

The people of Hyderabad have seen BJP's intentions. They will not accept the vulgar actions of the BJP and the RSS. Is this the 'Viksit Bharat' BJP is talking about? The peace of Hyderabad is more important than elections. I am confident that the people of



-Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM Chief P4

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN

**'LS poll results will have bearing on K'taka CM's continuation'**  
 5

**RAJPAL YADAV SHINES IN KAAM CHALU HAI**  
 10

**Mangli's new song OUT NOW**  
 P12

**DON'T MISS...**

**Court restricts parties from...**

Principal District Judge G Sridevi of the Kadapa District Court has issued orders for an ad-interim injunction, restraining political parties and their leaders from making derogatory and defamatory remarks against the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), its president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, and YS Avinash Reddy, alleged to be involved in the murder of his uncle YS Vivekananda ...

-PAGE: 3

**'Back pain, depression...**

The main causes of poor health impacting quality of life are low back pain, depressive disorders and headaches, according to a new global research published in The Lancet journal. The study analysed healthy life expectancy during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and found that even though people around the world are living longer, "they aren't spending all those years in good health." "With low back pain, the leading cause of poor health globally, we see that..."

-PAGE: 5

**'Electronics industry witnesses...**

The electronics industry in the country has experienced sharp growth in hiring and skilling initiatives with a 154 per cent growth in overall hiring in March, compared to the same month last year, a report said on Thursday. The report also showed that the telecom sector topped in the hiring demand within the electronics industry, accounting to 64 per cent of hiring, closely followed by lighting and automotive sectors. A comparison of the...

-PAGE: 8

**Lucknow Super Giants face stern...**

A set of probing questionnaires awaits the Lucknow Super Giants on their home turf as Chennai Super Kings' cerebral bowling unit will look to use its variation to the fullest on a two-paced Ekana Stadium track during their IPL clash here on Friday. The two teams endured contrasting fortunes in their previous couple of matches. While Ruturaj Gaikwad's team, still 'marshalled' by the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni, is coming into the game with back-to-back victories, LSG under KL Rahul ...

-SPORTS

**Jagan's roadshow in Godavari region a hit**

4-hour roadshow in Rajahmundry draws massive crowds

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRI

Day 17 of CM Jagan's 'Memantha Siddham Yatra' witnessed a remarkable display of mass support as it traversed through the Godavari region, covering Dr B R Ambedkar Konaseema and East Godavari districts.

Spanning more than 16 km, the Chief Minister's roadshow in Rajahmundry commenced at 5:15 pm and extended for an unprecedented 4-hour duration (a record-setting event in the history of Rajahmundry!). The yatra progressed, drawing a magnificent scene with a multitude of supporters turning out to greet the CM at Jonnadu, Pottilanka, Kodyapalanka, Vemagiri, Morampudi, Thadithota, Church Centre, Devi Chowk, Paper Mill Centre, and Diwancheruvu. At each stop, the overwhelming presence of thousands of supporters underscored that the Memantha Siddham Yatra has transcended mere political bounds, evolving into a symbol of unity, optimism, and a testament to the public's unwavering endorsement of good governance in Andhra Pradesh.

The focal point of today's Yatra

- Yatra showcases unity and hope beyond politics.
- Ravulapalem witnesses a huge turnout, reflecting widespread support for CM.
- Jana Sena and TDP leaders join YSR Congress Party.
- Former Minister Indukuri's presence adds weight to the event.
- Yatra progresses with enthusiastic support from various towns and villages.



was Ravulapalem, where a large assembly of locals, proudly waving the YSR Congress flag, flooded the streets. From the elderly to the youth, women to young campaign-

2

**Stone attack on CM Jagan an assassination bid: Sajjala**



The attack on CM Jagan is preplanned; both of them (Jagan and MLA Velampalli Srinivas) were hit by that stone and injured. We are fortunate that a major injury or incident was avoided. Otherwise, what would have happened if Jagan had been hit with the sharp-edged stone just below the eye? It should be noted that there would have been a danger to lives.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The stone attack on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was well-planned, and those behind this incident should be exposed, said YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. He launched the YSRCP LED campaign vehicles for the 2024 election campaign across Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. Launching the smart LED vehicles, Sajjala said that Jagan's fans from the USA have freely offered campaign vehicles, and the Challa Madhu team is coordinating and sending these vehicles for campaigning across the state. He further stated that these campaign vehicles promote the schemes of Jagan's regime in the constituencies.

Sajjala said NRI friends from the USA have voluntarily provided 13 vehicles for campaigning in next month's general elections, not requested by anyone. People want another five years of welfare and development similar to what hap-

pened in the past five years. He explained that through these vehicles, the good and benefits to the poor and SC, BC, ST minority groups done by the Jagan government will be showcased. He said that SC, ST, BC, and Minorities are considering Jagan's victory as their own victory, and YSRCP is expected to win by a landslide. He claimed that the public trusts that Andhra Pradesh will improve because of Jagan, hence people from the country and abroad are voluntarily participating in this great election yatra.

"The attack on CM Jagan is preplanned; both of them (Jagan and MLA Velampalli Srinivas) were hit by that stone and injured. We are fortunate that a major injury or incident was avoided. Otherwise, what would have happened if Jagan had been hit with the sharp-edged stone just below the eye? It should be noted that there would have been a danger to lives," said Sajjala.

2

**Accused in stone attack on CM held, remanded**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A youth who allegedly hurled a stone at Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was arrested and he was remanded in judicial custody for 14 days by a Vijayawada court on Thursday. Satish was presented before the Principal Junior Civil Judge's Court by the police, which ordered his judicial remand until May 2. This marks the first arrest made in connection with the April 13 incident in Vijayawada.

A resident of Vaddera Colony in the city, Satish threw a stone at the Chief Minister during an election campaign at Dhabakotlu Centre in Ajit Singh Nagar.

Jagan Mohan Reddy sustained an injury above his eyebrow, while YSRCP MLA Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, who was nearby, suffered an eye injury. Both received treatment at Government General Hospital on the same night. A case was filed under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code at the Ajit Singh Nagar police station based on the report provided by Velampalli Srinivas.

In response, City Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata established eight special teams, each led by two additional DCPs, to pursue the investigation. The teams meticulously analyzed 50 CCTV footage, conducted cell phone recording analysis, interrogated suspects, analyzed tower dumps, and recorded eyewitness statements.

2

**Filing of nominations begins in AP**

Nominations conclude on April 25, withdrawal deadline is April 29, and polling is scheduled for May 13

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

- Notification issued for 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats.
- Polling times vary, with some areas affected by Left-Wing Extremism.
- Eligible voters exceed 4.08 crore, with over half being women.
- Direct electoral battle between YSRCP and TDP-JSP-BJP alliance.
- Tripartite alliance aims to challenge YSRCP's power.
- Congress seeks revival under new leadership.
- Seat-sharing agreement among alliance parties for Assembly and Lok Sabha

The notification for 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats was issued by the Election Commission of India on Thursday. Polling for all 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats will be held on May 13. The process for filing nominations began with the issue of the poll notification on Thursday. The election authorities will receive nominations until April 25. The scrutiny of nominations will

be taken up the next day, while candidates can withdraw nominations until April 29.

Andhra Pradesh will see a direct electoral fight between the ruling YSRCP and the TDP-JSP-BJP alliance for simultaneous elections to the state Assembly and Lok Sabha.

Polling in all Assembly constituencies, except six, will be held from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

2



**PM Modi to address 4 public meetings in AP**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in four public meetings in the State, according to the NDA alliance leaders. With the release of notification for the general election, the NDA alliance leaders have increased their aggressiveness in the election campaigning.

According to sources, the NDA alliance is planning for joint public meetings as there is a great response from the people. They are planning public meetings with all three party leaders to share the stage.

Sources say that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu and Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan will participate in the joint meetings organized in Anakapalli, Rajamahendravaram, Kadapa or Rajampet, where BJP candidates are contesting.

2

**Several YSRCP candidates file papers**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Several YSRCP candidates filed their papers as the nomination process began today. Sitting MLA and YSRCP candidate Ramireddy Pratap Kumar Reddy filed his nomination papers from the Kavali Assembly constituency. Subsequently, MC Vijayananda Reddy filed his nomination. Deputy CM Narayana Swamy, MP Reddeppa Chandragiri Assembly constituency candidate Chevireddy Mohith Reddy and others accompanied him. Former MP Butta Renuka had come to the Tehsildar office with a huge rally of

supporters to file her nomination papers from the Yemmiganur seat.

YSRCP candidate Peddireddy Dwarakanath Reddy filed his nomination in Tamaballapally of Annamayya district. Tirupati deputy mayor Bhumana Abhinay Reddy submitted his nomination papers as a YSRCP nominee from the Tirupati assembly seat. He had come to the office to file his nomination with Mayor Dr Sirisha, Deputy Mayor Mudra Narayana, Standing Committee member Venkatesh and others.

Continued on Page 2

**Major fire at medical godown**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A major fire broke out at a medical equipment godown in Vijayawada city on Thursday, resulting in an estimated property loss of Rs 5 crore. The blaze erupted in the Bandar Road area, engulfing the entire godown.

Alerted by locals who noticed smoke billowing from the structure, firefighters swiftly responded with six fire tenders to contain the fire. Fortunately, there were no reported injuries or casualties.

The cause of the fire remains unknown, prompting authorities to launch an investigation into its origin. G Srinivasulu, a senior fire officer, affirmed that the situation was brought under control without any harm to individuals.

**5.26 L staff mobilised for poll duty: CEO**

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena has announced that 5,26,010 officials and staff have been mobilised for diverse polling duties across the state in preparation for the upcoming elections. Among these, 330,000 individuals are assigned to poll duties, with 10,134 serving as sector officers/sector police officers, 18,961 acting as micro observers, 46,165 as Booth Level Officers (BLOs), 114,000 as police personnel, and 6,750 as Nodal officers & other teams. Addressing the media during a session on Thursday evening, CEO Meena disclosed that 12,459 critical polling stations have been



identified for special attention, with plans for webcasting in approximately 30,111 polling stations, encompassing the aforementioned critical stations.

Continued on Page 2

**All set for first phase of LS polls in 102 seats today**

Simultaneously, Assembly elections for 92 seats will also be held

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 2024 Lok Sabha polls will kick off Friday with polling for the first phase scheduled in 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union territories and among those in the fray are Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal and Bhupendra Yadav, Gaurav Gogoi of Congress, DMK's Kanimozhi and K Annamalai of BJP.

Simultaneously, assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh (60 seats) and Sikkim (32 seats) will also be held.

Voting will begin at 7 AM and end at 6 PM. The Election Commission has deployed over 18 lakh polling personnel across 1.87

lakh polling stations where over 16.63 crore voters will exercise their franchise.

Voters include 8.4 crore men, 8.23 crore women and 11,371 from third gender. There are as many as 35.67 lakh first time voters, besides 3.51 crore young voters in the age group of 20-29 years.

While the BJP-led NDA under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a stronger majority, the constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc are hoping for a rebound after facing reverses in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

Polling will be held in all seats of Tamil Nadu (39), Uttarakhand (5), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Meghalaya (2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands

**Voting will begin at 7 AM and end at 6 PM. The Election Commission has deployed over 18 lakh polling personnel across 1.87 lakh polling stations where over 16.63 crore voters will exercise their franchise.**



(1), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1), Puducherry (1), Sikkim (1) and Lakshadweep (1). Besides, there will be voting in 12

seats in Rajasthan, 8 in Uttar Pradesh, 6 in Madhya Pradesh, 5 seats each in Assam and Maharashtra, 4 in Bihar, 3 in West

Bengal, 2 seats in Manipur, and one seat each in Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir and Chhattisgarh.

Campaigning for the first phase ended Wednesday evening.

Besides Gadkari, Sonowal and Yadav, six other Union ministers - Kiren Rijiju, Sanjeev Baliyan, Jitendra Singh, Arjun Ram Meghwal, L Murugan and Nisith Pramanik are among the contestants besides two former chief ministers - Biplob Kumar Deb (Tripura) and Nabam Tuki (Arunachal Pradesh), and former Telangana governor Tamilisai Soundararajan.

In 2019, the UPA had won 45 of these 102 seats and the NDA 41. Six of these seats have been redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise

**CASH-FOR-VOTE CASE**

**Setback to Naidu in SC**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a big setback to the opposition TDP chief, the apex court refused to further defer the hearing on petitions related to cash-for-vote case in 2015. The Court told Chandrababu Naidu and the Telangana state government that this would be the final chance for them to put forth their arguments in the case. The apex court posted the matter for the next hearing on July 24, 2024.

As soon as the hearing on the petition began today, counsels of Naidu and the Telangana government requested the court to postpone the hearing yet again and sought more time to file the reply in the case.

A bench of Justices Sundaresh and SVN Bhatti heard the petition seeking the inclusion of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and TDP chief

Chandrababu Naidu as an accused in the case. YSRCP's Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy had moved the top court requesting it to include the name of Naidu as an accused in the cash-for-vote case. He had based his argument on the charge sheet filed by the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) which has several mentions of the TDP leader. Earlier, the Mangalagiri MLA had stated that the ACB had allegedly failed to take the case to a logical conclusion.

Responding to the progress on the case, YSRCP legislator Ramakrishna Reddy said a purported telephonic conversation in an audio tape between former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu and nominated MLA Elvis Stephenson was aired by a few local TV channels.

Continued on Page 2



# Defections to YSRCP worry Oppn

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is strategically fortifying his party's stance in the lead-up to the upcoming assembly and Lok Sabha elections slated for May 13 in the State.

Adopting a meticulous approach, CM Jagan is actively courting dissident leaders from rival parties to bolster the ranks of the YSRCP, while also allowing disgruntled elements to exit the party without confrontation.

His primary focus lies in attracting leaders from the Jana Sena Party, particularly in the East and West Godavari districts. Many Jana Sena Party leaders, who found themselves sidelined due to various reasons such as denied party tickets or alliances with the TDP and the BJP, are now gravitating towards the YSRCP. While not guaranteed tickets within the YSRCP, they are being assured significant roles within the party hierarchy.

On Thursday, notable defections included former Jana Sena MLA from Razole, Bonthu Rajeswara Rao, former PAC chairman Mekala Veera Venkata Satyanarayana (Esubabu), T Trimurthulu, M Narasimhaswamy, Dommeti Satyanarayana, Manda Satyanarayana, and former Sarpanch Kesanapalli D Suryanarayana, all officially joining the YSR Congress Party.

In addition, under the leadership of former Jana Sena MLA Bontu Rajeswara Rao, Jana Sena



sarpanch Kakara Srinu and Chinta Satya Prasad also made the switch to the YSR Congress Party.

Prominent leaders representing Razole and P. Gannavaram constituencies cemented their allegiance to the YSR Congress party in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Thetali stay point.

N Ganesh Babu, son of former MLA from the P Gannavaram constituency N Ganapathi Rao, along with the grandson of the former MLA N. Ganapathi Rao; TDP leader Vadlamudi Gangaraju, also crossed over to the YSR Congress Party.

