byju's Founder Byju Raveendran will now handle the firm's day-to-day operations following the resignation of Mohan, the statement said. The company has also announced a major rejig of its business, consolidating it into three focused divisions - The Learning App, Online classes and Tuition centres, and Test-prep.



Vedanta secures 11-year Rs 3,900 cr loan from PFC; to expedite projects

Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd has secured an 11-year term loan of Rs 3,918 crore from Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), sources said. The financial closure will enable Vedanta to expedite completion of its power projects. The group plans to increase the operating capacity of its power business in India to 4.8 GW by FY27, sources with knowledge of the matter said. The latest financing follows Vedanta group's takeover of Meenakshi Energy Ltd on December 28 in an NCLT-driven insolvency process. Meenakshi Energy has a coal-based power plant at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, which Vedanta will use to supply power to merchants. Vedanta has acquired two plants -- Meenakshi Energy Ltd in Andhra Pradesh with a capacity of 1 GW, and Athena Power in Chhattisgarh with a capacity of 1.2 GW. It will primarily use the funds for these two of its key power plants, they said.



India top choice for digital pursuit: nasscom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India remains the top choice for enterprises looking to expand digital services portfolio and companies are expected to increase spending on AI, data analytics and cybersecurity, industry body nasscom said in a report on Monday. The report 'Digital Enterprise Maturity 5.0: Digital Readiness in the Era of AI' is based on a survey of 550 enterprises across 11 major sectors and seven major geographical regions. The survey found that 71 per cent of enterprises in India spent over 20 per cent of their tech spends on digital in 2023. "Nearly 90 per cent of companies have signalled plans to boost investments in key digital technology areas in 2024, including artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning (AI/ML), big data analytics, cloud computing, cybersecurity, and intelligent automation,"



The report further said the focus is expected to lean more towards cybersecurity by the first half of 2025, as a response to increased adoption of generative AI (gen AI), which has emerged as a prominent technology in 2023.

The report further said the focus is expected to lean more towards cybersecurity by the first half of 2025, as a response to increased adoption of generative AI (gen AI), which has emerged as a prominent technology in 2023. The advancements in gen AI propelled an increased emphasis on digital talent, nasscom said, with 83 per cent of enterprises reporting that over 6 per

cent of their total workforce was dedicated to digital roles. The report noted that sectors like BFSI (banking, financial services, and insurance), high-tech, discrete manufacturing, telecom, media and entertainment, as well as energy, utilities, and alternatives are expanding their digital services contracts. It said India continues to be the preferred outsourcing destination for businesses aiming to build and expand their digital services portfolio, with over 50 per cent of companies in the travel and transportation, telecom, media and entertainment, and construction and engineering sectors choosing it for their outsourcing needs. At least 47-49 per cent of firms in sectors like telecom, media and entertainment, discrete manufacturing, and energy and utilities outsourced digital services work to their own capability centres in India, it said.

Wholesale inflation hits 3 month high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale inflation in the country rose marginally to three-month high of 0.53 per cent in March compared to 0.20 per cent in the preceding month due to increase in prices of vegetables, potato, onion and crude oil. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned positive in November at 0.26 per cent. The inflation in March 2023 was 1.41 per cent. "The annual rate of inflation based on all-India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 0.53 per cent (provisional) for the month of March, 2024 (over March, 2023)," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement on Monday. Food inflation moved up marginally to 6.88 per cent in March from 5.42 per cent in the same month a year ago, data showed. Inflation in vegetables was 19.52 per cent, up from (- 2.39) per cent in the same month a year ago.

DESPITE GEO-POLITICAL TENSIONS

India's engineering exports edge up to US\$ 109 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's engineering exports edged up to USD 109 billion in 2023-24 despite a slowdown in some of the major global markets amid geo-political tensions, EEPCC said on Monday. India's engineering exports are competitive globally and expected to gain further market share in the coming years, with the country entering into more FTAs, it added. The apex body of engineering goods exporters expects the value of shipments from the sector to rise to USD 300 billion by 2030 and generate a significant number of jobs and foreign exchange earnings in the process. Notably, the engineering sector is the largest contributor to India's overall exports, with a share of 24 per cent, and also contributes approximately 40 per cent of the country's total manufacturing exports. "The engineering goods



exports in FY24 surpassed the previous year's numbers despite a slowdown in some of the key global markets, geopolitical tensions, Red Sea crisis and high freight rates," said EEPCC India Chairman Arun Kumar Garodia. Engineering exports in FY24 rose to USD 109.31 billion from USD 107.04 billion in the previous financial year, thus registering a growth of 2.13 per cent, the Commerce Ministry data released on Monday showed. According to EEPCC, FY24 exports on a strong note, with engineering exports rising 10.66 per cent year-on-year to USD 11.28 billion in March against USD 10.19 billion in the same month last year. "The monthly, as well as cumulative numbers, clearly show that the Indian engineering sector is quite competitive globally and consistently achieving success in penetrating new markets. The quick response from the government to counter various external challenges," Garodia said.

Delhi airport among world's top 10 busiest airports: ACI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 15 (PTI) Delhi airport has been named among the world's top 10 busiest airports for 2023 in a list topped by Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The Indra Gandhi International Airport in the national capital is ranked tenth while Dubai and Dallas airports are at the second and third positions, respectively, according to the Airports Council International (ACI) World. Releasing the list on Monday, the ACI also said the global total passenger forecast for 2023 stands close to 8.5 billion (850 crore), reflecting a remarkable recovery of 93.8



per cent from pre-pandemic levels and 27.2 per cent higher than 2022. "Notably, international traffic recovery drew nearer to that of domestic traffic, emphasising its essential role in propelling the industry's resurgence and expansion," it said. Among the top 10 busiest airports, five are in the US. At the tenth place, Delhi airport handled more than 7.22 crore passengers in 2023. In 2022, the airport was at the ninth position. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is on top and it handled over 10.46 crore passengers last year.

Gold rises Rs 300; silver jumps Rs 500

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 15 (PTI) Gold price rose Rs 300 to Rs 73,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with firm trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also jumped Rs 500 to Rs 85,700 per kilogram. In the previous trade, it had ended at Rs 85,200 per kilogram. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,050 per 10 grams, up Rs 300, taking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi,

Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international market, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,355 per ounce, up US\$ 12 from the previous close. Gold resumed trading on a positive note, mainly lifted by safe haven buying after the escalation in the conflict

between Iran and Israel over the weekend. Iran's attack on Israel reduced investor appetite for risky assets, and increased demand for safe haven assets like bullion, Gandhi said. Additionally, silver prices were trading higher at US\$ 28.25 per ounce. In the previous session, it had finished at US\$ 27.84 per ounce. According to market analysts, recent US inflation data diminished the possibility of an interest rate cut in June by the US Federal Reserve. However, it will be critical to monitor the geopolitical landscape and whether other nations choose to intervene, so as to intensify the crisis.