Key Jana Sena leaders joined the YSRCP in Godavari

**On Thursday, notable defections included former Jana Sena MLA from Razole, Bonthu Rajeswara Rao, former PAC chairman Mekala Veera Venkata Satyanarayana (Esubabu), T Trimurthulu, M Narasimhaswamy, Dommeti Satyanarayana, Manda Satyanarayana, and former Sarpanch Kesanapalli D Suryanarayana, all officially joining the YSR Congress Party.**

Districts, further strengthening the party's presence in the region. Notable among them are Makinidu Seshu Kumari from Pithapuram, Pithani Balakrishna from Mummdivaram, Shettibattula Rajababu from Amalapuram, Lakshmi Sivakumari (Former MLC) from Anguri, Bonthu Rajeswara Rao from Rajolu, and Meda Gurudatta Prasad (Former Jana Sena Incharge) from Rajanagar, all under the watchful eye of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Analysts opine that even a modest 5 to 10 per cent increase in voting stemming from these defections could significantly benefit the YSRCP.

# Candidates take centre stage over party affiliations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the political atmosphere heats up in the Gajapathinagar Assembly segment, the stage is set for a gripping electoral showdown marked by a unique tradition: the prioritisation of individual candidates over party allegiances. This electoral dynamic, steeped in the constituency's history of witnessing winners from diverse political backgrounds, takes centre stage as incumbent MLA Botsa Appalarasayya of the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRC) braces himself to defend his seat against the formidable challenge posed by Kondapalli Srinivas from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

Nestled in the heart of an agrarian landscape, the Gajapathinagar constituency boasts a rich tapestry of communities, including the influential Turpu Kapu and Koppula Velama groups, alongside Scheduled Castes (SC), Yadavas, and others. Agriculture stands as the cornerstone of its economy, with crops like paddy and sugarcane thriving, supported by major irrigation projects such



as the Tatipudi Reservoir and the Andra Reservoir.

However, recent discontent has simmered among farmers, fueled by allegations of governmental neglect towards crucial irrigation initiatives and the closure of the Bhimasingi Sugar Factory. These grievances have cast a shadow over the incumbent administration and set the stage for a contentious electoral battle.

For Botsa Appalarasayya, whose political lineage runs deep, securing a third consecutive victory hinges on his ability to tout his accomplishments, particularly in the realm of housing schemes and welfare programmes. Conversely, Kondapalli Srinivas, a rising star in the political arena, capitalises on the dissatisfaction among



farmers, lambasting the YSRC government's purported disregard for agrarian concerns, especially the perceived betrayal of sugarcane farmers' interests.

The electorate finds itself at a crossroads, torn between promises unfulfilled and aspirations for change. With infrastructure projects languishing and irrigation woes persisting, voters are increasingly turning their attention towards tangible solutions to their pressing issues.

As the election campaign gains momentum, navigating the intricate socio-economic landscape of the Gajapathinagar Assembly constituency emerges as a pivotal factor that will ultimately shape the outcome of the electoral contest.

# All eyes on political heirs

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the political atmosphere in Andhra Pradesh heats up ahead of the general elections, all eyes are on the successors of prominent leaders from the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Amidst the cacophony of debates and discussions, a central question looms large: Will these political scions rise victorious, or will they succumb to defeat at the polls? Both parties have strategically distributed tickets, aiming to provide opportunities to the youth and educated individuals within their ranks. This move underscores a broader agenda of grooming the next generation of leaders and fostering inclusivity within the political sphere.

Representing the YSR Congress Party are Abhinav Reddy, son of Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, Mohit Reddy, son of Chandragiri MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, Krishnamurthy, son of Bandaru MLA Parni Nani, Suryaprakash, son of

The forthcoming elections will serve as a litmus test for the parties' experiments and the extent of public endorsement for familial succession in politics. With anticipation and speculation rife, all stakeholders eagerly await the electoral judgment that will determine the future course of Andhra Pradesh politics.

Ramachandrapuram MLA Pilla Subhash, and Fatima, daughter of Guntur East MLA Mustafa. While there is optimism surrounding their candidature, the electoral landscape appears challenging in Chandragiri, Tirupati, and Ramachandrapuram constituencies.

Meanwhile, the Telugu Desam Party has fielded successors such as Prashanthi Reddy, wife of MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy in Prathipadu, Satya Prabha in Venkatagiri (following the demise of the incumbent), Lakshmi Priya, daughter of former MLA Kurugondla Ramakrishna in Mahilakota, Sudhir Reddy, son of Bojjala Gopalakrishna Reddy in Srikalahasti, and To Reddy, son of Putta Narasimha Reddy in Kamalapuram, among others.

The party leaders express enthusiasm over their heirs' candidacies, yet the ultimate test lies in the electorate's support. As the campaign fervour intensifies, the fate of these political heirs hangs in the balance. The forthcoming elections will serve as a litmus test for the parties' experiments and the extent of public endorsement for familial succession in politics. With anticipation and speculation rife, all stakeholders eagerly await the electoral judgment that will determine the future course of Andhra Pradesh politics. The ballots cast will not only decide the fate of individual candidates but also shape the trajectory of the state's governance. Until then, the debates will continue, and the verdict will remain suspended in anticipation.

# Setback to Naidu ...

Continued from Page 1

"Revanth Reddy was caught for allegedly offering a bribe of Rs 50 lakh to TRS (now BRS) nominated MLA Elvis Stephenson to cross-vote and help a TDP nominee Vem Narendar Reddy in the Legislative Council elections. Naidu will not

be spared in the coming days," Ramakrishna Reddy told reporters. The cash-for-vote case rocked Telangana when ACB arrested the then-TDP MLA Revanth Reddy and two others for allegedly offering a bribe to the then-TRS nominated MLA Elvis Stephenson for cross-voting.

# Several YSRCP candidates ...

Continued from Page 1

Other YSRCP candidates Nallapareddy Prasanna Kumar Reddy (Kovvuru), Talari Venkat Rao, Nallagatla Swamy

Das (Tiruvuru), Kiliveti Sanjeevaiah (Sullurpetta), and Akepati Amarnath Reddy (Rajampet) filed their nomination papers at the local offices today.

# Filing of nominations ...

Continued from Page 1

In three segments (Palakonda, Kurupam, and Saluru) in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected areas, polling will conclude at 5 p.m., and in three other segments (Araku, Paderu, and Rampachodavaram), polling will end at 4 p.m.

Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena said all arrangements have been made to receive nominations at the offices of all returning officers from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on all days except public holidays.

Over 4.08 crore, more than half of them women, are eligible to cast their votes. The poll notification has set the stage for a direct fight

between the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and NDA comprising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Jana Sena Party (JSP), and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

After a decade, the three parties have come together to take on YSRCP. The ruling party is confident of retaining power while the tripartite alliance is determined to deny it another term.

The Congress party, which drew a blank in Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in the state -- both in 2014 and 2019 -- is also hoping to revive its fortunes. With Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's sister YS Sharmila taking over the reins of the state unit of the Congress party, it is looking to improve its prospects.

# PM Modi to address 4 ...

Continued from Page 1

In the meantime, Chandrababu and Pawan have decided to campaign jointly in as many constituencies as possible. On April 24, the TDP and JSP leaders will participate in

Rajampet and Railway Koduru meetings in Rayalaseema. Chandrababu will participate in Aluru, Rayadurgam on the 19th, Guduru, Sarvepalli and Satyavedu Prajagalam meetings on the 20th.

# 5.26 L staff mobilised for ...

Continued from Page 1

Furthermore, Meena reported substantial seizures during the period from March 16 to April 17, including Rs 1731.75 lakh in cash, liquor valued at Rs 1571 lakh (5.59 lakh litres), drugs weighing 80,60,431 grams valued at Rs 261 lakh, precious metals totalling 13,44,431 grams valued at Rs 5917 lakh, freebies worth

Rs 1061 lakh, and other items amounting to Rs 1016 lakh. Regarding polling hours, constituencies vary: Palakonda, Kurupam, and Saluru will operate from 7 am to 5 pm, while Araku, Paderu, and Rampachodavaram will see polling from 7 am to 4 pm.

In the remaining 169 Assembly Constituencies, polling will be conducted from 7 am to

6 pm. Meena also outlined the expenditure limits for candidates, set at Rs 95.00 lakh for Parliamentary Constituencies and Rs 40.00 lakh for Assembly Constituencies.

In terms of disciplinary actions and enforcement, Meena noted the removal of 1017 volunteers, with 86 facing filed cases, and 44,163 resignations. Additionally, 181 contract

employees were removed, 40 facing cases, and disciplinary action was taken against 127 regular employees, with 59 suspensions and 27 filed cases.

A total of 338 FIRs have been filed against political party leaders, including 126 against TDP, 136 against YSRCP, and 76 against others, with a total of 968 complaints received from political parties.

# Sribharat voices concern over incomplete projects



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

M Sribharat, the parliamentary candidate representing the Telugu Desam Party in Visakhapatnam, highlighted the ongoing struggle between the power of the people and the influence of wealth. Emphasising the collective interest of the state, he affirmed that the alliance formed by the three parties was not motivated by past benefits but rather by a shared vision for the betterment of the region.

During his campaigning in the East Assembly constituency, Sribharat commended Pawan Kalyan's initiative in spearheading the alliance formation. He criticised the incumbent YSRCP candidate for their perceived lack of developmental efforts over the past five years, asserting that public funds earmarked for constituency development had not been effectively utilised.

Expressing concern over the allocation of resources, particularly in the Visakhapatnam East constituency where infrastructure projects remained incomplete, Sribharat questioned the accessibility of the current candidate to address public concerns effectively.

Continued from Page 1

Responding to the stone attack as a drama by TDP chief Naidu and JSP chief Pawan, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy challenged both to enact the same drama if they have the guts. He refuted allegations by Naidu and other leaders implicating TDP candidate Bonda Uma in the stone attack on Jagan. He said that if there is any involvement of Bonda Uma, it will come out, and if there are others including Chandrababu, it will be revealed in the investigation. He claimed that there is ample evidence that the attack on the CM was pre-planned and there is no doubt that the attack was an assassination attempt.

Drawing attention to his own entrepreneurial background, Sribharat posed a rhetorical question on his ability to connect with the electorate and address their issues.

Addressing a gathering, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, TDP candidate from the East Assembly constituency, popularly known as Meesala Babu to locals, urged constituents to remain vigilant against purported conspiracies and lend their support to leaders committed to public service. He underscored his 15-year track record of accessibility and dedication to resolving community issues, irrespective of caste or creed.

The meeting also called upon leaders from the three parties to collaborate harmoniously for the development of Visakhapatnam. Notable attendees included former corporator Pattabi and leaders from Jana Sena. Amid political tensions, constituents are urged to discern and elect leaders who prioritise the welfare of the community. With the elections looming, the political landscape in Visakh remains charged, with candidates vying for the trust and support of the electorate.

# Accused in stone attack on CM held, ...

Continued from Page 1

This comprehensive effort resulted in the swift cracking of the case.

Based on evidence gathered, including CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts, approximately 100 suspects and witnesses were thoroughly questioned. The investigation led to the identification of the accused, Vemula Satish Kumar, also known as Sathhi, an 18-year-old resident of Vaddera

Colony in Ajit Singh Nagar. Satish, who earns a livelihood through construction work, was apprehended and questioned. It was revealed that he had attacked the Chief Minister with a concrete stone near Vivekananda School during the roadshow.

Following valuable information provided by eyewitnesses and corroborating evidence from CCTV footage, Satish was taken into custody, and a case was registered against him.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

VIVEKA MURDER CASE

# Court restricts parties from making defamatory remarks

PNS ■ KADAPA

Principal District Judge G Sridevi of the Kadapa District Court has issued orders for an ad-interim injunction, restraining political parties and their leaders from making derogatory and defamatory remarks against the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), its president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, and YS Avinash Reddy, alleged to be involved in the murder of his uncle YS Vivekananda Reddy. The court said that such assertions are prejudicial to ongoing legal proceedings and violate fundamental principles of justice.

The respondents/defendants in this matter include Andhra Pradesh Congress President YS Sharmila, Telugu Desam Party President Nara Chandrababu Naidu, TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh, Andhra Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party president Daggubati Purandeswari, Jana Sena Party president Konidela Pawan Kalyan, Dr Suneetha Nareddy, daughter of late YS Vivekananda Reddy, and M

**“This court is of the considered opinion that when a case is pending before a competent court for adjudication, no one is entitled to step into the shoes of the court themselves with no authorisation and give their verdict and term any of the person so involved in such a case as a murderer/guilty person according to their whims and fancies.”**

Ravindra Reddy alias Btech Ravi.

The court's decision followed a meticulous analysis of the documents filed by the petitioners/plaintiffs, particularly videos and newspaper cuttings available on various social media platforms, print, and electronic media. It observed unsubstantiated claims propagated regarding YS. Avinash Reddy's alleged involvement in the murder of his uncle YS. Vivekananda Reddy, coupled with accusations of shielding by YS. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

“This court is of the considered opinion that when a case is pending before a competent court for adjudication, no one is entitled to step into the shoes of

the court themselves with no authorisation and give their verdict and term any of the person so involved in such a case as a murderer/guilty person according to their whims and fancies.” – the Court stated.

The court highlighted concerns regarding the interference of political parties and media in legal matters, stating that they have assumed the role of a ‘public court’ (Janta Adalat), thereby jeopardizing the presumption of innocence until proven guilty and the principle of ‘guilt beyond reasonable doubt’. The court warned against the dangers of media trials and underscored the importance of upholding the integrity of the justice system.

Given the pending Vivekananda murder case before the CBI court in Nampally, the court specifically restrained any propagation labelling YS. Avinash Reddy as the murderer of his uncle and any assertions regarding YS. Jagan Mohan Reddy shielding him through any medium, including print, electronic, and social media platforms.

Furthermore, the respondents/defendants were directed to remove objectionable remarks made against the YSRCP, its President YS. Jagan Mohan Reddy, and YS. Avinash Reddy from all electronic and social media platforms immediately. They were also instructed to refrain from making personal attacks or criticisms based on allegations or distortions regarding pending cases in competent courts of law, adhering strictly to the prevailing Election Code of Conduct in Andhra Pradesh as issued by the Election Commission.

This ad-interim injunction will remain in force until April 30.

# Jagan's 'Memantha Siddham' yatra sends ripples across Opposition

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy continues to make waves in the entire State with his ongoing Memantha Siddham Yatra, which has completed 17 days.

The bus yatra, which is an extension of YSRCP's electioneering campaign, has sent ripples across the Opposition by drawing a massive crowd of supporters across all 17 districts CM Jagan has traversed through, including a few districts that were labelled as strongholds of the Opposition. The Yatra till date has covered 17 districts, more than 50 Assembly constituencies and over 1,700 km. Under the Memantha Siddham campaign, CM Jagan has also conducted 12 mega public meetings, two Grama Sabhas, and three community-specific interactions with drivers, old-age pensioners and weavers.

Not just the swelling crowd, but Jagan's intimate interactions with the individuals who have been longing to meet him have won the hearts of many. Jagan's continued efforts to support people who have been approaching him seeking support for various health-related ailments has also created a positive talk and response for him.