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 5.18 Lcr as markets crash on Iran-Israel conflict worries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A sharp plunge in the stock market wiped out Rs 5.18 lakh crore from investors' wealth on Monday as an escalating conflict in the Middle East hit the market sentiment. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 845.12 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 73,399.78. During the day, it plunged 929.74 points or 1.25 per cent to 73,315.16. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies fell by Rs 5,18,953.97 crore to Rs 3,94,48,097.94 crore (USD 4.73 trillion). "The worsening situation in the Middle-East with con-



flict between Iran and Israel flaring up had engulfed Dalal Street. Investors worldwide, including in India, have turned cautious and resorted to profit-taking. Geopolitical tensions and uncertainty over interest rate cuts could have a bearing on the markets," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

Quantum MF objects to delisting ICICI Securities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Quantum Mutual Fund has objected to the scheme of merger of ICICI Securities with parent firm ICICI Bank, saying it is "flawed and bridled with irregularities" and will adversely affect minority shareholders of the broking firm. Last month, ICICI Securities announced that about 72 per cent of its shareholders voted in favour of delisting and subsequent merger with ICICI Bank, even

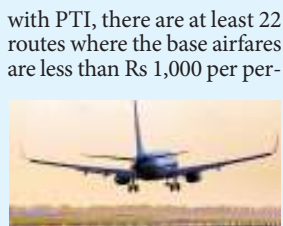


as the majority of retail investors opposed the scheme. "The scheme of merger is flawed and bridled with irregularities," Quantum Mutual Fund MD and CEO Jimmy Patel said in his letter written last week to ICICI Bank and forwarded it to market regulator Sebi and the stock exchanges.

With just Rs 150 base airfare, take a 50-minute flight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shell out just Rs 150 as base airfare and take a 50-minute flight from Lilabari to Tezpur. Not just this route, there are many more flights where the base ticket price is less than Rs 1,000. All of them are operated under the regional air connectivity scheme that provides various incentives for the airline operators. According to an analysis shared by travel portal ixigo



with PTI, there are at least 22 routes where the base airfares are less than Rs 1,000 per person, with the lowest being Rs 150 for flights connecting Lilabari and Tezpur in Assam. The cheapest one way base fare is Rs 150 for a flight to

and from Lilabari to Tezpur (Assam). The flights are operated by Alliance Air. While booking a ticket, there will be addition of convenience charge to the base fare. Broadly, the duration of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) flights on these routes are around 50 minutes. Majority of the routes where the base airfares range between Rs 150 and Rs 199 per person are in the North East.

India's merchandise exports dip marginally, shipments at US\$ 437 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports declined marginally in March to US\$ 41.68 billion, while for the entire 2023-24 it dipped 3.11 per cent to US\$ 437.06 billion, as geopolitical issues continued to hamper global shipments. Imports, too, declined 5.98 per cent to US\$ 57.28 billion in March, taking the trade deficit to 15.6 billion during the month. According to commerce ministry data released on Monday,



the imports during 2023-24 stood at 677.24 billion, down 5.41 per cent from US\$ 715.97 billion in the preceding year. The trade deficit or gap between imports and exports worked to be US\$ 240.17 billion. Replying to a query on esca-

lation of the crisis in the Middle east, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal, who was briefing about the trade data, said the ministry was monitoring the situation and will take "appropriate action". However, he did not elaborate due to the Model Code of Conduct in the wake of the ongoing Lok Sabha election. The overall exports (merchandise + services) are estimated to surpass last year's highest record, the Secretary said.

ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

'Malpractices by candidates fear recruiters'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Malpractices by candidates during online assessments is one of the biggest fears among recruiters and talent acquisition (TA) specialists, a report said on Monday. Fraudulent practices by candidates during online assessments have emerged as the biggest fear of the participants (39 per cent), followed by anxiety over finding the right can-

didate for a role (37 per cent), according to a report by AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro. The lack of effective tools to gauge specific skills has emerged as the next significant worry among 26 per cent of recruiters, it added. The report by HirePro is based on a survey among 837 recruiters, talent acquisition specialists, and HR professionals during October 2023 to March 2024. It further revealed that in the recruitment planning phase, the anxiety of finding



the right candidate for a role (37 per cent) is the biggest concern for recruiters and talent acquisition specialists, followed by the uncertainty of meeting hiring targets (32 per cent), in case it concerns planning for high-volume hiring and hiring for specific skill sets. In the candidate engagement phase, the report found that the inability to ascertain whether candidates are explor-

ing multiple job offers (29 per cent) and the anxiety surrounding offer rejections or candidate no-shows (28 per cent) are among the top fears. This is followed by the stress of losing candidates due to budget constraints (25 per cent), it added. During the interviewing phase, the management of candidates' and hiring managers' availability is a concurring challenge, the report noted.

Sebi to auction 30 properties of 7 companies next month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday said it will auction 30 properties of seven companies, including Mangalam Agro Products and Purusattam Infotech Industries, on May 15 to recover money illegally collected from investors. The properties will be auctioned for a reserve price of nearly Rs 25.64 crore. The other companies, whose properties will also be auctioned, are Bishal Group of Companies, NVD Solar Ltd, Sun Plant Business, Sumangal Industries Ltd and Jivan Sathi Dream Projects.

Properties that will go under the hammer include land parcels, land with building structures and flats in West Bengal and Odisha. It will be auctioned at a reserve price of Rs 25.64 crore, according to a notice issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). Sebi invited bids for the sale of properties in the recovery proceedings against Mangalam Agro Products, Purusattam Infotech Industries, Jivan Sathi Dream Projects, Sun Plant Business, Bishal group, Sumangal Industries and NVD Solar, along with their promoters/ directors, it said.

what's brewing?

SUKI WATERHOUSE SUBTLY REVEALS GENDER OF HER NEWBORN BABY



It's a girl! In a moment of subtle revelation amidst the pulsating energy of Coachella 2024, actor and singer Suki Waterhouse seemingly unveiled the gender of her and partner Robert Pattinson's newborn baby. The couple, who welcomed their bundle of joy in March, has kept much of their journey into parenthood private, but Waterhouse's stage presence at the renowned music festival hinted at the joyous news. Taking a break from her maternity leave, the 32-year-old star graced the Coachella stage on Friday night, captivating the audience with her performance. The *Daisy Jones and the Six* actor shared the pictures from her stage performance on her official Instagram handle.

Clad in an ensemble of white pants paired with an oversized fur coat, Waterhouse exuded radiance as she delivered a mix of original songs

and a poignant cover of *Oasis's Don't Look Back in Anger*, as per Page Six. Amidst the cheers of the crowd, Waterhouse paused, offering a glimpse into her personal life. "I love amazing ladies and I've been very lucky to have my own little amazing lady and meet the love of my life," she shared with the audience, alluding to the recent addition to her family.

Speculation arose as Waterhouse continued, "I don't know if some of you know, but I had some big life changes happen recently; some pretty big events have been going down," leaving fans curious about the details of her cryptic announcement.

As fans eagerly await further details about the newest addition to the Pattinson-Waterhouse family, the couple's subtle revelation at Coachella offers a glimpse into the joy and love that fills their lives, marking a new chapter in their journey together.

Mumtaz criticises Zeenat Aman for her live-in relationship statement!

Zeenat Aman has never followed the mold when it comes to roles or appearance, and she also doesn't follow the conventional wisdom when it comes to relationships. The *Don* actor strongly advises young people to choose a live-in partnership before saying, "I do".

The 72-year-old recently shared some bits of wisdom on her Instagram account. "Here's a personal opinion I haven't previously shared - if you're in a relationship, I strongly recommend that you LIVE TOGETHER before getting married! This is the same advice I've always given my sons, both of whom have had, or are in, a live-in relationship (sic)," read an excerpt from her note.

Fans have praised her as "cool" and "modern," but Mumtaz, an actor from the past who starred with her in *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, didn't agree. In a Zoom interview, she declared, "I don't agree with Zeenat."