## Oppn party leaders joining YSRCP

At every Memantha Siddham meeting, in all districts covered so far, a slew of leaders have been joining YSRCP from Opposition TDP and JSP. This includes very senior leaders, including ex-ministers, former MLAs, party district presidents, and

**By actively seeking feedback on governance and welfare benefits, Jagan demonstrates a commitment to grassroots democracy and responsiveness to citizens' needs**

people holding significant positions in the area. With Jagan starting his day with the joinings, it gives a significant boost and impetus to the party leaders and cadres in the district and sets a positive narrative to follow.

## Direct interaction with people

CM Jagan's unprecedented move to directly engage with the public signifies a profound shift in political dynamics, bypassing traditional intermediaries. By actively seeking feedback on governance and welfare benefits, Jagan demonstrates a commitment to grassroots democracy and responsiveness to citizens' needs. Through genuine one-on-one interactions, Jagan ensures that every citizen feels heard, valued, and empowered in the governance process.

## Women's participation

The overwhelming presence of women at Jagan's events underscores the deep trust and confidence they place in his administration's efforts to uplift their lives. For the first time ever one could see the women from the minority community coming out and displaying their political support for

Jagan. Women's enthusiastic support signals a resounding endorsement of CM Jagan's pro-women policies and initiatives, making them key stakeholders in his political journey.

## Enthusiastic youth

The palpable energy and fervour among the youth reflect a growing resonance with Jagan's visionary leadership and agenda. Political observers believe that the paramount craze that is being observed in the people today is equivalent to the craze of YS Rajasekhara Reddy and NTR.

## Intensive campaigning efforts

Jagan's relentless commitment to on-the-ground campaigning underscores his unwavering dedication to connecting with the grassroots understanding their concerns first-hand and taking direct feedback on governance from them without any mediator in-between. Jagan is spending 13-14 hours on the road daily due to his ongoing Memantha Siddham yatra. More than 50 per cent of the time during his time on the road is spent in interacting with multiple smaller groups of people.

One can say that the bus isn't allowed to travel for more than 3-4 minutes without interruption. Because the moment Jagan sees someone on the road, he gets the bus stopped, immediately gets down and goes to greet them. Whether it is keeping his hand on their heads, enquiring how they are feeling, feeding them groundnuts or even taking selfies, Jagan is focusing on this direct one-on-one connection.

# CM Jagan shows empathy to patient

PNS ■ MADIKI (EG)

In a display of empathy, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy got off the bus and attended to a patient named Rayudu Sattibabu (aged 40 years) in Madiki village, who had arrived in an ambulance seeking medical attention.

Concerns regarding the patient's medical situation were conveyed to the Chief Minister. The patient's family described his neuro-related ailment and how he had suffered a fall. Expressing their concerns about Sattibabu's ongoing physiotherapy and the financial burden it placed on their family, they requested additional assistance from the Chief Minister.

Upon hearing their concerns, CM Jagan assured the patient's family of providing the necessary medical support. His words of reassurance deeply touched the hearts of the patient's family and the gathered crowd, fostering hope and gratitude.



# Vizag struggles under weight of unfulfilled promises

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Despite the ambitious assurances from leaders of the ruling party and government officials, Visakhapatnam, the thriving port city situated on India's eastern coastline, remains entrenched in significant traffic congestion—a development that disappoints many. Five years ago, amid much fanfare, YSRCP assumed power with grand plans to transform the city's infrastructure. Key pledges included making Visakhapatnam the administrative capital, developing the port city at par with international standards and crucially, constructing vital infrastructure to alleviate the city's escalating traffic woes.

However, as the city heads back to the polls, it's evident that these promises remain largely unfulfilled. Not a single flyover bridge has materialised, and projects such as the Rail Over Bridge (RoB) at Gopalapatnam and the Foot Over Bridge at Madhurawada, which were ceremoniously inaugurated, are still



far from completion. The dire situation on Visakhapatnam's roads reflects a broader trend of rapid urbanisation and population growth. Over the past two decades, the number of vehicles in the city has surged exponentially, from a modest three lakh in 2005 to a staggering 15 lakh in 2024. With nearly 80 per cent of vehicles comprising two-wheelers, the city's intersections resemble chaotic mazes during peak hours.

Adding to the congestion is the presence of a national highway cutting through the city centre, exacerbating the traffic gridlock with vehicles travelling to other districts and

Despite police efforts to curb these accidents, the numbers continue to climb, leaving residents, law enforcement, and municipal officials deeply concerned.

Promised solutions, including flyover bridges at crucial junctions and pedestrian crossings, have remained in bureaucratic red tape and delays. Despite invitations for proposals and feasibility studies, critical projects like the RoB at

**Not a single flyover bridge has materialised, and projects such as RoB at Gopalapatnam and Foot Over Bridge at Madhurawada are far from completion**

Kothapalem have failed to progress beyond the planning stage. As the city hurtles towards a projected 25 lakh vehicles by 2030, the failure to address its pressing infrastructure needs casts a shadow over the YSRCP government's commitment to the city's development.

# Issue of executive capital takes a backseat in polls

**Election promises such as infrastructure enhancements, industrial development, job creation have taken precedence**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ongoing election campaigns in Visakhapatnam have witnessed a notable shift in focus, with the contentious issue of the executive capital taking a backseat. What was once a fiercely debated topic has gradually lost its prominence as political parties redirect their attention towards more immediate concerns resonating with the voters.

Initially, the proposal to designate Visakhapatnam as the executive capital drew significant attention from both political parties and the public. YSRCP and TDP engaged in a showdown over their differing stances on the matter, with efforts made to rally support for their respective positions. However, as the campaigns progress, it's evident that the fervour surrounding this issue has waned.

Instead, election promises such as infrastructure enhancements, industrial development, job creation, and social welfare initiatives have taken precedence. The realisation that these issues directly impact the daily lives and well-being of citizens has prompted a shift in focus. Controversies surrounding construction activities on Rushikonda hill further intensified the political discourse. The detention of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu at Vizag airport in February 2020 dur-

ing his 'Praja Chaitanya Yatra' added fuel to the fire, highlighting the depth of opposition to the Vizag executive capital proposal.

Analysts attribute the diminishing prominence of the executive capital issue to the recognition of more immediate and tangible concerns such as water supply, housing, sanitation, pollution control, and infrastructure development. These issues hold greater sway over voters' opinions and have thus become the focal point of the election campaigns. While YSRCP initially championed the executive capital proposal, concerns over the lack of progress on this front have led them to pivot their campaign strategies. In contrast, TDP remains steadfast in its commitment to retaining Amaravati as the permanent capital.

As candidates from both parties outline their priorities, developmental initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life in Visakhapatnam take centre stage. Despite the shift in focus, the upcoming elections remain crucial for shaping the future trajectory of Visakhapatnam and its surrounding regions. In conclusion, while the executive capital debate may have lost its spotlight, the evolving electoral landscape underscores the dynamic nature of politics in Visakhapatnam.

# Naidu, Pawan cheating public: Perni Nani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) criticised TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan, the chiefs of TDP and JSP respectively, for their derogatory comments aimed at Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging that they were staging dramas to garner sympathy in elections. Nani vehemently denounced Naidu and Pawan, accusing them of deceiving the public with false narratives to regain power, asserting that the electorate remains unconvinced by their alliance.

Addressing media personnel on Thursday, Nani dismissed accusations that CM Jagan offered ministerial and party positions to individuals who vilify Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan, challenging the duo to substantiate their claims.

He criticized Naidu, aged 75 and a former Chief Minister for 14 years, for his discourteous language, stating that despite adversities, his son Krishnamurthy, contesting from Machilipatnam, refrained from resorting to derogatory rhetoric in response to Naidu and Pawan's attacks. Nani refuted Naidu's allegations regard-

ing the Jagan government's purported neglect of the fishing community, highlighting the ongoing rejuvenation of the Machilipatnam (Bandar) port initiated by the Jagan administration, contrasting it with Naidu's tenure from 2014 to 2019 when no such efforts were made.

Nani reminded the public of Naidu's failure to honour N.T. Rama Rao while highlighting CM Jagan's tribute to the late leader by dedicating a new district in his name.

Asserting his challenge to Chandrababu, Pawan Kalyan, and the BJP, Nani questioned their contributions

to the state during their collective tenure from 2014 to 2018, contrasting their administration with the successful implementation of Village and Ward Secretariats and Volunteer programs under the current government, without the alleged corruption of the Janmabhoomi Committees.

Recalling Naidu's promise in 2014 to initiate and complete port works in Machilipatnam within six months, Nani accused him of conveniently abandoning the commitment, only to resurrect similar assurances ahead of the 2024 elections, dismissing them as hollow pledges designed to deceive the electorate.

# Lokesh, Magunta, Midhun file papers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu's son Nara Lokesh and current YSRCP MP P V Midhun Reddy were among candidates who filed their nominations on Thursday for the Assembly elections and Lok Sabha polls to be held simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh.

For the Assembly elections, a delegation of TDP, BJP and Jana Sena leaders from the NDA, submitted two sets of nomination papers on behalf of TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh in Mangalagiri, said a statement from the TDP.

As many as 39 nominations were filed for the Lok Sabha polls after the notification was issued.

# ECoRWWO honours academic achievements of Railway staff' wards

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The president of the East Coast Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (ECoRWWO) of Walthair Division, Manjushree Prasad, presided over a prestigious felicitation ceremony on Thursday, honouring the outstanding academic accomplishments of the wards of railway employees during the year 2023.

A total of 40 deserving students were recognised and awarded scholarships for their remarkable achievements across various educational domains. Among the recipients were individuals who achieved perfect scores in SSC examinations, Intermediate students, and rank holders in esteemed competitive exams such as IIT, Medical, and



Engineering.

In addition to the scholarship distribution, the event featured a captivating cultural programme, adding a festive flair to the proceedings. Attendees were treated to performances that showcased the rich cultural diversity and talent within the Railway community, further enhancing the celebratory atmosphere. The felicitation

ceremony drew the attendance of branch officers, esteemed members of ECoRWWO, dedicated staff, and proud parents.

The felicitation ceremony organised by ECoRWWO not only celebrated academic excellence but also highlighted the organisation's ongoing efforts to support and encourage the educational aspirations of Railway employees' wards.

# Vesuvius opens state-of-the-art mould flux manufacturing plant

Flux is a critical component in the continuous casting process at steel plants

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vesuvius, a renowned name in the global refractory industry, has inaugurated a state-of-the-art mould flux manufacturing plant in Visakhapatnam, underscoring its commitment to meeting the burgeoning demand for flux, a critical component in the continuous casting process at steel plants.

Addressing the inaugural function, Patrick Andre, Chief Executive of London-headquartered Vesuvius Group, expressed his delight, highlighting the significance of the

new facility. "We are thrilled to inaugurate our new flux manufacturing facility, a testament to our relentless pursuit of innovation and dedication to meeting the needs of our customers and the market," stated Andre. He further outlined the company's ambitious investment plans, projecting an outlay close to Rs 1,000 crore over the coming years, surpassing their initial investment estimates.

In recent years, Vesuvius has made substantial investments in India, focusing on expanding the capacity of exist-



ing manufacturing plants and establishing three new green-field manufacturing units. These expansions are expected to add an additional capacity of 250,000 tonnes per annum. The flux manufacturing plant

inaugurated on Thursday marks the first of these new facilities, slated to become operational this year.

Reflecting on Vesuvius' longstanding presence in India, Biswadipta Gupta, Chairman of

Vesuvius India Limited (VIL), emphasised the strategic importance of the Indian market. "India has always been a strategic market for the group. Our investment in manufacturing capabilities here will not only enhance our competitive position but also contribute to the socio-economic development of the communities where we operate and the Indian economy," remarked Gupta.

Nitin Jain, Managing Director of VIL, highlighted the advanced features of the new manufacturing plant, emphasising product consist-

ency and sustainability as key priorities. "With the inauguration of this cutting-edge manufacturing plant, we embark on a path that redefines industry standards and reaffirms our dedication to delivering value to our customers," stated Jain. He also underscored the company's commitment to sustainability, focusing on energy efficiency and waste management. Jain expressed gratitude towards the employees for their dedication and contributions, acknowledging their role as the 'people capital' of Vesuvius.

# Expenditure observers inspect Command Control Room

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Election expenditure observers Sadiq Ahmad and Yogesh Kumar inspected the Command Control Room here on Thursday.

Sadiq Ahmad is the Kakinada Parliamentary constituency election expenditure observer consisting of Tuni, Prathipadu, Pithapuram and Kakinada Rural Assembly constituencies. Yogesh Kumar is the expenditure observer for the Peddapuram, Kakinada urban and Jagampeta constituencies. They inspected the command control room set up in the Spandana hall in the collectorate accompanied by district Collector J Nivas.

On the occasion, the Collector explained the functioning of departments like the 1950 call centre, help desk, Suvudha, webcasting, check posts, monitoring of various media news channels, c-VIGIL app, and FST teams in the control room.



Kakinada Parliament Constituency Expenditure observer Sadiq Ahmad said that the accounting staff should educate the candidates of the political parties contesting in the elections about bank account management, expenses and their details registration.

District Expenditure Observers Sadiq Ahmad and Yogesh Kumar later held a meeting with A Ashif, District Election Officer, Collector J Nivas and other officials in the

Collector's office.

The Collector explained to the expenditure observers about the Accounting Teams, Duties of Additional Expenditure Inspectors in the District, Supplies provided to them, c-VIGIL, Seizure Management Report Details, MCAC, FST, Video Surveillance, Expenditure Teams, Control Room, and Details of negative news in Media, Inspection at Check Post, webcasting and excise

officials inspections and seizures.

Sadiq Ahmad said that the nomination process began on Thursday after the notification for the general election was released. He directed the officials to be vigilant on the details of expenses of candidates of political parties from time to time and the details should be recorded accurately.

The accounting staff should be made aware of issues such as bank account management of candidates of political parties, expenses and registration of their details. He also directed the accounting staff to follow the price chart prescribed as per the election guidelines for the announcements, advertisements, loudspeakers and paid news used by the candidates for campaigning.

DRO D Thippe Naik, Control Room in-charge D Bharati & PR DDD Nagarjuna and AEE C Babu Rao were among those who were present.

# Prominent leaders file papers on day 1

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The filing of nominations for the forthcoming elections began in the state on Thursday and prominent YSRCP, TDP, JSP and BJP leaders filed their nomination papers on the first day.

In Rajahmundry, TDP candidate Adireddy Srinivas filed his nomination paper in the ERO's office located at Tilak Road. Adireddy Bhavani, accompanied by the leaders of the alliance, went to the ERO's office in a huge rally after performing puja in the Shirdi Saibaba temple. TDP candidate Adireddy Srinivas was accompanied by BJP state president Daggubati Purandeswari, former MLA Adireddy Appa Rao, former Mayor Adireddy Veera Raghavamma.

TDP Lok Sabha candidate and sitting MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy filed his nomination in Ongole. He handed over his nomination papers to Collector and District Returning Officer AS Dinesh Kumar. YSRCP candidate Buchepalli Shivaprasad Reddy filed nomination papers to contest from Darshi while Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy filed nomination papers to



Tension prevailed in Kovur in the Nellore district as the TDP and YSRCP candidates went to the Taluk office to file their nominations. TDP candidate Vemireddy Prashanthi Reddy filed her nomination at the same time YSRCP candidate Nallapureddi Prasanna Kumar Reddy also went there. The activists of both parties jostled leading to a tense situation.

contest for LS from Ongole constituency. TDP MLA Payyavula Keshav's wife Hemalatha filed a nomination on his behalf in Uravakonda in the Anantapur district.

In the Guntur district, a total number of 14 nominations have been filed. TDP leaders filed a nomination on behalf of Nara Lokesh in Mangalagiri. After performing puja in the temple, they went to the Tahsildar office in a mas-

sive rally and filed the nomination papers.

Tension prevailed in Kovur in the Nellore district as the TDP and YSRCP candidates went to the Taluk office to file their nominations. TDP candidate Vemireddy Prashanthi Reddy filed her nomination at the same time YSRCP candidate Nallapureddi Prasanna Kumar Reddy also went there. The activists of both parties jostled leading to a tense situ-

ation. However, the police dispersed them. TDP candidates Bojjala Sudhir Kumar Reddy and G Jagannathan filed nomination papers in Srikalahasti and Chittoor respectively.

Kurnool MP TDP candidate B Nagaraju filed his papers in Kurnool. Those who filed nominations today were BV Jana Nageswar Reddy (YSRCP), Butta Renuka (YSRCP), Shilpa Chakrapani Reddy (YSRCP), Nedurumalli Ramkumar Reddy and Yarlagadda Venkata Rao (TDP). The nomination process passed off peacefully on Thursday across the state, officials said.

The Election notification was issued in the state today filing of nominations ends on April 25 and scrutiny of nominations will be held on April 26. The last date for withdrawal of nominations is April 29 and the polling in AP will be held on May 13.

Election Officials said that there are 4,09,37,352 voters in Andhra Pradesh of which 2,00,84,276 are female voters and 2,08,49,730 are male voters. There are 175 Assembly constituencies and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State.



# Elephant electrocuted at electric fence laid by poachers

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

An elephant was electrocuted as it came in contact with an electric wire laid by poachers at Budidapalli village in Gangavaram mandal on Thursday.

District forest officials said that some poachers laid an electric trap to hunt wild animals. A 20-year-old tusker from a herd of elephants came into contact with the electric fence and electrocuted. The tusker died instantaneously.

The incident took place at the agriculture field belonging to a farmer Lakshmaiah. The farmers told the media that some poachers erected a fence and gave electric connection to it in a bid to hunt wild animals like deer, antelopes and wild boars. When an elephant herd was passing by the fence, one of the tuskers came into contact with the electric fence and died. District DFO and Palamaner forest ranger visited the scene of the incident and registered a case.

# Development of Rayalaseema ignored by YSRCP, TDP: Sharmila

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

APCC president YS Sharmila regretted that the Rayalaseema region remains backwards due to the indifference of successive governments and that the YSRCP-led government could not complete the 10 per cent works of the Handri-Neeva project.

Sharmila addressed a series of election meetings in the district on Thursday raising many issues and castigating the present YSRCP government and the erstwhile TDP regime for their failures in the development of the Rayalaseema region and on the SCS issue.

Addressing a sizable crowd at Madakashira, she recalled that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy assured of filling 127 irrigation tanks with water and providing water for irrigation to lakhs of acres after completing the Handri Neeva project but he did not do anything. "After coming to Power, Jagan Mohan Reddy has ignored the Handri Neeva works. The industrial corridor has not been established here nor has the leather park. He assured of constructing the Outer Ring Road around Madakashira town but that has not been materialised so far," she blamed.



The present YSRCP and the erstwhile TDP regimes compromised with the interests of the state. Jagan Reddy and Chandrababu Naidu has surrounded themselves with the BJP and dancing to their tunes ignoring the interests of the state, she lashed out.

She also pointed out the soft stand, adopted by Jagan Reddy on the SCS issue, and highlighted that the Congress assured in its manifesto of granting the SCS if

voted to power.

"If the Congress is voted to power, the first sign will be made on filling of 2.25 lakh vacant posts, granting the SCS, constructing a house at Rs 5 lakh to the houseless poor, disbursement of Rs 6,000 to the differently-abled people," the APCC president asserted.

Stating the people of the state had seen the five-year rule of Chandrababu Naidu and seeing the rule of Jagan Reddy, she wooed them for one chance to the Congress, assuring them of providing the best administration. She introduced Congress Madakashira Assembly candidate Sudhakar and MP candidate Sayyad Shaheen and appealed to the voters to elect them.

Addressing an election meeting at Shinaganamala, she recalled that Jagan Reddy had assured of developing the area as a horticulture hub but failed to do so.

Though there is adequate land and infrastructure, industries have not been established due to the failure of the government in its efforts, she lambasted. She deplored that the indiscriminate sale of poor-quality liquor is taking the lives of people. YSRCP means 'YV Subba Reddy', 'Sai Reddy' (Vijayasai Reddy) 'Ramakrishna Reddy,' she ridiculed.



# Two killed as bus rams culvert

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Two persons were killed and four were injured when a private travel bus rams a culvert at Pudi Cherlametta village in Orvakal mandal in the wee hours on Thursday.

Police said that a private travel bus was going to Tirupati from Hyderabad. Since the driver of the bus was drowsy at the steering wheel, he lost control

over the bus resulting in the bus rammng a culvert.

The driver of the bus Srinivasulu and a passenger Sriramulu were killed instantaneously. The injured persons were shifted to the hospital. As many as 28 passengers were travelling in the bus when the accident took place. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for post-mortem.

# Police officials told to intensify raids on illicit liquor, ganja

PNS ■ NELLORE

Superintendent of Police Aarif Hafeez directed the police officials to intensify the raids to check the sale of illicit liquor and ganja and take all steps to conduct elections peacefully.

The SP held a meeting with the SEB police officials here on Thursday and reviewed various issues. Speaking on the occasion, the SP explained to the SEB officers their duties, the model code of conduct and the guidelines of ECI.

The SP told the enforcement officials to take stringent steps to curb illegal and immoral activities like the sale of illicit liquor and ganja, banned tobacco products, and prohibited drugs. Surveillance systems should be strengthened to collect information related to



illegal liquor transportation, brewing of illicit liquor and sale of drugs. He instructed the SEB police officials to conduct surprise raids and seize the materials.

He ordered the SEB officials to have a full understanding of the election code of conduct

and follow it strictly. The officers on duty at the check posts should act punctually and should be vigilant and increase vigilance at the border areas to prevent illegal entry of NDPL/DPL liquor into the district. Liquor stock points, bars and restaurants should be inspected regularly and raids should be conducted if any irregularities are detected.

The flying squads conduct joint raids to find articles stocked to distribute to the voters to lure and tempt them by the political parties. All departments should work in a coordinated manner to conduct elections peacefully and impartially, the SP told the officials. Additional SP (Admin) CH Sowjanya and other officials were among those who attended the meeting.

# 6,240 liquor bottles seized

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

The Special Enforcement Bureau and flying squad personnel seized 6,240 non-duty paid liquor bottles being brought from Goa state illegally at Alamuru in Kothapet mandal in Konaseema district on Thursday.

SEB Sub-inspector

Satyaveni told the media that on a tip-off, a SEB police team and election flying squad conducted a checking of vehicles on the Alamuru-Penekeru road. The team found 6,240 NDPL bottles being brought from Goa state illegally in a car. They seized the liquor bottles worth Rs 7.8 lakh and arrested one person.



# TDP leader questions police response to stone-pelting incident

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP Politburo Member Varla Ramahai, on Thursday, raised suspicion over the recent stone pelting incident, which left Andhra Pradesh CM Jagan Reddy injured. Pointing out at the Police's inability to recover the stone that was hurled at Jagan, He said that it has already been 6 days and they still haven't found the stone, "How could it be a murder attempt without a weapon?" He asked. He further questioned how YSRCP could have known that Jagan

was attacked by a stone beforehand.

Ramaiah mentioned that after the incident minors have been taken into custody who are being subjected to torture, which is clearly inhuman.

Holding the Police Commissioner accountable for the incident, he asked why was the CM made to stand on a bus when there was no electricity in the first place. "How did the security allow this? The police commissioner should answer for this", He remarked.

# 2 students from TG, AP nabbed for shoplifting in US

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from New Jersey, United States, two female students from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were arrested for shoplifting.

The accused belong to Hyderabad and Guntur. They were pursuing studies in New Jersey. The incident occurred on March 19, when Hoboken ShopRite alerted the police that the girls did not pay for certain items that they had purchased.

The accused lifted 27 items worth Rs 12,948 (\$155).

One of the students offered to pay the full amount or even double it for the items they had stolen earlier.

# Pawan Kalyan to file nomination on April 23

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena Party chief K Pawan Kalyan will file his nomination papers in Pithapuram on April 23.

Pawan Kalyan is contesting the Assembly from the Pithapuram constituency. Pawan Kalyan himself filed his nomination papers in the returning office in Pithapuram on April 3, the Jana Sena said in a release here on Thursday. On the same day, he will address an election meeting in Uppada.

Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan will resume his election meetings on April 20. He will address two election meetings every day. He will address constituencies where the alliance's candidates are contesting. Pawan Kalyan will also partic-



icipate in the election meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# SC Railway celebrates Heritage Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway celebrated the World Heritage Day on Thursday at Kacheguda railway station. R Dhananjayulu, Additional General Manager, SCR, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Every year, the World Heritage Day is observed to spread awareness about our rich cultural diversity and importance of preserving ancient heritage for the future generations. The World Heritage Day (WHD) is celebrated with different themes every year as declared by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMS). Accordingly, the theme for the year 2024 has been declared as "Disaster & Conflicts through the Lens of the Venice Charter". Senior railway officials, staff, rail users and schoolchildren also participated.

AGM Dhananjayulu appreciated the efforts of Hyderabad Division in the upkeep of the aesthetically designed unique "Rail Museum" which showcases the origin and growth of railways in the region. He called upon everyone to honour and celebrate the timeless heritage of our country. "Indian Railways is at the forefront in preservation of rich heritage in the form of monuments



and sites," he added.

He also inaugurated the Kacheguda Rail Museum. The Additional General Manager unveiled one display item showcasing logos of different railways from the pre-independence era at the museum and released a souvenir coffee mug. The employees and students presented a Nukkad Nattak on preserving heritage.

Later, he presented prizes to the winners of drawing, debate and essay-writing com-

petitions and also felicitated the staff involved in the maintenance of the rail museum. In view of the

World Heritage Day celebrations, free entry is being given to the Rail museum for general public, school and college students till April 23. This initiative has been taken to encourage passengers and children, to get a glimpse of the beautiful railway heritage. The Rail Museum visiting hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

# Peace more important than elections: Asaduddin

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"The peace of Hyderabad and Telangana is more important than elections. I am confident that the people of Telangana will vote against the BJP," AIMIM President Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi said on Thursday.

The Hyderabad MP was reacting to Kompella Madhavi Latha's viral video in which the BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Hyderabad is seen aiming an imaginary arrow towards a mosque in Siddiambar Bazaar during the Ram Navami Yatra.

"The people of Telangana have understood the BJP's intention. I humbly appeal to them to use their voting rights wisely," Asaduddin said.

"The BJP is using vulgar videos for political gains. However, they won't succeed as the people will not accept it. Is this what the BJP means by Viksit Bharat and Sab ka Sath, Sab Ka Vikas," the MP asked.



INDIA CORNER

Indian woman cadet on vessel MSC Aries returns home

An Tessa Joseph, a woman cadet who was among the 17 Indians onboard container vessel MSC Aries that was seized by Iranian military over the weekend, returned to Cochin on Thursday. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said the Indian mission in Tehran is in touch with the remaining 16 Indian crew members of the container vessel. "With the concerted efforts of the Indian mission in Tehran and the Iranian government, Indian deck cadet Ms Ann Tessa Joseph from Thrissur, Kerala, who was among the Indian crew members of container vessel MSC Aries, has landed safely at the Cochin International Airport today afternoon," it said. At the airport, Joseph was received by the regional passport officer. "The Indian mission in Tehran remains seized of the matter and is in touch with the remaining 16 Indian crew members of the container vessel," the MEA said.



Married woman, man jump in front of moving train

A married woman and a man allegedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a moving train near Pahlipar village here on Thursday, police said. The bodies of Shailendra Kumar Dubey (25) and Mahe Nigar (22), both residents of the same village in Ayodhya, were found on the Gonda railway line, they said. According to police, Nigar was married and her husband lived in Saudi Arabia while Dubey was soon getting married and his pre-wedding functions were supposed to start today. They were having an affair and prima facie, it seems that they committed suicide due to fear of separation, they said. Additional Superintendent of Police (North) Chiranjeev Nath Sinha said a motorcycle was also found parked about 50 meters away from the spot. They left their homes a day earlier on the pretext of taking medicine, the ASP said, adding that the matter is being investigated.



Court sets aside magistrate's order taking cognisance of chargesheet

A court here has set aside the order of a magistrate taking cognisance of chargesheet against three accused, observing that it did not mention the penal offences nor the facts which were considered. The court sent the matter back to the judicial officer. It directed the magistrate to pass a "detailed order" mentioning the facts which were considered along with the Indian Penal Code (IPC) offences under which the magisterial court took cognisance. Principal District and Sessions Judge (south) Madhu Jain was hearing three revision petitions against a magisterial court taking cognisance of the charges against Gautam Kumar, Isha and Abhishek in February this year. The court noted, according to the complainant, Kumar raped her on the pretext of marriage and also threatened to kill her. In the case she filed at Pushp Vihar police station, she said when she went to Kumar's house for a conversation, his friends Isha and Abhishek assaulted her.



SC TELLS PETITIONERS DOUBTING EVM MACHINES

Appreciate election panel's good work, says apex court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Underscoring the importance of voter satisfaction and trust in the electoral system, the Supreme Court on Thursday told petitioners who sought its direction to go back to using ballot papers not to suspect the efficacy of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and appreciate if the Election Commission does good work.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), said over suspicion of everything is a problem.

The VVPAT is an independent vote verification system which enables electors to see whether their votes have been cast correctly.

The bench made the

remarks when advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms' (ADR), sought reversal of the poll panel's 2017 decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the light is on for seven seconds.

"I understand it is the election eve. At least the bulb which glows for seven seconds should be allowed to glow continuously after the button is pressed in the EVM," Bhushan pleaded.

The bench, which interacted for nearly an hour with senior deputy election commissioner Nitesh Kumar Vyas to understand the functioning of EVMs, told Bhushan that voter satisfaction and trust are at the core of the electoral process.



"Mr. Bhushan, now you are going too far. This is too much. Whether it's transparent or translucent glass on a VVPAT machine or the glowing of a bulb, ultimately it is the voter's satisfaction and trust (that matters). The bulb only helps you see better, that's all," the bench said.

It said, "Everything cannot be suspected. You (Bhushan) cannot be critical of everything. If they (the EC) have done something good, you have to appreciate it. You don't

have to be critical of everything."

Bhushan said he is not casting any aspersion on the poll panel but possibility for improvement exists.

Justice Khanna told him, "Agree. But if they have improved things within four corners of law, then it is fine. Bulb or no bulb, how does it matter? If an explanation is given, then you must appreciate it. Over suspicion of everything is a problem. A voter has to satisfy himself, that's all. They gave the explanation for the improvement, you heard them and everyone heard them."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was in the courtroom, said as an officer of the court he is submitting that these efforts by petitioners, of doubting the efficacy of EVMs, on the eve of election has an impact on voter percentage.