The actress had a different opinion on live-in relationships and marriage, and added, "Kitna bhi live-in kar lo, kya guarantee hai (What is the assurance that even after living-in together your marriage will be a success)? Main toh kehti hoon, marriage hi nahin honi chahiye. What is the need to tie yourself down in this day and age? Why marry? For children? Arrey, go out there, find the man who appeals to you, and get his baby without physical intimacy. Zamana bahot aage

chala gaya hai (the society had evolved)." The *Roti and Do Raaste* actor advocated for raising one's children in a way that they're "self-sufficient" while daughters grow up to believe that "they don't need a man to be complete." "I have been married for more than forty years. *Shaadi nibhani padti hai* (Marriage requires upkeep). It is not easy," she added.

Mumtaz was offended by Zeenat, her contemporary, who claimed that Indian society wasn't "ready for" live-in relationships and therefore suggested they weren't desirable. "Zeenat should be careful with what she is advising. She has all of a sudden come into this huge social media popularity, and I can understand her excitement about sounding like a cool aunty. But giving advice that is counter to our moral values is not the solution to increasing your following," she emphasised.

She went on to say that if live-in becomes commonplace, marriage may become obsolete and unnecessary. "If girls adopt the live-in culture, marriage as an institution will become obsolete. Tell me honestly, would you marry your son to a girl whom you know to have been in a live-in relationship? *Aap Zeenat ko hi le lo misaal ke taur par* (take Zeenat, for example)... She knew Mazhar Khan for years before marrying him. Her marriage was a living hell. She should be the last person doling out advice on relationships."



"I am back, and not going anywhere," announced Parineeti Chopra!

After considerable anticipation, *Amar Singh Chamkila*, starring Diljit Dosanjh and Parineeti Chopra, has finally been released. The life of renowned Punjabi musician Amar Singh Chamkila serves as the basis for the movie. Parineeti Chopra is getting a lot of appreciation for her performance as Chamkila's spouse and singing companion, Amarjot. She has been using social media to express her gratitude to her followers for their support.

Recently, Parineeti Chopra took to the microblogging site X, previously known as Twitter and wrote, "Currently curled up in my blanket. Overwhelmed with your words, your calls, and the movie reviews. (Tears are not stopping). 'PARINEETI IS BACK'. These words are ringing loud. Hadn't thought of this. Yes I am back, and not going anywhere! #Chamkila."

The film *Amar Singh Chamkila* is directed by Imtiaz Ali and is available to be streamed on Netflix.



Will Smith's 'greatest surprise' at Coachella

Get ready for some of the greatest performances from international performers as Coachella gets underway. Columbian artist J. Balvin entered the stage on the second day of the first weekend of the music festival, and he had the greatest surprise in store for the crowd. Following an amazing performance, the singer welcomed Will Smith to the festival's alien-themed stage, which had an alien head positioned in the center of the platform and a UFO hovering overhead! At the conclusion of Balvin's performance, Will appeared, dressed like his character from the 1997 movie *Men in Black*. Smith entered the stage and said, "Coachella," fitting in with the mood of the crowd. With all of his fervour, he continued with the title track from his hit film. The *King Richard* actor and J Balvin rocked as they performed a special rendition together while rocking black suits and sunglasses. When Will finished his performance, he took out his memory-erasing neuralyser, and a bunch of guys wearing *Men in Black* costumes hauled Balvin off the stage. A number of social media videos featuring Balvin and Will Smith performing have gone viral, receiving amazing feedback from viewers.



Dua Lipa roped in as a musical guest and host of Saturday Night Live's show

Dua Lipa has been cast as the musical guest and presenter of *Saturday Night Live's* upcoming show, so she will be busy the first week of May. On the May 4 episode of SNL, Dua will play two roles. The news was revealed during the show, which Ryan Gosling presented. Chris Stapleton provided music for the episode.

The announcement coincides with Dua Lipa's preparations for the release of *Radical Optimism*, her third studio album, which is scheduled for May 3.

Dua will be behind the cameras this time. She was last seen as a doll from the Mattel world in Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*. She was also a star of the high-end spy thriller *Argylle*. She recently spoke about her

upcoming album as she told Variety, "I think for me, the importance of understanding that when things are bad, there's always some light at the end of the tunnel. I always think about it like, when I'm in the midst of a mess of turmoil or everything's going wrong, I always tell myself, in a couple months, I'm gonna look back on that moment, and be like, thank God I walked through it."

"I didn't decide to hide or not deal with the problem at hand, whatever it is, but actually chose to go through it. And that's how I grew. And I feel like that just overall, especially in the world right now, I think it's important that we just learn to walk through the fire and not hide away from it, or shy away from it. That's just optimism. It's probably the most daring thing we can do," she added.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



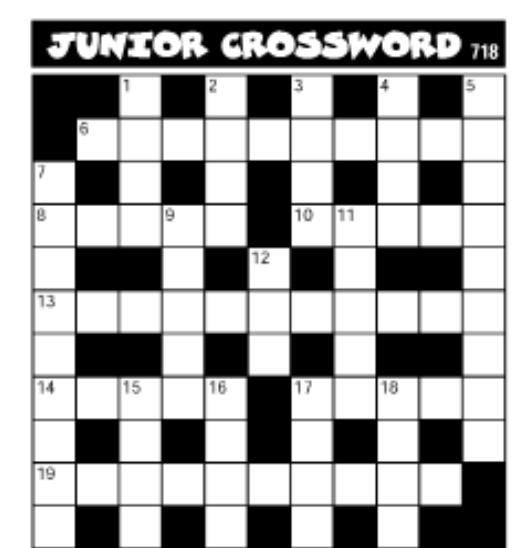
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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6	1	7						
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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



ACROSS

- A traffic circle where roads cross
- A pointy thing that indicates direction
- Snapshot
- A greeting (4,7)
- Salty water from the eyes
- Rubber covers on wheels
- Getting better after illness

DOWN

- Bitter-tasting
- Cold winter crystals
- Moist
- A song for one singer
- The most powerful
- Female children

9 A command

11 Bees make this

12 A fishing pole

15 A curved support under a bridge

16 Rescue

17 Grow weedy

18 Wear this on a finger

SOLUTION

A	L	M	O	S	T	G	R	I	N
I	G	O	O	D	E				
S	H	I	Y	E	L	O			
S	H	A	D	O	E				
C	E	N	T	R	O	V	E	S	
I	N	T	O	B	E				
I	S	E	C	O	N	O	S		
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S	L	E	E	P	S	T	E		
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Melodies of serenity through his 'Sitar for mental health' tour

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

The well-known proverb that states "music has the power to heal wounds that medicine cannot" emphasises how healing music can be. Virtuoso sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma recently started his *Sitar for Mental Health* tour with a similar goal in mind in Hyderabad!

He has played in a number of Indian cities during the last two months, but it was time to travel to Hyderabad! The rich, powerful tones of ancient Indian instruments like the 'tabla' and 'pakhawaj' added to the concert's sensory thrill. It transcended the boundaries of a performance by using complex melodies and a blend of traditional and modern beats to create music that evokes feelings, takes the listener to a different place, and uses music as a healing therapy for mental health.

The virtuoso begins, "I was struggling with mental health issues, which led to a lack of appetite and a hiatus from playing the sitar," in an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*. "I did, however, pick up the sitar again after I made the decision to face my health issues and get better. This not only helped me feel better, but it also opened my eyes to the therapeutic value of music. I was driven to tell everyone about this discovery and to inspire others to talk about their personal experiences with mental health. I think that music in general and the 'sitar' in particular may be effective tools for managing mental health and dispelling the stigma attached to it. The human spirit is touched and healed by

music, which exists beyond the sphere of sound."

At the age of ten, Rishab Rikhiram Sharma, a fourth-generation sitar player from the illustrious Rikhiram family of luthiers, made his stage debut in 2011 alongside his father, master luthier Sanjay Sharma.

He became the youngest disciple of Sitar Maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar after the latter's passing! He was trained by Pandit Parimal Sadaphal after Shankar's passing and also studied with Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Ustad Rais Khan, among other renowned maestros. Notably, Rishab is the only sitarist of his generation to have participated in popular TV series and networks like *Entertainment Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega*, *Hindustan Ke Hunarbaaz*, and *Doordarshan*. He has also performed live for audiences of 60,000-400 million people.

"As a young teenager growing up, I found myself immersed in a world of musical instruments," he says, "immersed in the symphony of traditional Indian music. 'Sitar', 'Tanpura', and 'Santoor' are surrounding me. My parents were also passionate musicians, with their fingers skipping over the veena's strings. However, within this rich tapestry of conventional sounds, an electronic pulse beckoned as a new beat. I cherished hip-hop tunes and synthesised beats seamlessly blended into my life, uniting contemporary and traditional. My mentor, Pandit Ravi Shankar, continued to have a strong influence throughout everything and served as a beacon of light for me on my musical path."

There is another fascinating story of Rishab, who was also the first Indian musician to deliver a mesmerising 'sitar' performance at the White House on Diwali. This was a deliberate and concentrated performance, as opposed to the usual background music that goes with dinners or get-togethers.

"I complied

with my esteemed guruji's instructions and patiently answered their questions concerning our music and instruments. But I continued to act in a conventional manner, recalling our annual Saraswati Pooja festival. We made a deal after I performed because I had to make things right. My family and I were the only ones who got to meet the President and First Lady, who were thrilled with the performance. The president noted in a letter that he had never heard the sound of a 'sitar' echoing through the White House before the performance. Seeing that letter delighted me," he exclaimed. "The diyas, rangoli, lighting, and decorations were all done beautifully."

In the realm of music and performance, building a relationship with the crowd is just as crucial as the actual performance. "Connecting with over 60,000 people at NGR Stadium in Houston, Texas, might seem daunting, but during my concerts, we engaged in interactive sessions where questions flowed freely," says a musician who genuinely lives this idea. "This fosters a feeling of cohesion and common experience. The audience has a strong sense of kinship, feeling as though we're all a part of something greater. Everyone feels inspired and united both before and after the event because of the incredible atmosphere and energy. This enchanted interaction is what makes giving a performance in front of a big crowd so exceptional."

A mentor's role is frequently crucial in the process of self-discovery and progress. Written by someone who has personally experienced the transformative impact of mentorship and who also shares this universal truth with the younger generation of musicians, this is a testimonial to that fact. "I had the good fortune to have wonderful mentors, and I would advise others to look for outstanding teachers as well. Learning from a mentor you don't respect can be difficult." Thus, the Sitarist concludes, "Find a guru who inspires you, someone you aspire to emulate, and let your potential shine through."

SITAR VIRTUOSO RISHAB RIKHIRAM SHARMA, WHO RECENTLY BEGAN HIS SITAR FOR MENTAL HEALTH TOUR, SPEAKS TO THE PIONEER OVER AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT, SHARING HIS INSPIRATION BEHIND THE TOUR AND ALSO TAKING US ALONG A JOURNEY THROUGH HIS MUSIC.

Silence 2 speaks volumes!

TANISHA SAXENA

Hum sabke andar ek moral compass hota hain. Usko cross karke grey ke andar ghusna (We all have a moral compass within us. Crossing it and entering the grey) is your choice, and you have to pay for that choice eventually," asserts ACP Avinash Verma, portrayed by Manoj Bajpayee, in the concluding scenes of the second season of *Silence*, a gripping whodunit series.

In a typical thriller like this, officers often exude a sense of brooding intensity, accompanied by dramatic music and dimly lit interrogation rooms. Forensic reports and DNA analyses are the bread and butter of investigation, while a cluttered office adorned with a bulletin board filled with suspect photos sets the scene for the hunt.

However, *Silence* flips the script with its unconventional approach. ACP Avinash Verma brings a refreshing energy reminiscent of a seasoned cop, but with a quirky charm that sets him apart. Instead of relying solely on forensics, the film delves into the psychology of its characters, unravelling their hidden motives and intricate connections. And while there may be a board with suspect names, it's not just a static backdrop; it evolves with each revelation, reflecting the dynamic nature of the investigation. *Silence* proves that it's not just about following the typical tropes but about reinventing them in unexpected ways.

Following the harrowing shootout at the Night Owl Bar, which claimed the lives of eight to ten individuals, the unexpected demise of Minister Pradeep Joshi's esteemed PA, Saryu Seth, initially served as the focal point of the investigation. However, this proves to be merely a deliberate misdirection, as the true depth of the case begins to unfold. Subtle hints pepper the narrative, suggesting a more profound revelation awaiting discovery. As the Special Crime Unit investigators delve deeper into the heart of the matter, the intricate pieces of the puzzle gradually align, uncovering not only the usual suspects but also shedding light on sensitive societal issues such as human trafficking, rape, and the alarming trend of young



Director and Writer: Aban Bharucha Deohans
Producer: Kiran Deohans
Cast: Manoj Bajpayee, Sahil Vaid, Prachi Desai, Vaquar Shaikh, Parul Gulati
Streaming on: Zee5
Rating: 3

girls being trafficked into bachelorette parties. It is this nuanced exploration of societal ills that elevates the show beyond its initial premise; what started as a routine murder inquiry evolves into a multi-layered exposé of pervasive social injustices.

Sahil Vaid as Amit Chauhan, Prachi Desai as Inspector Sanjana Bhatia, and Vaquar Shaikh as Inspector Raj Gupta form a formidable team under the leadership of ACP Avinash. While Bajpayee undoubtedly serves as the backbone of both the team and the show, the ensemble cast adds an extra layer of depth to the already compelling narrative. Each member of the team is not merely a supporting player but rather a vital ingredient, enhancing the overall flavor of the series. With well-crafted dialogues and distinct roles, every character brings their own charisma to the table, contributing to the dynamic chemistry and seamless storytelling of the show.

While *Silence 2* undoubtedly boasts compelling storytelling and a talented ensemble cast, it is not without its flaws. One notable weakness lies in its cinematography, which fails to effectively capture the essence of the various locations depicted in the show. Despite featuring Mumbai, Jaipur, and even glimpses of Madhya Pradesh, the lack of

emphasis on these locales leaves viewers feeling disconnected from the environment and geographical setting of the narrative. With only fleeting glimpses of iconic landmarks like Jaipur's Hawa Mahal, the film misses an opportunity to fully immerse its audience in the rich tapestry of its surroundings, creating a noticeable void in the viewing experience.

Despite its shortcomings, the exceptional performances of the cast elevate *Silence 2* to a commendable standard. From Bajpayee's masterful portrayal, blending strength with nuanced emotion and sharp dialogue delivery, to Prachi Desai's portrayal of beauty with brains, the ensemble cast delivers stellar performances. Shruti Bapna's contribution adds another layer of depth to the show, while Sahil Vaid and Vaquar Shaikh captivate with their compelling portrayals. Unlike other whodunit narratives, *Silence 2* deliberately eschews delving into the personal lives of its characters, instead focusing on the intricacies of the whodunit mechanism. The disciplined narrative unfolds with precision over its two-and-a-half-hour runtime, maintaining a structured pattern throughout. A special mention must be made of Parul Gulati's captivating portrayal of Aarti, a troubled character who leaves a lasting impression despite her limited screen time, leaving viewers yearning for more. In essence, *Silence 2* is worth watching.