Kerala to Centre: Ensure assistance to Indians in UAE

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday urged the External Affairs Ministry to ensure a mechanism for extending assistance to Indians who need support due to heavy rains in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In a post on 'X', the chief minister also extended sincere gratitude to the Malayali expatriates involved in rescue efforts in the Gulf nation, with which Kerala shares warm ties.

"Heavy rains in Gulf countries are a serious concern. A year's worth of rain fell in a day in UAE, highlighting the urgent need for assistance. We request @MEAIndia to urgently ensure a mechanism to support Indians who are in hardship."

"Kerala and the Gulf share warm ties, and we extend our sincere gratitude to all Malayali expatriates involved in rescue efforts," he said.

SC reserves verdict on issue of regulating industrial alcohol

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court reserved its verdict on Thursday on the issue of overlapping powers of the Centre and states with regard to the production, manufacturing, supply and regulation of industrial alcohol.

A nine-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud heard arguments from Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocates Dinesh Dwivedi and Arvind P Datar, who appeared in the court on behalf of the Uttar Pradesh government, and other lawyers representing different states.

Industrial alcohol is not meant for human consumption. While Entry 8 in the State List under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution gives the states the power to legislate on the manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of "intoxicating liquors", Entry 52 of the Union List and Entry 33 of the Concurrent List mention industries whose control is



"declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in public interest".

While both Parliament and state legislatures can enact laws on the subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List, a central law will have primacy over the state law.

A clutch of petitions came before the nine-judge bench after a seven-judge Constitution bench ruled against the states.

The matter was referred to

the nine-judge bench in 2010 after the seven-judge bench ruled in 1997 that the Centre would have regulatory power over the production of industrial alcohol.

The seven-judge bench had, in 1990, observed that through the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, the Union had "evinced a clear intention to occupy" legislative competence on the subject and hence, Entry 33 could not empower a state government.

BJP'S DREAM SHATTERED: GOPAL RAI

'AAP has emerged stronger after Kejriwal's arrest'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sunita Kejriwal, the wife of jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, will be her husband's voice and carry his message wherever needed in the country, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai said on Thursday.

In an interview with PTI, Rai asserted that the people of Delhi are firmly behind the AAP and Congress candidates fielded in the parliamentary polls after Kejriwal's arrest and claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is currently trailing in all the seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital.

Kejriwal has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam.

Sunita Kejriwal will tour Gujarat as a star campaigner of the AAP. The party is contesting the Bharuch and Bhavnagar seats in Gujarat.



Replying to a question on whether Sunita Kejriwal, in the absence of his husband, will campaign in other states, Rai said a plan is being firming up in this regard.

Arvind Kejriwal was the biggest star campaigner for the AAP and he has been put behind bars to ensure that his voice does not reach the people of the country, he said.

"Sunita Kejriwal will take across the voice of Kejriwal wherever needed in the country. She will become Kejriwal's voice and go wherever his

voice needs to be raised," the senior AAP leader said.

"A plan is being firming up. We will make it public once it is ready," he added.

Rai said the party organisation -- MPs, ministers and MLAs -- is collectively taking the day-to-day decisions regarding campaigning and strategy for the Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling BJP at the Centre might have dreamt that the AAP will fall like "a pack of cards" after Kejriwal goes to jail but that did not happen, he said.

"I can say it with responsibility that the AAP has emerged stronger after the arrest (of Kejriwal) and those who were earlier scattered are now united. The results of this will be visible on May 25, when votes will be cast in Delhi," Rai said.

The AAP is contesting four Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, while its alliance partner Congress has fielded candidates in the three remaining seats

'LS poll results will have bearing on K'taka CM's continuation'

PNS ■ KOLAR (KARNATAKA)

Indicating that the Lok Sabha poll results will have a bearing on Siddaramaiah's continuation as chief minister of Karnataka, Minister Byrathi Suresh on Thursday warned that voting for opposition candidates poses a threat to the CM's position.

"(Let your votes) be in favour of Congress, Siddaramaiah and (K V) Gowtham (Kolar Lok Sabha candidate). In case you change your mind and make another candidate win, there will be a threat to Siddaramaiah's (CM) seat. So, I request for your support," Suresh said at a meeting of leaders of the Kuruba community to which Siddaramaiah belongs.

He said, "By voting for Gowtham, you are also voting for Siddaramaiah's leadership."

The statements gain significance amid persistent rumours about a leadership change in the ruling Congress in the state after the Lok Sabha polls, or midway of the current assembly's tenure.

Amid such speculations, Siddaramaiah had

recently asked the people of his Varuna assembly segment to give the Congress candidate a lead of at least 60,000 votes in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, to ensure that he remains in the post of chief minister.

On the same day in Mandya, Deputy Chief Minister and state Congress President D K Shivakumar, who has made no secret about his chief ministerial ambitions, told the people that the desire with which they supported the party in the assembly poll in May last year, keeping him in mind, "will not turn out to be false."

There was stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the chief minister's post after the assembly election results were declared in May last year. The Congress leadership then managed to convince Shivakumar to take up the deputy chief minister's post.

There were some reports at the time that a compromise had been reached, according to which Shivakumar would become the CM after two-and-a-half years. However, this has not been officially confirmed by the party.



BJP instigated violence during Ram Navami fete: Mamata

PNS ■ RAIGANJ (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday alleged that the BJP instigated violence during Ram Navami celebrations in the state.

She claimed that the violence in Murshidabad district was "pre-planned" and accused the saffron party of orchestrating it ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

A blast happened near a procession in Murshidabad's Shaktipur area on Wednesday, injuring a woman, police said. "Everything was pre-planned. The DIG of Murshidabad was removed a day ahead of Ram Navami so that you (the BJP) can carry out violence," she said at an elec-

tion rally in the Raiganj Lok Sabha constituency.

The chief minister also claimed that goons associated with the BJP roughed up police personnel in the district.

At another poll rally in Balurghat, the CM dubbed the BJP as a party that always issues threats.

"BJP leaders brazenly declare that your monthly allowance (under the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme) will be stopped if they come to power. I feel like pulling out their tongue for issuing such threats to deprive your dues."

"But being a civilised person... I will not utter such words. I will control my language though the BJP will never do that," she asserted.



Banerjee called the BJP a "party of looters", which has gained "full control" of central agencies.

She said while the BJP-led central government "withheld" dues of the state under the 100 days' work scheme, the ruling TMC ensured that job card holders get 50 days' work wages from the state's coffers.

Bengal Guv calls off Cooch Behar tour on advice of ECI

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Acting on the advice of the Election Commission of India (ECI), West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose on Thursday called off his proposed tour to Cooch Behar, during which he intended to "oversee" the polling process. He, however, alleged that an attempt was being made to "politicise the Governor's office", while asserting he would not allow anyone to use him as a "pawn on the political

chess board". "My priority is to be with the people of Bengal. My focus is to fight against violence in the state, particularly during election(s). My field visits are for these purposes but there is an attempt to politicise the Governor's office. I will not let anyone to lower the dignity of the office of the Governor," Bose said in a statement released by the Raj Bhavan. "I will not allow anyone to use me as a pawn on the political chess board," he added.

Odisha ex-MLA sells land to fund daughter's poll expenses

PNS ■ KENDRAPARA (ODISHA)

Struggling to meet the rising expenses of the upcoming assembly elections, a former Congress MLA in Odisha recently sold off a portion of his ancestral land to fund his daughter who is contesting as a candidate.

Debendra Sharma, who represented Aul assembly constituency in Kendrapara district from 2014 to 2019, sold off his five decimal homestead land in his native village recently.

Facing formidable challenges including financial constraints and a well-funded opposition, Sharma expressed concerns over



the lack of monetary support from the Congress party, citing the freezing of party accounts by the Income Tax department.

"My daughter Dr. Debasmitha Sharma (28), is contesting the polls from the constituency where both my father and I was previously elected as MLAs," he said, highlighting the financial

strain on the family due to the heavy campaign spending by rival candidates, making it challenging to meet the necessary poll expenses.

Debasmitha, following in the footsteps of her father and grandfather, left her job as a government doctor to pursue a career in public service.

Sharma explained that the campaign funds provided by the party for his daughter were insufficient. "Consequently, faced with compelling circumstances, I made the difficult decision to sell a piece of our ancestral land in the village to generate additional resources for her campaign," he said.

'Back pain, depression, main causes of ill health'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The main causes of poor health impacting quality of life are low back pain, depressive disorders and headaches, according to a new global research published in The Lancet journal.

The study analysed healthy life expectancy during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and found that even though people around the world are living longer, "they aren't spending all those years in good health."

"With low back pain, the

leading cause of poor health globally, we see that the existing treatments aren't working well to address it," said co-first author Damian Santomauro, affiliate assistant professor of the Health Metrics Sciences at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, US.

"We need better tools to manage this major cause of global disease burden," he added. In contrast, Santomauro said that for depressive disorders, therapy or medication or a combination of both for an



adequate amount of time can work. "However, most people in the world have little or no access to treatment, unfortunately," he said.

"Considering how depression increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's urgent to ensure that everyone with this disorder can get treatment," he further said.

Examining how men and women responded to COVID-19, the researchers found that women suffered more than men when it came to the secondary effects of the viral infection, involving long COVID and mental disorders, even as men were more likely to die from the infection than women.

Women were found to be twice as likely as men to experience long Covid, and most likely to be affected by depression, seen to increase sharply during the pandemic.

The researchers presented updated estimates from the Global Burden of Diseases (GBD) study 2021, which analysed data from 204 countries and territories. The GBD study is the largest and most comprehensive effort to quantify health loss across places and over time, according to the IHME, which coordinates it.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Time bomb

Currently at 1.44 billion, India's population may double in 77 years unless we curb the trend

India stands at a pivotal juncture in its demographic journey; its population already surpassing China's to reach a staggering 1.44 billion. The prospect of this number potentially doubling within 77 years presents a formidable challenge. True, India's burgeoning population holds the promise of a significant demographic dividend: A youthful workforce, if equipped with the right skills and opportunities, can be the driver for economic growth, innovation and productivity. With appropriate investments in education, healthcare and employment opportunities, India has the potential to emerge as an economic powerhouse. But this is easier said than done. Alongside the opportunities, India also grapples with formidable challenges stemming from its rapid population growth. The strain on resources and infrastructure is palpable, with sectors like healthcare, education, housing and transportation already stretched thin. Overpopulation exacerbates the demand for food, water, energy and housing, leading to environmental degradation and perpetuating socio-economic disparities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. First of all, there must be a concerted effort to invest in human capital. Education and healthcare must be prioritised to empower individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully in economy. Mercifully, our population growth rate is showing a downward trend. To arrest the spiralling growth, a comprehensive population strategy is urgently needed, but the nation does not have any such plan.

One reason could be that any attempt to control the population would be highly unpopular. Indira Gandhi, along with Sanjay Gandhi, tried it in the 1970s which eventually led to her downfall. All political parties also learnt their lesson. Of course, we are no China and no coercive measures should be taken but the Government can make concerted efforts to reward family planning and penalise large family sizes. Comprehensive programmes aimed at empowering individuals, especially women, about reproductive health and contraception can help stabilise population growth. Furthermore, investments in sectors such as healthcare, sanitation, transportation and housing are necessary to meet the needs of the growing population. Sustainable development practices must be embraced to mitigate environmental degradation. Job creation is also paramount for managing population growth effectively. Policies that promote entrepreneurship, attract investments and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises can help generate employment opportunities. Gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives that enhance access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities are essential. Empowered women are more likely to make informed choices about family planning, leading to smaller family sizes and improved maternal and child health outcomes. There is no dearth of solutions but the big question is, who will bell the cat?



along with Sanjay Gandhi, tried it in the 1970s which eventually led to her downfall. All political parties also learnt their lesson. Of course, we are no China and no coercive measures should be taken but the Government can make concerted efforts to reward family planning and penalise large family sizes. Comprehensive programmes aimed at empowering individuals, especially women, about reproductive health and contraception can help stabilise population growth. Furthermore, investments in sectors such as healthcare, sanitation, transportation and housing are necessary to meet the needs of the growing population. Sustainable development practices must be embraced to mitigate environmental degradation. Job creation is also paramount for managing population growth effectively. Policies that promote entrepreneurship, attract investments and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises can help generate employment opportunities. Gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives that enhance access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities are essential. Empowered women are more likely to make informed choices about family planning, leading to smaller family sizes and improved maternal and child health outcomes. There is no dearth of solutions but the big question is, who will bell the cat?

## PICTALK



Foreign tourists during celebrations of World Heritage Day at the Agra Fort, in Agra

## The enduring ties between India and Iran



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Amid geopolitical complexities, India finds itself navigating a delicate balance between Iran, Israel and its domestic constituencies

Persians have had a civilisational connection with Hindustan (Persian for India) since antiquity. There is a powerful India connect, even for the most epochal person defining the politics of the post-Iran Revolution (1979) i.e., Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. His paternal grandfather, Seyed Ahmad Musavi 'Hindi', was born in Kintoor, near Lucknow. Musavi was to leave Awadh and settle in Khomein but was popularly known as 'Hindi' in Persia! Later, 'Hindi' was to be the pen name for Ruhollah Khomeini's poetry. In India itself, Shiite dynasties flourished as refugees escaping persecution from Arab-Sunni strains settled and thrived in Deccan, Rampur, Awadh, Bengal etc., with Lucknow emerging as the epicentre of Indian Shi'ism. Unlike the Middle East, the sectarian tensions were relatively less as the Gazetteer of Gilgit Agency noted, "Wherever Sunnis and Shias are found living together, they seem to practice a mutual tolerance rare in other Muhammadan communities. Except in Chilas and the Indus valley below or, there is, generally speaking, a complete absence of fanaticism". But, times changed and polemical writings of supremacist and sectarian assertions increased, causing bloody rift and polarisation. Soon, even in India the numerically lesser Shias were harassed by the substantially larger Sunni populace, leaving only pockets of Lucknow and Kargil area to have Shias in majority, as other enclaves were predominantly Sunni dominated.

'Shiaphobia' acquired even more sinister propulsion in neighbouring Pakistan and the air of the Sunni-Shia divide soon acquired political/sovereign overtones with Iran emerging as the transnational voice of Shiite sensibilities. The Ummah (Muslim world) got divided into two broad 'blobs' on sectarian lines and the shadows of Iran-versus-Arab Sheikdoms undercurrents played out violently in areas with mixed populations e.g., Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Pakistan and even so in India, though the sectarian tensions were not so pronounced here. This unique phenomenon of the relative security, freedom



and thriving of Shias in India (where their percentage was in a similar minority to many other Islamic countries with the Sunni majority) did not go unnoticed in Tehran. India was a rare haven for Shias in modern times and Iran reciprocated the same by occasionally taking a pro-India stand on platforms like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). That the fate of minority Shias in Pakistan was particularly beleaguered, made Tehran adopt pro-Delhi postures as geopolitical quid pro quo. As the Arab Sheikdoms were particularly close to the Pakistanis during the Cold War, Iran acted on the rebound by deepening relations with India. But the inevitable consequences of the Iranian Revolution and the need for it to take more puritanical stances and aspire to take over Ummah leadership from Saudi-led Sheikdoms led to it occasionally striking contradictory postures on issues like Kashmir et al. But situational and sectarian angularity ensured that both Iran and India were on the same side in sensitive theatres like Afghanistan, opposing the Pakistan-led Taliban forces. However, at the same time, India was recalibrating its relations by cosyng up to both the United States of America and Israel, strategically. The cost of Delhi's engagement with Washington and Tel Aviv led



INTERESTINGLY, BOTH ISRAEL AND IRAN HAVE STRONG CONSTITUENCIES WITHIN THEIR NARRATIVES THAT CAN CONVINCE THEIR POWERS-THAT-BE OF INDIA'S 'LARGER COMPULSIONS'

to sticky situations like India stopping oil purchases from Iran owing to US-imposed sanctions, as well as stuttering on strategic projects like Chabahar Port. Yet all along there was always an unsaid understanding between Delhi and Tehran of the other's compulsions leading it to be forced into certain decisions — the bilateral trust and intent were rarely questioned.

While India's drift towards 'majoritarian' politics led to natural concerns within the Ummah (even though Sheikdoms were officially bonding frenetically owing to India's emergence on the global highway), the local dynamics for Shias remained protected with the ruling political persuasion co-opting the Shias, actively. Both during the 2014 and 2019 General Elections, prominent Shia leaders in Lucknow actively supported the winning dispensation. Again, it didn't go unnoticed in Iran which remains hypersensitive to the fate of Shias across the world. India was an honourable exception in terms of its treatment of the minority Shias.

This undeniable reality helped nuance the parallel (and unprecedented) outreach of Delhi with the capitals of Sheikdoms and Tel Aviv. Today, when the Israel-Palestine war has metastasised into dragging Iran into the conflict, picking sides for Delhi becomes tricky. The

template of 'strategic independence' (used in the Russia-Ukraine conflict) could be afforded to this conflict which conjoins morality with practicality to take a deliberately mealy-mouthed position that offends none and yet genuinely beseeches peace.

Delhi would know about the latent and conflated emotions of the Indian Muslims on the conflict, especially for the Shias when it comes to Iran. From the electoral lens, the dispensation recognises its investment in the Shias and Pasmanda (a backward caste) but the situation does get complex with Israel in the admixture, as that has a similar resonance in the 'majoritarian' calculus as a valorised counterpoise to Pan-Islamism. Israel often gets lionised disproportionately and morality becomes increasingly irrelevant.

Interestingly both Israel and Iran have strong constituencies within their narrative that can convince their powers-that-be of India's 'larger compulsions'. It is these powerful backdoor channels, civilisational bonhomie and calibrated diplomatese that must be deployed as both countries are vital to India's future. India needs to prioritise peace over binary choices.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## POLITICAL CHARADE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Contribute fully in 400 seats goal: PM to Bengal", published on April 17, this is my response. If Sandeshkhal has indeed "sent shivers down the entire nation"; surely it must be asked whether the country had been "immersed in a coma" revolving around spine-chilling gangrapes /murder/forced cremation /naked parade of women folks in Uttar Pradesh Gujarat Kathua or Manipur!

So the TMC Government of West Bengal is "allowing infiltration" to "boost" its "vote bank"! So who mans the Indo-Bangladesh international border? West Bengal police under the TMC-led West Bengal Government or Border security forces under the BJP-led Centre! Period. And "TMC Government opposes" Ram Navami celebration in West Bengal" should feature as "joke of the century"! If announcing a State Government holiday for a purely North Indian festival, absolutely alien to Bengali culture, gets "credited" as "Opposition" to Ram Navami with the Who's Who of the TMC, zealously participating in such processions; then the word "Opposition" itself must be urgently amended in the dictionary! Lastly, it must be answered why despite winning as many as unprecedented 18 Lok Sabha seats from West Bengal in 2019, not a single Bengali was allowed to lead a ministry in the Union Cabinet in the last 5 years!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

## TENSION IN WEST ASIA

Madam — The tension in the West Asia region has escalated since Iran has directly launched missile attacks on Israel. The area is already facing challenges due to Israel's war operation in Gaza after the October 7 attack by Hamas. More than thirty thousand people have already died due to this out of which the majority are women and children. USA and other regional players like Hezbollah and Houthis have also been involved in the conflict in these six months. Further escalation of war can lead to serious conse-

## Chhattisgarh encounter aftermath



Apropos the news article, "Chhattisgarh encounter leaves 29 Naxals dead", published on April 17, this is my response. In the dense forests of Chhattisgarh, where at least 29 Naxals were neutralised, including the top leaders, Shankar Rao and Lalita, divisional committee members of the CPI (Maoist)'s North Bastar Division. This clash, occurring just days before the Lok Sabha polls in Bastar, signifies the ongoing battle against insurgency in the region. More than 60,000 security personnel have been deployed in the district to oversee the electoral

process. This is the highest casualty suffered by the Maoists in a single incident since 2018 when 37 of them were killed in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district.

The Maoist rebels may have had reasons to hold a grudge against the government, but their romantic notion of revolution is misplaced because they'll never succeed in displacing the Government or creating their own Communist paradise in Bastar, or any other region of the country. So yes, they'll probably try to continue their usual attacks, but with the continued, concerted push by the security forces into their strongholds, those attacks will become fewer and far between. We have lack of military and other security personnel but still, activity is not controlled. Advishi have their livelihood in the jungle. Government cannot replace them in the name of development. However, I think Maoists' best bet would be to put down their arms and try to effect change through the ballot box.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

quences in the region and the world. West Asia is often termed as the energy basket of the globe due to its potential to produce oils. Many important sea trade routes connecting Asia to other parts of the world also go through this region.

Any direct war between Tehran and Tel Aviv can pause oil supply and disrupt the sea routes. The war can also pull other regional powers into it. Global organisations and leaders should mediate between the countries and convince them to avoid future intensifications of conflict. The leaders of both Iran and Israel should also stop provoking each other. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza also needs to be stopped immediately as it is the root cause behind the conflict in the region.

Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal

## TOO MUCH IS TOO BAD

Madam — Apropos the news article, "RCB Maxwell takes a mental and physical break from IPL 2024", published on April 17, this is my response. Many players from

the ongoing IPL have been playing all three game formats almost continuously throughout the year, so their endurance limit, patience and love for the game must be appreciated. The saying, "Eat cricket, talk cricket, sleep cricket" is highly suitable in their case. But too much of anything is too bad in many ways.

It wrecks their physical and mental health, playing becomes mechanical & casual, keeps them away for longer periods from their family, spectators will be bored to see the same faces again and again etc. Further cricket became a profession and business, no more a gentleman's game played leisurely and IPL affected the way test cricket is played and reduced its popularity and the number of spectators in the stadiums watching it. No other game has reached such a situation as that of cricket. It is time to restrict the amount of cricket played for its good.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## How justified is abusive language on OTT?

The impact of abusive language on societal norms is profound; content creators must deliver realistic but responsible content

The Over-the-Top (OTT) platform has revolutionised India's entertainment landscape and has created a niche for itself among audiences. It is considered to be progressive, realistic, has variety and also caters to the needs of all age groups. However, there has been a lot of noise about the proliferation of abusive language in many of the web series that have raised a lot of general and even legal objections. Recently the Supreme Court (March 2024) has given its verdict that the use of abusive language on OTT cannot be regarded as a criminal offence, as it would lead to an infringement of free speech and violate artistic creativity. This leaves us with an open debate about whether under the guise of freedom of speech, we can use foul language that may be affecting the cultural values of people. The use of abusive language in OTT content shapes how audiences perceive the characters, themes and overall tenor of the content. It may add authenticity to certain narratives or characters. If nothing else, it has become a fashion Statement and is more



saleable. It can be categorised as a demerit good with a high order of negative externality. Undoubtedly, the onus of the use of such language in society does not lie on OTT, it reflects something already present, but it has certainly contributed to making it more prominent. Some viewers avoid using such foul language, as they consider it to be morally incorrect and undignified. After all, what is the use of good education, if it does not teach us to differentiate between decent and indecent?

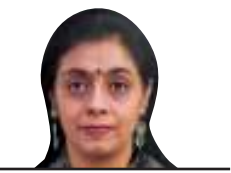
With the explosion of cuss words on OTT, even this section of society is affected. The young generation, at tender ages, is exposed to such language and easily gets influ-

enced by it. It can become pervasive in everyday usage, hindering effective articulation of thoughts and ideas and challenging the professional and academic standards. It can be detrimental to social interactions and emotional well-being, hampering overall personality development. Simply providing a statutory warning of the content not suitable for a certain age, does not complete the responsibility of the makers. With the availability of the internet and its easy access via gadgets in every home, it is practically not possible to refrain kids from watching such content every time. With the nuclear family setups and working parents' culture gaining strength, it becomes even more difficult.

We in India have reformed the education system with the introduction of the National Education Policy and Indian Knowledge System. It thrives on providing a high-quality education system rooted in Indian ethos contributing to transforming India into a value-based superpower. So, while at one place when we are trying to imbibe and revive our rich heritage, at the

same time, we are defending, if not promoting, the use of indecent language. We have a zero-tolerance policy against abuse in educational institutes, but a child tends to learn from the overall environment of which OTT is presently an unavoidable part. Besides, another aspect of the foul language on OTT incorporates gender-specific derogatory terms, predominantly objectifying women. Indian society has always given a special place to women and their role is spread across the cultural, economic and spiritual fabric of our society. The worship of goddesses reflects the deep-rooted respect and reverence for women in our culture. Undeniably, women are behind building the strong-rooted edifice of values and ethics, the society does not feel any responsibility to uphold their dignity. A good and progressive social environment is one where individuals feel respected, secure and valued.

(The author is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR



## FIRST COLUMN A VISION FOR INDIA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The BJP manifesto focuses on strategy to make India a champion of Global South



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unveiled its election manifesto earlier this week, opting for a departure from the conventional strategy of enticing voters with freebies and subsidies. Instead, the manifesto takes on the guise of a policy document, delineating the achievements of the PM Modi administration over the past decade and pledging to propel India into a developed economy within the next 25 years. Notably absent from the document is any significant mention of Pakistan, a focal point of India's foreign policy for years, in either the BJP manifesto or the Prime Minister's interviews.

The manifesto underscores the government's emphasis on foreign policy, echoing the strategic vision cultivated during India's G20 presidency. It celebrates India's emergence onto the global stage, exemplified by the unanimous consensus achieved for the New Delhi Declaration, a feat accomplished amidst doubts about US-Russia concordance. Prime Minister Modi elucidated his approach in an interview, emphasising the imperative of working towards global good without personal reservations, a principle that guided India's diplomatic endeavours.

In delineating the government's foreign policy outlook, Prime Minister Modi reiterated the cornerstone principles of "Neighbour First" and "Act East" since assuming office. The Act East policy has extended India's influence into the ASEAN region, fostering positive perceptions even among nations geographically distant. India's proactive assistance to neighbours during crises, such as earthquake relief in Nepal and aiding Sri Lanka during times of turmoil, exemplifies its commitment to regional solidarity.



The manifesto boasts of the safe repatriation of 1.5 crore distressed Indian citizens and positions India as a vocal advocate for the Global South, a central tenet of its foreign policy stance. Technological innovations like the Digital India stack, including UPI, have amplified India's presence on global platforms, albeit challenges persist in enhancing the acceptability of the Indian rupee in international trade. The document briefly touches upon India's burgeoning focus on the Indo-Pacific, a region of strategic interest for major global players and pledges to safeguard navigation rights and maritime security.

Under Modi's leadership, the manifesto pledges to bolster India's standing as a champion of the Global South, leveraging the Prime Minister's 5S approach of respect, dialogue, cooperation, peace and prosperity. It articulates aspirations for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and vows to enhance collaboration within the Indo-Pacific region to foster mutual growth and security.

Furthermore, the manifesto underscores the importance of securing critical minerals essential for the digital age, signalling intentions to forge partnerships with friendly nations to integrate India more deeply into global supply chains. In sum, the BJP's manifesto serves as a testament to continuity in India's foreign policy objectives, underlining a commitment to advancing the nation's interests on the global stage.

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

# Sustainability through global collaboration



RAJDEEP PATHAK

President Dennis Francis, at the helm of the 78th UN General Assembly session, champions sustainability as pivotal to economic advancement

While the news of increasing temperatures in the Capital City of Delhi in the coming weeks and months hit the headlines, in a resounding affirmation of the symbiotic relationship between sustainability and economic progress, President Dennis Francis (heading the 78th session of the UN General Assembly), recently in an exclusive interview with PTI, unequivocally asserted that the pursuit of sustainability stands as the cornerstone of 21st-century development endeavours. He also emphasised the imperative of integrating sustainability into the fabric of global advancement. Dennis Francis is all set to inaugurate the "Sustainability Week" at the United Nations headquarters scheduled from April 15-19, 2024. Under the overarching theme of "Paving the Way for a Sustainable Future", this landmark event will spotlight pivotal sectors such as tourism, infrastructure connectivity, transportation, energy and debt, dedicating its discourse to the multifaceted dimensions of sustainability in each domain.

In this PTI exclusive, President Francis outlines a strategic focus on key economic sectors — tourism, transportation, infrastructure, energy and debt management — to drive transformative sustainability. He highlights challenges like climate change, energy security and debt entrapment, emphasising their nexus with poverty, education, housing and national security. Francis further underscores sustainability as both a moral imperative and a catalyst for equitable global progress, envisioning judicious decisions in these realms as key to profound shifts towards a sustainable future.

During the upcoming 'Sustainability Week', Dennis will host a series of high-level events including debates on 'debt sustainability' and 'socio-economic equality'; discussions on 'tourism and sustainable transport', an informal dialogue on 'global resilience through infrastructure connectivity' and a stocktaking session for the completion of the 'UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All' - all aimed at advancing the implementation of SDG 7 for sustainable development.

Dennis (in the interview) fervently promotes the fusion of sustainability and economic advancement, underscoring their intrinsic interdependence for societal well-being. He advocates for a transformative approach toward sustainable lifestyles, condemning antiquated resource exploitation methods exacerbating climate instability. He envisions a future where profitability harmonises with environmental stewardship, fostering equity and resilience. 'Sustainability Week' precedes the 'Summit of the Future', to instil sustainability as a collective imperative for safeguarding resources for posterity. He further emphasised the pressing requirement to refocus endeavours on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which saw a setback in target achievement because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts. 'Sustainability Week' aims to revive dedication to impactful measures, crucial for reorienting the SDGs towards their intended trajectory.

Through collective action, the aim should be to uplift communities, inspire hope and advance the global agenda for sustainability and equity. The need is to empower communities, foster optimism and promote sustainability and equity worldwide.



INDIA'S SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS EXTEND TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY, EXEMPLIFIED BY SCHEMES LIKE MGNREGA AND AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Governments, communities and organisations per se are uniting to tackle environmental challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss and renewable energy promotion. For example, in Scandinavia, countries like Denmark have been leaders in wind energy production, investing heavily in offshore wind farms and renewable energy infrastructure. Denmark's commitment to sustainability has led to a significant reduction in carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.