Redefining men through tailored cosmetic procedures

In recent years, a notable shift has occurred in the realm of cosmetic procedures, challenging traditional stereotypes that once deemed such practices exclusively feminine. Men are increasingly embracing the idea that self-care goes beyond skincare routines, hitting the surgeon's chair with confidence. This surge in male interest prompts a closer look at tailored cosmetic treatments designed to address their unique aesthetic concerns.

One significant factor contributing to this trend is the evolving perception of masculinity. Modern men are breaking free from outdated norms that stigmatised grooming and aesthetic enhancements. In response, the cosmetic industry is witnessing a surge in demand for treatments that cater specifically to men, acknowledging and addressing their distinct features and concerns.

Facial rejuvenation, for instance, has become a popular avenue for men seeking to maintain a youthful appearance. Botox and dermal fillers are now customised to preserve masculine facial structures, enhancing features without compromising the rugged charm often associated with male beauty.

Something customised for men called "the corporate look," seems like another new concept which gives them less angry, less tired, and more youthful skin. This tailored approach ensures a subtle and natural result, avoiding the overdone look that can be a concern for many men.

Hair restoration is another domain witnessing a surge

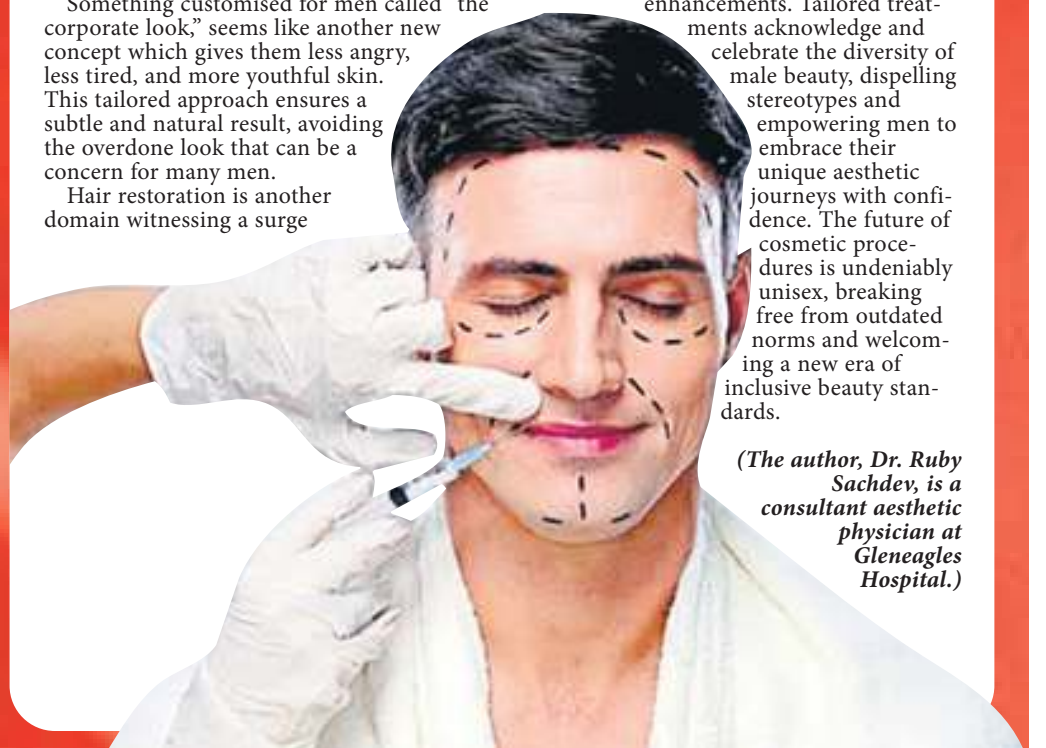
in male interest. With advancements in technology, personalised hair transplant procedures are gaining popularity. These procedures not only address male pattern baldness but also consider factors like facial structure and hairline preferences, providing men with a bespoke solution that aligns with their unique sense of identity.

Body contouring, a realm once dominated by female clientele, is now attracting a growing number of men. Procedures like liposuction and non-invasive fat reduction are tailored to accentuate masculine contours, fostering a more sculpted physique. This shift reflects a broader acknowledgment that body image concerns are not exclusive to any gender.

As the demand for male-centric cosmetic procedures rises, it's crucial to recognise the importance of a holistic approach. Understanding that men have unique aesthetic goals allows practitioners to refine and tailor treatments to meet those specific needs, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and diverse beauty standard.

The rise of cosmetic procedures among men signals a progressive shift in societal attitudes toward self-care and aesthetic enhancements. Tailored treatments acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of male beauty, dispelling stereotypes and empowering men to embrace their unique aesthetic journeys with confidence. The future of cosmetic procedures is undeniably unisex, breaking free from outdated norms and welcoming a new era of inclusive beauty standards.

(The author, Dr. Ruby Sachdev, is a consultant aesthetic physician at Gleneagles Hospital.)





RR BRACE FOR NARINE SPIN TREAT AS KKR EYE TOP SPOT

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Rajasthan Royals' star-studded batting will face the serious challenge of decoding Sunil Narine's mystery at Eden Gardens when they take on two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders in a top-of-the-table IPL clash here on Tuesday.

Narine, who is one month shy of turning 36, had played a pivotal role in KKR's twin triumphs under former skipper Gautam Gambhir in 2012 and 2014.

Ever since joining the side way back in 2012, Narine has sizzled at Eden Gardens with his crafty bowling, proving to be a big threat to opposition batters.

Now after reuniting with Gambhir, who returned to the team as their mentor, Narine dished out an allround show, reigniting their title hopes again and a win against RR will hand them the pole position in the 10-team standings ahead of the halfway stage of the season.

His 1/19 against the Sunrisers Hyderabad or 1/17 against Lucknow Super Giants may have

failed to grab attention but those eight overs where he did not concede a single boundary made all the difference in the end for KKR.

Phil Salt may have walked away with the player-of-the-match award in their solid eight-wicket win over LSG here on Sunday, but it was Narine, who choked LSG in the middle overs to limit them to a below-par 161 for 7.

Come Tuesday, the likes of Sanju Samson, Riyan Parag and Shimron Hetmyer -- who all have struck at the rate of more than 155 this season -- will be up against the Narine challenge.

It remains to be seen if Jos Buttler is fit to be included in the playing XI after missing their last fixture against Punjab Kings.

With his ability to express himself at the top, Narine, who has a strike-rate of 183.51 and averages 33-plus this season, has a Rashid Khan-like aura at KKR.

Their IPL record buy Mitchell Starc has also shut all the noise to return to his elements, claiming two wickets in the last over for his



3/28 against LSG.

In such a scenario, the top-of-the-table contest may well bow down to KKR's bowling versus RR's batting.

KKR's only weaklink could be their skipper Shreyas Iyer's poor form with the bat.

Even though he remained unbeaten on a run-a-ball 38 in their 162-run chase against LSG, Shreyas looked tentative both against the pacers and spinners and KKR's batting may well get exposed if RR manage to give early breakthroughs.