Moreover, in Southeast Asia, Singapore pioneers innovative strategies to address river and ocean waste, utilising advanced wastewater treatment and strict plastic regulations, effectively curbing marine pollution. Meanwhile, Africa's 'Great Green Wall' initiative fights desertification in the bio-geographical Sahel region by planting trees and promoting sustainable land management, revitalising degraded landscapes and fostering biodiversity. Across Latin America, Costa Rica exemplifies biodiversity conservation through national parks and eco-tourism, fostering sustainable development while preserving its rich natural heritage, resulting in both environmental protection and economic prosperity. Some of these diverse efforts demonstrate global commitment to environmental management, enhancing resilience and also safeguarding ecosystems for future generations.

India's proactive stance towards achieving the SDGs is evident through multifaceted commitments across sectors. Initiatives like the 'National Solar Mission' and 'Jal Jeevan Mission', 'National Health Mission', etc., highlight the resolve to tackle environmental challenges. India further aims to generate great renewable energy capacity, emphasising reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Water conservation programs such as rainwater harvesting and the

'Jal Jeevan Mission' underscore India's dedication to ensuring water security, aiming to provide piped water supply to all households by 2024. This commitment is reinforced by experts like waterman, Rajendra Singh and CEO of Centre for Science and Environment, Sunita Narain, who stress the importance of renewable energy and community-driven water conservation efforts.

Additionally, India's sustainability efforts extend to biodiversity conservation, rural development, healthcare, education, waste management and gender equality, exemplified by schemes like MGNREGA and Ayushman Bharat. Dr. Vandana Shiva emphasises that sustainability encompasses socio-economic factors, with India's inclusive policies striving to create a more equitable and resilient society through integrated policymaking.

It may be noted that India initiated its climate action journey in 2009 by pledging to decrease emissions intensity by 20-25 per cent by 2020, achieving a commendable 24 per cent reduction. Subsequently aligning with the Paris Agreement, India outlined its 'Nationally Determined Contributions' in 2015, aiming for a 33-35 per cent emissions intensity reduction by 2030. Additional goals include enhancing non-fossil fuel energy generation, expanding carbon sinks and targeting 'NET ZERO' emissions by 2070. National efforts are reinforced by initiatives such as the 'National Action Plan on Climate Change' and the 'National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change', focusing on renewable energy, sustainable habitat and adaptation strategies.

As per media reports, by April 2023, India had made substantial progress toward 14 of the 33 SDGs, with improvements in neonatal and under-five mortality; sanitation

and electricity access. Challenges like adolescent pregnancy, clean cooking fuel and water facilities persist. Legislative amendments promoting renewable energy and carbon credit trading, along with initiatives such as the 'Green Hydrogen Mission', highlight India's commitment to sustainability. "Business Today" report of August 25, 2023, suggests that these efforts, coupled with the implementation of the 'Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework', positioned India as a global leader in sustainability, as reflected in its ranking in the 'Climate Change Performance Index', indicating promising future progress.

India has implemented various environmental conservation initiatives like the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' 'Namami Gange', etc., along with legislative measures such as the 'Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act' and so on. The introduction of the 'Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework' by the National Statistics Office in 2023 signifies efforts to monitor progress. However, despite advancements in climate action, financing SDGs remains a challenge. Proactive measures, integrating sustainability into policymaking and engaging communities are essential for achieving the ambitious 2030 SDG targets globally, ensuring equity and resilience. The imperative for proactive engagement by dedicated and committed citizens, not only within India but globally, underscores the exigency of collective action. Such involvement is paramount in addressing contemporary challenges, necessitating concerted efforts on a global scale. The choice is ours — perish or preserve.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

# Corruption and political defections: A telltale sign of democratic decay

The electoral arithmetic, rather than the principles of righteousness, often dictates the trajectory of political decisions

Last week, while flitting through the contents of a leading daily newspaper in India, an interesting article caught hold of my attention and it made a compulsive reading throughout. The article was captioned — 'Since 2014, 25 Opposition leaders facing corruption probe crossed over to BJP, 23 of them got relieve'. The article was, undoubtedly, a telltale commentary on the holes in the prevalent political system in our country. It was an embarrassing account of the glaringly apparent fact that political parties of all hues and shades are compelled to flow with the tides produced by the fault lines in our political system and that too sometimes for sheer political survival.



ATUL SEHGAL

It may not be worthwhile to go deep into the finer nuances of the above account and be brazenly judgemental of hallowed political parties and personalities. It appears to be proper to dwell on the deficiencies of the current system in Bharat and regretfully State that the electoral arithmetic is the biggest bane of our political system. To build up the numbers for gathering the elusive major-

ity, political parties, under a legal system that is speckled with loopholes, have to resort to such shenanigans to assemble numbers to make stable governments and even make strong governments that can govern smoothly. Our democracy has definite deficiencies. Rather it is anything but perfect. A multi-party democracy is better described as a non-ideal, diluted form of democracy, especially so in a culturally variegated society like ours. The purest form of democracy is outlined in our ancient scripture Manusmriti. While making a mention of Manusmriti, it needs to be clarified that this observation is not to be taken lightly even if there is controversy associated with this ancient scrip-

ture. That controversy sprang from its distorted version, due to historical extrapolations by unscrupulous persons. The original, uncorrupted version of Manusmriti is a divine blueprint of an ideal governance system. The scripture talks of democracy indicating the following three characteristic features of democracy (prajatantra) 1. Partyless system of elections and governance 2. Right to recall the elected representatives by the voters 3. Congruous with the principles of righteousness or Dharma It would also be relevant to State here that the above primaeva, divine scripture also provides a structural frame for the democratic governance system. It talks of



three assemblies — Rajaryasabha (executive assembly), Vidyaryasabha (subject specialist assembly) and Dharmaryasabha (assembly of religious experts). The last-mentioned assembly or council is composed of persons of distinguished moral standing and impeccable character who

act collectively as some kind of moral authority on the functioning of the executive council. It is easy to see how far the existing polity and governance structure are away from the above-mentioned ideal polity and governance system in a democratic setup. In a party less democratic polity, all problems of electoral arithmetic and the evils that they engender are bound to vanish. There are going to be no big election rallies, no stupendous spending on elections, no horse-trading, no party switching, no turncoats, no go slow on prosecuting the corrupt and criminal politicians and no silly concepts of majoritarianism or minoritarianism. There is going to be no

minority-centred governance. It is also not difficult to understand how many secondary evils of the extant political system in our country will get eliminated if we were to incorporate the tenets of the sacred scripture Manusmriti in our polity and governance. It may be farfetched to expect that we can carve out from the present system something exactly conforming to the above utopian structure but even if we incorporate therein one or two important features like party less democratic system in our country, great benefit can accrue to our governance. In light of what is Stated above, we certainly need to reform our democratic system which does not deliver

too well. Accordingly, we look forward to the expectedly third term Modi Government bringing about wide constitutional, electoral and bureaucratic reforms to enable our nation to progress by kangaroo leaps, which it is capable of. Bharat is divinely destined to become the leading global nation-State of the world while maintaining its pristine stature as the moral and spiritual trailblazer of the world. This is so because Bharat is the land of saints, sages and seers who have been the beacons for humanity through the course of its long and chequered historical existence on this planet.

(The author is a management consultant; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

## Infosys profit jumps 30% to Rs 7,969 crore in Q4

Company Infosys on Thursday said its consolidated profit jumped 30 per cent to Rs 7,969 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The company posted a profit of Rs 6,128 crore in the same period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue of Infosys during the reported quarter increased by 1.3 per cent to Rs 37,923 crore from Rs 37,441 crore in the same quarter a year ago. The company expects a revenue growth of 1-3 per cent in constant currency for financial year 2025. During the financial year ended March 2024, net profit increased by 8.9 per cent to Rs 26,233 crore from Rs 24,095 crore recorded in FY23. The annual income from operations increased by 4.7 cent to Rs 1,53,670 crore in fiscal year 2024 from Rs 1,46,767 crore a year ago. Infosys board recommended a final dividend of Rs 20 per equity share for FY24 and additionally a special dividend of Rs 8 per equity share. The company also announced that it will acquire 100 per cent stake in German firm in-tech in an all cash deal for 450 million euros.



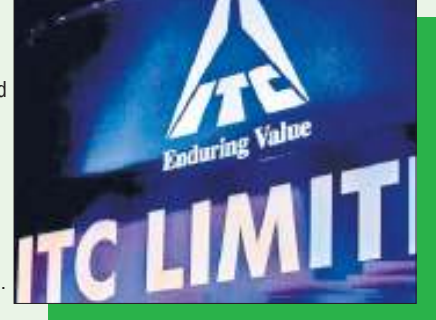
## Nestle India shares decline ; mcap erodes by Rs 8,137.49 cr

Shares of Nestle India on Thursday declined over 3 per cent amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries. The stock dipped 3.31 per cent to settle at Rs 2,462.75 on the BSE. During the day, it went lower by 5.40 per cent to Rs 2,409.55. It was the biggest laggard among the BSE Sensex firms. At the NSE, shares of the company declined 2.94 per cent to settle at Rs 2,471. The company's market capitalisation (mcap) eroded by Rs 8,137.49 crore to Rs 2,37,447.80 crore. Nestle India on Thursday said it has reduced added sugar on baby food products in India by over 30 per cent, depending on variants, over the past 5 years, amid reports that the global FMCG major sold products with more sugar content in less developed countries. According to findings by Swiss NGO, Public Eye and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Nestle sold baby products with higher sugar content in less developed South Asian countries including India.



## ITC Infotech to acquire Blazeclan Technologies

Diversified entity ITC Ltd on Thursday said its arm ITC Infotech India will acquire Blazeclan Technologies for a total consideration of up to Rs 485 crore. ITC Infotech India, a wholly owned subsidiary, has advised us that they have entered into a share purchase agreement on Thursday for the acquisition of 100 per cent of the share capital of Blazeclan Technologies Pvt Ltd. ITC Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Total consideration for the acquisition is up to Rs 485 crore, including contingent consideration which is subject to achievement of prescribed targets, it added. Blazeclan is a "born-in-the-cloud consulting company" providing cloud services on AWS, Azure and GCP, it added. This acquisition is expected to augment ITC Infotech's capabilities to service its customers in a multi-cloud and hybrid cloud environment with a focus on the partner ecosystem to accelerate future growth, the filing said.



## Fundraising through bond placement at all-time high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fund mobilisation through corporate bonds on private placement basis reached an all-time high of Rs 9.98 lakh crore in 2023-24, marking a surge of 17 per cent from the preceding fiscal, according to a release by primedatabase.com on Thursday.

Prime Database Group Managing Director Pranav Haldea attributed the upswing to a surge in credit demand fuelled by strong economic growth. This came despite changes in taxation relating to debt mutual funds and expectations of lower borrowing costs. The highest fund mobilisation in 2023-24 (FY24) came from the All-India Financial Institutions/Banks category at Rs 4.68 lakh crore. This was in comparison to Rs 4.33 lakh crore raised in 2022-23, representing an increase of 8 per cent.

The private sector (excluding banks or financial institutions) witnessed a 44 per cent jump, mobilising Rs 4.96 lakh crore compared to Rs 3.44 lakh crore in 2022-23. Government entities played a key role, collectively mobilising 39 per cent of the total amount, slightly



lower than the 41 per cent registered in 2022-23.

Among government entities, All-India Financial Institutions/Banks led with an 91 per cent share, followed by a 8 per cent share by public sector undertakings (PSUs).

NABARD emerged as the frontrunner in fund mobilisation, garnering Rs 65,393 crore followed by REC (Rs 52,140 crore), HDFC (Rs 46,062 crore), PFC (Rs 45,130) and SIDBI (Rs 38,600 crore). The top 5 issuers of 2023-24 raised Rs 2.47 lakh crore, constituting 29 per cent of the total amount.

As per the release, fund mobilisation through corporate bonds on private placement basis stood at Rs 9.98

lakh crore in FY24 as compared to Rs 8.52 lakh crore in the preceding fiscal. This was mobilised by 976 institutions and corporates.

Also, public bonds market witnessed a remarkable growth in FY24 with 48 issues raising Rs 20,787 crore in comparison to 32 issues mobilising Rs 7,444 crore in FY23. The largest issue was from Power Finance Corp that raised Rs 2,824 crore. In addition, Indian companies also raised Rs 3.79 lakh crore through overseas borrowing (including ECBs) in FY24, marking a jump of 71 per cent from Rs 2.22 lakh crore garnered in the preceding fiscal year.

# Global warming may result in 10 per cent GDP loss, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Warming of the planet by 3 degrees Celsius may cost the world up to 10 per cent of its GDP, a new research has found.

It also found that poorer, tropical countries could see the worst effects -- up to 17 per cent GDP loss.

The study -- led by ETH Zurich, Switzerland, and published in the Nature Climate Change journal -- suggested that roughly half of the predicted global economic damage could be related to extreme heat, with heat waves being the most impactful among the extreme events analysed.

"Impacts are more severe in the Global South and highest in Africa and the Middle East, where higher initial temperatures make countries particularly vulnerable to additional warming," the authors wrote.

The researchers further found that the cost of climate



change increased around the world after accounting for changes in rainfall and temperatures occurring within a short span at a location.

"If we take into account that warmer years also come with changes in rainfall and temperature variability, it turns out

that the estimated impact of spiking temperatures is worse than previously thought," said doctoral researcher and economist Paul Waidelich from ETH Zurich and lead author of the study.

Limiting the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees

Celsius could cut these projected economic damages by two-thirds, the researchers found.

"Some people still say that the world cannot afford rapid decarbonisation but the global economy will also suffer from the impacts of climate change," said Sonia

Seneviratne, co-author of the study and a vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Working Group I. For the study, the researchers used 33 global climate models and analysed climate indicators related to both greenhouse gas emissions and income growth for the 1850-2100 period. The indicators included yearly average temperature, yearly precipitation and extreme precipitation.

The authors acknowledged that substantial uncertainties remain while projecting the cost impacts of climate change.

They said uncertainties are primarily "socio-economic" -- how long the impacts persist and how well society can adapt.

They added that the total cost of climate change is likely "considerably higher" as the study did not include non-economic impacts, droughts, sea-level rise, and climate tipping points.

## UK-INDIA-FTA Good market access offered on both sides:UK

PNS ■ LONDON

There has been good market access offered on both sides but not enough to secure a free trade agreement (FTA), the UK government has said as Indian negotiators are in London this week to continue discussions with their British counterparts.

During a debate in the House of Lords this week, UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron was addressing questions from British peers on the current state of freedom of religion or belief in India.

The recent restructuring of the BBC to create a new Indian-owned entity in order to comply with the country's foreign direct investment (FDI) rules was flagged by

Liberal Democrat peer Lord Jeremy Purvis, who questioned the level of market access being offered to India in the field of media, data and telecoms as part of the FTA negotiations.

"My understanding of where we are with the trade deal is that good market access has been offered on both sides, but not quite enough yet to secure a deal. It is important with such trade deals, as you only really get one proper shot at it, to make sure that it is a good enough deal that will be welcomed by industry leaders here in the UK as offering real market access," said Lord Cameron. It came as a team from India arrived in London to continue talks this week under the fourteenth round of FTA negotiations.