KKR's batting has largely depended this season on Salt-Narine's fireworks at the top and Andre Russell's blitz at the death, as their Indian batters have not been tested much.

Rituraj Gaikwad had batted so well along with Shivam Dube. I do believe that they should have been restricted to 185-190," Gavaskar said.

"Probably the worst kind of bowling that I've seen for a long, long time," Gavaskar said on Star Sports during the innings break after CSK posted 206 for 4.

"It almost looks like I've had this embrace with my hero. I've got the kind of deliveries that he's gonna hit for sixes. One six is fine. The next one is a length ball when you know this batter is hunting for a length ball that he wants to hit.

RR have a formidable bowling lineup in Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Yuzvendra Chahal and Keshav

Maharaj, while it remains to be seen if Ravichandran Ashwin is fit for the match.

TEAMS (FROM):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain and Mujeeb Ur Rahman.

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



CSK have a man behind stumps telling them what is working: Pandya pats Dhoni

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya could not hide his appreciation for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's tactical acumen following his team's 20-run loss to Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium here on Sunday.

While Dhoni's barrage of three sixes and a hurriedly-completed two runs off the fourth and last delivery was something that gave CSK the winning cushion, it was the former India skipper's reading of the game from behind the stumps that Pandya felt made the difference on a belter of a track.

"They (CSK) were smart with their plans and used the longer boundary well. They got the hang of it and they have a man behind the stumps telling them what's working," said Pandya after his side failed to chase 206 despite Rohit Sharma smashing his second IPL

century and batting from start to finish.

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad gave Dhoni a huge compliment, saying his power-hitting with just four balls remaining made the difference between victory and defeat.

Dhoni, 42, scored 20 off four deliveries, which in the end made the difference to the match's outcome.

"Our young wicketkeeper (MSD) scoring three sixes down the order helped a lot and I think that was the difference. To start off, on this kind of ground, you need 10-15 extra runs. We were looking at 215-220, but Bumrah bowled well," said Gaikwad, who took over the captaincy duties from Dhoni this season.

"Bowling-wise, we were spot-on with our execution. Even in powerplay, I would have taken six overs for 60. These kinds of venues demand both skills: batting and bowling. Our (Lasith) Malinga (Matheesha Pathirana)

bowled exceptionally well and nailed those yorkers," he said.

On why he did not open the innings and instead sent Ajinkya Rahane with Rachin Ravindra, Gaikwad said, "Nothing, Jinks (Rahane) was carrying a bit of a niggles. Thought it was better for him to open and get away quick runs. I'm fine batting anywhere."

Player of the Match, Pathirana, who grabbed his best IPL figures of 4/28, said he was a bit nervous as he was coming back into the side after recovering from a niggles.

"When we bowled in powerplay, I was nervous. I don't think about results and I just think about execution. First of all, I was having a niggles before two weeks and all support staff and players helped me.

"That's the main thing to have my form," said the Sri Lankan, who has modelled his action on the lines of the legendary Malinga.

Absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy: Gavaskar slams Hardik

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya faced scathing criticism from prominent former players after Mumbai Indians' fourth loss in the ongoing IPL with the great Sunil Gavaskar slamming him for his "absolutely ordinary bowling and ordinary captaincy" so far.

Booed and heckled by fans ever since he took over MI's captaincy, Pandya found himself in the line of fire of the legendary Gavaskar and former England captain Kevin Pietersen after his team slumped to yet another defeat, this time to Chennai Super Kings, here on Sunday night.

It was the 26 runs that Pandya conceded in the final over as Mahendra Singh Dhoni going hammer and tongs,

which proved to be decisive as Chennai Super Kings notched up a 20-run win over MI.

"Oh, absolutely ordinary bowling, ordinary captaincy. They should have been restricted despite the fact that Ruturaj Gaikwad had batted so well along with Shivam Dube. I do believe that they should have been restricted to 185-190," Gavaskar said.

"Probably the worst kind of bowling that I've seen for a long, long time," Gavaskar said on Star Sports during the innings break after CSK posted 206 for 4.

"It almost looks like I've had this embrace with my hero. I've got the kind of deliveries that he's gonna hit for sixes. One six is fine. The next one is a length ball when you know this batter is hunting for a length ball that he wants to hit.



"Third ball is again a full toss on the legs when you know he (Dhoni) is looking for a six," Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his four overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture of the game as MI ended at 186 for six despite a fine 63-ball 105 by

former skipper Rohit Sharma. Pandya has faced fans' ire right from the first match and even at the Wankhede Stadium, boos have followed him, forcing Rohit (against Rajasthan Royals) and Virat Kohli (in MI's game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru) to ask the crowd to calm down a bit.

Pietersen feels the outside noise is taking a toll on the flamboyant all-rounder.

"I actually think, with Hardik Pandya, everything away from the game is affecting him so much. He's smiling too much when he does the toss. He's trying to act like he is so happy. He is not happy. I have been there. I have been in the firing line. And I can tell you now, it affects you.

"The boos we have been hearing just now and I know they are happy to see former CSK captain (Dhoni), the lion, smacking him (Hardik) all over the park, it hurts you. Because he has emotions. And he is an Indian player and he doesn't want to be treated like this. So when this is happening, it's affecting him, it's affecting his cricket and something needs to happen."

Pollard defends Pandya, says sick & fed up of people pinpointing individuals for team losses

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard is "sick and fed up" of people pinpointing particular individuals for the team's losses as he urged fans not to "nitpick" struggling captain Hardik Pandya after MI lost to Chennai Super Kings by 20 runs in their Indian Premier League match here.

CSK legend MS Dhoni took 26 runs off Pandya's final over with the help of three consecutive sixes as the MI skipper struggled for right line and length while also bowling two wides at a crucial time.

Pandya finished with figures of 2 for 43 from his three overs and also had a tough time with the bat, managing a mere two runs off six balls at a crucial juncture of the game.

"You're going to have those days. I'm sick and fed up of just looking to pinpoint at individuals. Cricket is a team sport at the end of the day," Pollard said at the post-match press conference Sunday night.

"He (Pandya) is a confident guy. He has been great around the group. In cricket, you have good days and you have bad days. I'm seeing an individual who's working bloody hard to continue his skill and to ply his trade."

Pollard reminded fans about the possibility of Pandya being picked for India's T20 World Cup campaign, saying if that happens everyone would be singing his praises.

"This is an individual that's going to represent the country in less than six weeks' time. We're all going to be cheering for him and want him to do well," said



the West Indian who himself is a MI legend. "It's about high time that we try to encourage and try to stop nitpick. See if we can get the best out of one of the great all-rounders India could ever produce.

"He can bat, he can bowl, he can field. He has an X factor about him. I hope very well deep

down within my heart that when he comes out on top, I'll sit back and I'll watch everyone sing his praises."

The match witnessed intermittent booing of Pandya who struggled with both bat and ball and also received criticism from former England captain Kevin Pietersen who claimed that the

MI skipper has been 'smiling too much'. Pollard said he is seeing Pandya evolving and backed him to turn things around.

"As an individual, you have to evolve as well. When you're young and there's that youthful exuberance, you go out and you do things in a certain manner. But the older that you get, at times, responsibility sort of kicks in, accountability to teams sort of kicks in," he said.

"What I'm seeing is a guy that is evolving. Obviously, we as individuals, we want to see certain things, but sometimes the game does not demand certain things," Pollard said while Mumbai Indians would revisit their plans on Dhoni but added that anyone could have been at the receiving end of the former CSK skipper's onslaught, like Pandya experienced Sunday night.

Cricket brings happiness for Afghan public but cannot help if Australia refuses to play us: Rashid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"You can't do anything about it," Rashid Khan conceded as he tried to make sense of Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with Afghanistan men's team, which he believes, achieves nothing beyond denying happiness to his people.

Cricket Australia cancelled an ODI series Down Under in 2023 and as recent as last month, refused to play a T20 series scheduled in the UAE later this year due to its government's concerns over "marked deterioration" of treatment of women in the Taliban-ruled state.

But Afghan players, including Rashid, continue to be welcome in the Big Bash League.

"I want, all the players want, to play cricket because that is the only source of happiness for people back home in Afghanistan and if you take that away, there is nothing that people could celebrate or enjoy," Rashid told PTI during an exclusive interview on Monday.

In 2023, Rashid had threatened to pull out of the Big Bash League over Australia's refusal to play bilateral cricket with them. The 25-year-old

has many Australian friends but he hasn't actually spoken to any of them about the issue.

"Well, I have never discussed it with anybody (Australian cricketers) as I haven't had that opportunity to discuss all those things with them, something which is not in your hands or you have no control over, you can't do anything about it.

"It's not a cricketering reason or matter that you think about it, it is about two governments and as a player you can't do anything about it. What we can do is whenever we get an opportunity to play cricket, we go with full pride while representing our country."

Having played over 400 T20 games and being the most sought after freelancer in the T20 universe, Rashid feels privileged about being the face of Afghanistan cricket.

"Before 2017, we never thought about playing the IPL. It was hard (far-fetched) thought for us to even think of playing in the biggest T20 league in the world.

"The hardest part is to get into the system and when I (first) got the opportunity, I knew okay, I got that opportunity now I have to do the



best where it helps me promote my cricket and also help my country where youngsters can get inspired to get into cricket more and more," the eloquent Pathan said.

Apart from Rashid, Noor Ahmed and Azmatullah Omrzi are playing for Gujarat Titans in the ongoing IPL. Mohammad Nabi is representing Mumbai Indians and

Rahmanullah Gurbaz is part of the KKR squad.

"Back in 2017, it was only me and (Mohd) Nabi, who were there and now we have 7-8 players who are

with different franchises, and it is so good to see them not just being a part of the team but also performing," he said. "At the end of the day, it is helping Afghanistan cricket and youngsters back home. So I am quite happy, and blessed to be one of those who brought about this change in mindset of people about cricket in Afghanistan."

DIFFICULT TO HIT RHYTHM IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY: Rashid had undergone a major back surgery last year, which didn't allow him to play the India series in January. It was a hard time but now he feels he is back in rhythm.

"For me, those three to four months were hard but I tried to make sure that I am relaxed and when I get back on field, I am fully ready and prepared for it," the champion spinner said.

"The main focus for first four months was on getting back on track, it is hard when you are not playing but these are things which are attached to your career, and it is important as a player that you take (accept) that process, you make sure that you look after your-

self.

"I made sure that I spent time with my family and looked after my body."

MISSING SHAMI BUT HAPPY WITH GT BOWLING UNIT: Gujarat Titans have had a bumpy ride with three wins and an equal number of defeats in the season thus far. While the absence of a game-changer like Mohammed Shami is being felt massively, Rashid stood by the bowling unit.

"Shami played a main role for us in last two seasons, both with new ball and old ball, and the way he has delivered for the team actually made mine and others job easier, especially in the middle overs," he had no hesitation in admitting.

"We have started the season with a positive mindset and everyone is taking responsibility and delivering best for team but sometimes result doesn't go your way but we are quite happy with bowling unit.

"T20 is all about making right decisions at the right time. Spencer Johnson, Darshan Nalkande, Azmat, Umesh have all delivered and most importantly, Mohit (Sharma) bhai as well."



'My character reflects the challenges of nepotism in *Love Guru*'

Actress Minalini Ravi, who is currently seen in the film *Love Guru*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing interesting insights about the character, her preps for the same, and more.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Minalini Ravi is a rising south actress known for her work in Tamil and Telugu cinema. With a background in engineering and a stint in IT sector, Minalini's transition to acting was propelled by her viral TikTok and Dubsmash videos, marking her as a versatile talent in the industry. Making her debut with the acclaimed film *Super Deluxe* in 2019, she has since then garnered attention for her roles in movies like *Gaddalakonda Ganesh*, *Enemy*, and *Cobra*.

Now, the actress, who is seen alongside Vijay Anthony in *Love Guru*, delves into her character, as she shares, "In the movie, I portray the character of Leela, whose journey closely mirrors my own experiences. She embodies the struggles of today's generation, facing opposition from her traditional-minded parents as she pursues her passion for acting. Despite their disapproval, Leela perseveres, working in the IT sector while tirelessly striving to establish herself in the film industry. Her

story reflects the challenges of nepotism, as she navigates through small roles in Chennai and Hyderabad, determined to realise her dream. Each day, she wakes up with unwavering determination to break through barriers and make her mark as an actress."

She further states that unlike conventional movie narratives, where the hero faces obstacles and the heroine provides support, her character takes centre stage, with the hero offering his support and love as she pursues her aspirations. Through Leela's journey, she reveals, "The film sheds light on the resilience and strength of individuals pursuing their dreams against all odds. I had every reason to say yes to this script—it's undoubtedly the finest piece of work I've encountered throughout my entire career."

She reflects on the rigorous training required on set to embody the character of Leela, detailing the challenges encountered in portraying her on-screen. "For a month, I underwent intense training under Kalyani Ma'am, focusing intensely on expressions and eye movements. This character demands subtlety; she speaks little, revealing her emotions through her silent anguish and weariness from constant rejection in the industry. Despite the pain, she harbours a glimmer of hope, persistently chasing her dreams. We honed the art of maintaining a blank face, ensuring that the agony resonated through my eyes."

Throughout the movie, I portray a rigid, aloof, and occasionally abrasive demeanour, a challenge that required nuanced variations to prevent monotony while conveying her persistent frustration and bitterness."

She further shares, "It's crucial not to risk losing the audience's interest while ensuring that my character remains relatable. Despite her struggles, she mustn't disregard the support from her husband, Aravind or alienate viewers from empathising with her journey. Although the hero's unwavering love poses a challenge, the aim is for viewers to feel a sense of sympathy and root for her, rather than resent her for her aloofness this was the chal-

lenging part of the role. So, to justify the character of Leela was a difficult task."

In reflecting on her experience working with her co-stars, the actress expresses genuine joy, particularly highlighting Vijay Anthony's remarkable support and flexibility in allowing her to flourish on screen. She expresses, "Vijay Anthony sir, in particular, was incredibly supportive and allowed me the space to shine in the movie. His willingness to take on the role of Aravind, which required him to display vulnerability and self-deprecation, was commendable, especially in a film centred around women's issues and aspirations. His involvement as both actor and producer further exemplified his commitment to the project. Together, we formed a close-knit family on set, and everyone's dedication to their roles made the experience truly unforgettable."

On the working front, she has a web series titled *Pre Love*, which delves into the tumultuous journey of a teenage girl transitioning into her early twenties. With the entire series centred around her character, it's an exhilarating yet intense role that she is very much thrilled to undertake. "We've already completed shooting for 20 days, with another 60 days ahead of us. Unlike *Romeo*, which explores old-school love in a refreshing manner, *Pre Love* tackles a hard-hitting and controversial subject, offering a completely new genre for audiences. Embracing such challenging roles has become a personal addiction for me; I'm drawn to characters where I can truly showcase my acting prowess and evoke a sense of pride."

The love and respect garnered from portraying such roles hold a different significance, driving me to pursue projects that offer depth and substance over glamorous or peripheral roles. I'm not inclined towards being part of big-budget films where I play secondary characters; instead, I prioritise roles that allow me to make a meaningful impact and push the boundaries of my craft," she signs off saying.



Director Shankar's daughter, Aishwarya marries Tarun Karthikeyan

The oldest daughter of renowned filmmaker Shankar Shanmugam got married to Tarun Karthikeyan in February 2024. The pair is currently in the news once more after being married in front of their loved ones!

The private wedding photos have been making the rounds on social media, and as of right now, the place and time of

the ceremony are unknown. Celebrities like CM Stalin, Kamal Haasan, Chiyaan Vikram, Atlee, Suriya, Karthi, Vignesh Shivan, Nayanthara, Maniratnam, Suhasini, and others did, however, attend the event. These images are currently becoming viral on social media. Regarding his career, Shankar has two upcoming films that are slated for wide release in theaters: *Indian 2* and *Game Changer*.

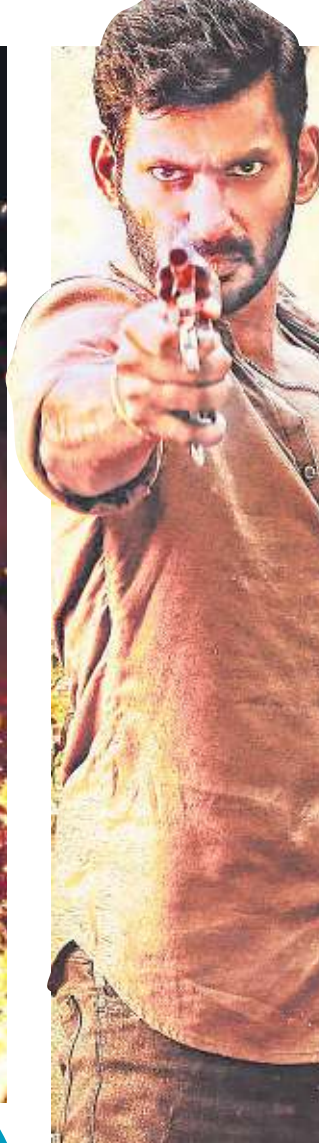
Raghava Lawrence aiming for two films

In the minds of the Telugu audience, Raghava Lawrence has always been associated with horror-comedies, but he is soon to explore other genres. His effort at a chick flick action drama about a mobster with a social message proved well in Tamil last year, but not in Telugu. *Jigarthanda DoubleX* is the topic of discussion. He's aiming for two projects this year. The first is *Hunter*, which is written and directed by co-director AR Murugadoss Venkat Mohan. Devi Sri Prasad will write the soundtrack for it. Its tagline is *The Battle For the Sou*. It's said that this one is an action adventure. *Benz*, created under Lokesh Kanagaraj's G Squad banner, is the second. Director of *Roemo* and *Sulthan*, Bakkiyaraj Kannan, is behind the thriller. According to the announcement poster, "A warrior with a cause is the most dangerous soldier."



MAJOR UPDATES ON TEJA'S NEXT WILL BE UNVEILED ON APRIL 18

Following *Hanu-Mani*'s phenomenal box office success, many speculated that Teja Sajja, a young actor, would feature in the film *Jai Hanuman* as the following actor. However, he has a film with acclaimed filmmaker Karthik Ghattamaneni, who helmed Ravi Teja's *Eagle*, before he heads to the sequel's sets. People Media Factory has stated today that the first look poster and title of the action-packed film (*PMF 36*) would be unveiled on April 18, 2024. The movie is called *Mirai*, which translates to "The Future," according to the sources. In an effort to build anticipation for the movie, the actor's pre-look poster was removed. Manchu Manoj portrays the antagonist in the film, while Ritika Singh plays the key female character. However, Dulquer Salmaan does not have a major part in this TG Vishwa Prasad-produced film.



Aa Okkati Adakku in cinemas on May 3



The renowned Telugu actor Allari Naresh, under the direction of Malli Ankan, is about to debut his next romantic comedy, *Aa Okkati Adakku*. The main characters and an amusing plot were introduced in the film's teaser, which was released on March 12. Now, the makers have released the release date of the film, which is on May 3!

In *Aa Okkati Adakku*, Naresh portrays Gana, a man who discovers via a priest's prophecy that he must be married within the next twenty-five days to prevent living a life of singledom. While his family frantically searches for him to match with someone suitable, Gana finds himself falling in love with a vibrant woman, played by Faria Abdullah. However, she is reluctant to get married, which puts Gana in a difficult situation.

The picture appears to provide a beautiful fusion of humour and romance, maintaining viewers' interest throughout. Along with comedian Jamie Lever, who is making her Telugu debut, the ensemble cast includes Faria Abdullah as the female lead. Prominent performers such as Ariyana Glory, Viva Harsha, and Vennela Kishore are also featured in important parts in the movie.

Rama Ayodhya to premiere on Sri Ram Navami

A documentary film titled *Rama Ayodhya* shot in Ayodhya on the 16 virtues of Lord Rama is going to be released in Telugu OTT Aha on this Sri Rama Navami. National Film Award winner - Satyakashi Bhargava has written the story for this film and directed by Krishna. On this occasion, the author Satyakashi Bhargava said that in *Rama Ayodhya*, he was telling the important qualities of Lord Ram, showing many important places in Ayodhya and telling their special features. "I hope all Telugu people will like it." Director Krishna said that Ayodhya is



not only Ram Mandir, but there are many holy places and shrines. They have shown them all very well in our film. Moreover, he said that how they can practice the qualities of Lord Ram in the present time, they have made it simple so that everyone can understand it.

Vishal's Raththam trailer out now

Vishal collaborated with filmmaker Hari on the movie *Raththam*, which will be his next big-screen appearance. With *Raththam* Vishal and Hari reunite for the third time following their phenomenal hits, *Thamirabarani* and *Poojai*. With less than two weeks until the movie's premiere, the makers of the movie have finally released the trailer. The film is scheduled to hit theaters on April 26. The movie's theatrical trailer was unveiled by the producers, who are getting closer to the release date. A Hari movie would be expected to include a lot of action, and the trailer has plenty of it. Even though the plot hasn't been fully disclosed, it's obvious that the main focus of the movie is keeping the female lead, Priya, safe from the antagonist and his group. Important parts are played by Samuthirakani, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Vijay Kumar, Jaya Prakash, Yogi Babu, and others. Devi Sri Prasad composed the soundtrack for *Raththam*, which was produced by Kaarthikayan Santhanam and Zee Studios under the auspices of Stonebench Films and Zee Studios.



TEPPA SAMUDRAM PRE-RELEASE EVENT HELD

Bigg Boss fame Arjun Ambati as the hero, Kishori Dattak as the heroine Ravi Shankar, and Chaitanya Rao in the lead roles of the film *Teppa Samudram*. The film is directed by Satish Rapolu, produced by Neerukanti Manjula Raghavendra Goud under the banner of Srimani Entertainments, and presented by Baby Vaishnavi. For this film, P.R. is the music director. The film is going to hit screens on April 19 after completing its shooting. As part of the promotion of the film, the trailer launch and pre-release event were organised by the film unit.