## NSE to launch derivatives on Nifty Next 50 index

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Thursday said it will introduce derivative contracts on Nifty Next 50 index from April 24.

The Nifty Next 50 index represents 50 companies from Nifty 100 after excluding the Nifty 50 companies.

In a statement, NSE said it "has received approval for derivatives on Nifty Next 50 index from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and will launch these contracts from April 24, 2024".

The exchange will offer three serial monthly index futures and index options contract cycles. The cash-settled derivatives contracts will expire on the last Friday of the expiry month.



## 'Hindustan Zinc 3<sup>rd</sup> largest silver producer globally'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc on Thursday said it has become the third largest producer of silver globally.

As per a survey, its Sindesar Khurd Mine in Rajasthan now stands as the world's second largest silver-producing mine, moving up from last year's fourth spot, the company said in a statement. Silver plays a pivotal role in the global energy transition and Hindustan Zinc's production growth of 5 per cent year-on-year is attributed to increased ore production and enhanced grades, reinforcing its status as a key player in the global silver market, Hindustan Zinc Chairperson Priya Agarwal Hebbar said.

Hindustan Zinc, a Vedanta Group company in zinc, lead and silver businesses, is the world's second largest integrated zinc producer and now the third largest silver producer. The company has a market share of 75 per cent of the growing zinc market in India with its headquarters in Udaipur along with zinc, lead mines and smelting complexes spread across Rajasthan.

## Gold falls Rs 250 to Rs 73,700 per 10 grams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices fell from an all-time high level and traded lower by Rs 250 at Rs 73,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a decline in the yellow metal's rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had settled at Rs 73,950 per 10 grams in the previous session. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,700 per 10 grams, down by Rs 250 against the previous day close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

However, silver prices remained flat at Rs 86,500 per kg. Commodity markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Ram Navami.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,375 per ounce, down by USD 13 from the previous close.

## Markets face heavy fluctuations

● Settle lower taking downtrend to 4th day

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty faced heavy volatility on Thursday and ended lower, taking their losing streak to the fourth straight session, dragged by bank stocks and foreign fund outflows. Concerns over fading rate cut hopes and persisting FII fund exodus from domestic equities also dampened investors' sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined abruptly post noon, reflecting heavy fluctuations, wiping out all its early gains. It tanked 454.69 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,488.99. During the day, it gyrated 1,107.38 points between the day's high and low. The benchmark quoted 73,135.5 at 13:31 hours but within two minutes it declined to 72,817.03 at 13:34 hours, reflecting a drop of 318.47 points. The NSE Nifty



declined 152.05 points or 0.69 per cent to 21,995.85. It hit a high of 22,326.50 and a low of 21,961.70 during the day.

From the Sensex basket, Nestle declined the most by over 3 per cent amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries.

Titan Company, Axis Bank, NTPC, Tata Motors, ITC, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Bajaj Finance were the other laggards.

Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Infosys and Larsen & Toubro were among the gainers.



## Walmart launches page for Indian sellers

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Multinational retailer Walmart announced the launch of a dedicated page for Indian sellers to register and sell on the company's marketplace site.

The company hosted a global seller meet in Jaipur on Tuesday, kicking off a series of regional events to help prospective sellers with insights and knowledge on consumer and category trends and assist with onboarding support and catalogue setup, a release said.

"India is a priority market for Walmart, and the dedicat-

ed landing page builds upon our commitment to Indian sellers. Walmart Marketplace strives to unlock the potential of Indian businesses by giving sellers access to customers around the world," Michelle Mi, Vice President of Emerging Markets and Business Development for Walmart stated in the release.

"Through dedicated onboarding support and expertise in navigating global supply chains, we are empowering sellers with the tools they need to thrive in the US marketplace and beyond," the release added.

## 'Electronics industry witnesses surge in hiring led by telecom sector'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The electronics industry in the country has experienced sharp growth in hiring and skilling initiatives with a 154 per cent growth in overall hiring in March, compared to the same month last year, a report said on Thursday.

The report also showed that the telecom sector topped in the hiring demand within the electronics industry, accounting to 64 per cent of hiring, closely followed by lighting and automotive sectors. A comparison of the hiring statistics of March 2024 and March 2023 reveals a 154 per cent growth in overall hiring in the electronics industry, according to a report by workforce management solutions provider Qness Corp. In terms of geography, Tamil Nadu led the states with a 33 per cent share of electronics hiring demand, followed by Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana, it added.

The report by Qness Corp is based on internal as well as external data as well as opinions of industry experts from March 2023 to March 2024.

It further found that there is a significant deployment of women in various roles in the electronics industry, espe-



cially in manufacturing.

The report revealed that the rise in hiring has been more in the mobile manufacturing sector, followed by the retail and services sector.

"Industry experts forecast the creation of 1 million jobs by FY26, and the market size is expected to reach USD 400 bil-

lion by 2025. "This growth is not only fuelled by increasing consumer demand but has also received a boost from government initiatives such as 'Make in India' and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme," Qness Corp President, Workforce Management, Lohit Bhatia, said.

## Vesuvius Group plans to increase India investment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

UK-based Vesuvius Group on Thursday said it will increase its investment capex in India to Rs 1,000 crore, its Chief Executive Patrick Andre said Thursday.

He made the remarks while inaugurating a mould flux manufacturing plant in Visakhapatnam, the company said in a statement. "Given our compelling growth in India and basis our investment pipeline, we envisage surpassing our earlier stated investment plans of Rs 500 crore to reach close to Rs 1,000 crore outlay over the next few years," Andre was quoted as saying in the statement.

Vesuvius has been making significant investments in India by expanding the capacity of its existing manufacturing plants as well as setting up three new greenfield manufacturing



plants, which will create an additional capacity of 2,50,000 tonnes per annum.

The flux manufacturing plant is first of the three new manufacturing plants expected to be operational in 2024.

Mould flux is a critical component used in continuous casting process at steel plants. "India has always been a strategic market for the group. Our investment in manufacturing capabilities in India will further enhance our competitive position in the country," Vesuvius India Ltd Chairman Biswadipta Gupta said.



### Raj-Shilpa's legal team releases statement on property attachment by ED



Raj Kundra, is facing legal issues once more. The businessman, who was previously detained in connection with a pornographic case, is currently under investigation by the Enforcement Directorate for allegedly defrauding investors of their money by using bitcoins. Following the federal agency's announcement, according to reports, the Enforcement Department (ED) has attached Shilpa and Raj's assets valued at Rs 97.79 crore following the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). According to the agency's statement, Amit Bhardwaj, the creator and marketer of the Gain Bitcoin Ponzi scheme, gave Kundra 285 bitcoins in exchange for her putting up a bitcoin mining farm in Ukraine. The bitcoins that he still possesses

are currently worth over Rs 150 crore. In addition to their Mumbai home, their quiet shares and Pune mansion have been linked to a money laundering probe. Now the couple's legal team has issued a statement. Their lawyer, Prashant Patil, shared in the statement, "We shall follow the due process of law and take necessary steps as prescribed under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act to protect the liberty and property of my clients. On the face of it, there is no prima facie case made against my clients, Raj Kundra and Shilpa Shetty Kundra. We have complete faith in the Honourable Judiciary. I believe that when we make our fair representation before the Honourable Enforcement Directorate, even the investigation agencies may grant us justice. We have faith in a fair investigation. We stand committed to cooperating with the authorities as and when required."

### Quentin Tarantino scraps plans for his final film!

Fans are shocked to learn that Quentin Tarantino has allegedly decided to "scrap" his final and most ambitious project, *The Movie Critic*. The title character, supposedly to be played by Brad Pitt, won't be delivering his trademark dry humour on screen. The Hollywood Reporter received information from sources that the director is taking a step back from his previously announced plan to start filming his eagerly anticipated project this year.

HR revealed on April 17 that Tarantino has been putting off his last projects for a number of months. The



movie was planned to be his eleventh feature film and was set in 1977 in California. But recently, people close to him have stated that the auteur is intending to do something fresh and is not interested in revising or revitalising the movie. When Tarantino was in his teens, he was initially motivated by a pessimistic film critic who he looked up to for his final endeavour before "scrapping it." However, according to sources, the plan was reworked to focus on Brad Pitt's performance as stuntman Cliff Booth in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, which earned Pitt an Academy Award. Pitt is considered "one of the last remaining big-screen movie stars," according to Tarantino. Earlier, during the Cannes Film Festival, the director briefly spoke about the film and said, "I can't tell you guys anything until you see the movie. I'm tempted to do some of the character's monologues right now, but I'm not going to. Maybe if there were fewer video cameras. You just have to wait and see."

# what's brewing?

## Brian Cox is 'unimpressed' with co-star Joaquin's performance in *Napolean*

Actor Brian Cox wasn't impressed with fellow actor Joaquin Phoenix's performance in *Napolean*.

Cox didn't mince words when talking about Phoenix's performance, reports 'People' magazine.

The *Succession* star, 77, called Joaquin Phoenix's performance as Napoleon Bonaparte in Ridley Scott's biopic *Napolean* "terrible" during a conversation at the British Library in London.

"It really is appalling," said the Scottish actor of the "truly terrible performance by Joaquin Phoenix," as reported by The Standard.

"I don't know what he was thinking." As per 'People', Phoenix, 49, played Napoleon Bonaparte in the Oscar-nominated historical drama directed by Scott and written by David Scarpa, released last November.

The *Joker* Oscar winner starred opposite Vanessa Kirby as Josephine de Beauharnais, Tahaar Rahim as

Paul Barras, Rupert Everett as Arthur Wellesley, and Ben Miles as Armand de Caulaincourt.

In his conversation with moderator Clive Myrie, titled *History on Stage and Screen*, Cox said of *Napolean*'s lead role, "I would have played it a lot better than Joaquin Phoenix, I tell you that."

He added that the blame was on Phoenix, adding, "I don't think Ridley Scott helps him" as the film's helmer.

Cox said, "I think he's well-named. Joaquin... whack-eeen... whacky. It's a sort of whacky performance."

With regards to the historical accuracy of *Napolean* and other epics like it, Cox reportedly said: "You can say it's good drama. No - it's lies."

He also called the 1995 Best Picture Oscar winner *Braveheart* "a load of nonsense", adding that director-star Mel Gibson "was wonderful, but it's a load of lies".



## Vidya Balan opens up about her intimate scenes in *Do Aur Do Pyaar*

This weekend, Vidya Balan is scheduled to feature in *Do Aur Do Pyaar*. The actor, who is paired opposite Pratik Gandhi, portrays a woman who is having an extramarital affair but is trapped in a loveless marriage. A few private moments between Vidya and Pratik were hinted at in the trailer. Now that she has spoken up about the sequences, Vidya claims that during "uncomfortable or intimate scenes," her laughter acted as a consolation.

In a recent interview, Vidya said, "As actors, we are trained to portray characters, but most of the time, my laughter on the sets gave enough breather to the discomforting or intimate scenes. The way this film is written is pleasing; there is a light touch to a subject like infidelity. The writing is very fun and nuanced at the same time, which is a very fine balance. The film could have become very serious or frivolous."

In addition to Vidya and Pratik, Ileana D'Cruz and Sendhil Ramamurthy also feature in *Do Aur Do Pyaar*. The duo is seen cheating on one another in the trailer. Sendhil is shown to be dating Vidya, but Pratik develops feelings for Ileana D'Cruz. There are moments when every couple tries very hard to make their marriage work. Pratik asks Ileana's character who the father is when she gets pregnant. The romantic comedy slice-of-life portrays the interpersonal strife, confusion, insecurity, and discontent of city lovers.

## Parineeti Chopra reveals feeling 'guilty' listening to wrong advice in her career

Parineeti Chopra's film *Amar Singh Chamkila* is receiving a lot of attention and appreciation. The actor has not been in the spotlight for a performance, though, for a while. *Mission Raniganj: The Great Bharat Rescue*, Parineeti's most recent release from 2023, did not go well at the box office.

In a recent interview, Parineeti was questioned about her past blunders and the kinds of movies she chose; she believed she had followed a lot of incorrect advice.

She said, "I think I heard a lot of wrong advice. And I did a lot of films that were perceived to be the correct thing to do—to be commercial, to be bankable, to be a sellable actor—but were not necessarily the right fit for me. In fact, I am guilty of listening to that noise and succumbing to it. I didn't actually hold my own. If I had stuck to my own and listened to my gut instinct, I would probably have made fewer mistakes."

Talking about the kind of advice she took, Parineeti said, "You know, there were lots of people who were giving me advice and saying that, see, that actress is doing that. You should also do it. That actor is wearing this. You can also go and wear it. And

I used to think that I didn't know anything about this industry. I need to listen to these people. And I went ahead and did it. But that's not the right way. You know all those ups and downs have happened because I was trying and testing. But I think I have a better understanding of what I have to do today."

The *Ishaqzaade* actress stated that she and Raghav had crossed paths during filming. He knew a lot about the history of Chamkila and Amarjot, being a Punjabi. He would frequently say, "My God, you're doing this film! It will be extremely popular." She remembered saying to him, "Oh my gosh, please don't ruin it."

Parineeti also revealed that her family was shocked to see her perform live on set because it wasn't the typical studio dubbing procedure.

## FUN

### ARCHIE

YOU COMING TO POP'S? I'LL BE ALONG SHORTLY!

FIRST, I'M GOING TO REPLENISH MY SPIRIT WITH A SESSION OF CONTEMPLATION AND SOLITUDE!

YOU MEAN YOU'VE GOT DETENTION? PARDON ME FOR PUTTING A POSITIVE SPIN ON THINGS!

LENDY SCARLETTI GOING BUSHY! 0-0

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

IT'S FREEZING IN THIS HOUSE! SOMEBODY CRANK UP THE THERMOSTAT! WHY DOESN'T SOMEONE MAKE A FIRE?!

IF WE CAN'T AFFORD TO HEAT THIS PLACE, MAYBE DAD SHOULD GET A BETTER JOB! WHY CAN'T WE MOVE TO FLORIDA?!

CALVIN, PIPE DOWN AND PUT ON A SWEATER IF YOU'RE COLD.

AND GO TO ALL THAT TROUBLE?!

### GARFIELD

"DEAR ASK A DOG..."

"DO DOGS REALLY EAT HOMEWORK?"

MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH

### REALITY CHECK

IGNORE HER! SHE'S JUST TRYING TO GET A REACTION OUT OF US BY LISTENING TO PITBULL!

### SPEED BUMP

WHAT? NO, REALLY, I'M JUST TAKING NOTES.

### CROSSWORD

### NANCY

Nancy debuted in the comic strip *Fritzi Ritz* by Fannie Bushmiller in 1933. Fritzi adopted her orphaned niece, who soon became the star. The strip's name changed to *Nancy* in 1938. We're ringing in the New Year with the history of Nancy!

AUNT FRITZI'S HOLLYWOOD SCREEN TEST WAS A FLOP... BUT THE STUDIO NEEDED A KID ACTRESS... SO GUESS WHO GOT A SHOT AT STARDOM?

---ACTION---

NANCY-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING???

WELL-- YOU SAID TO ME 'GET IN THERE AND ACT LIKE YOU NEVER ACTED BEFORE'!

### SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

RULES

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

### ACROSS

- Look at the stars through this
- Naming words
- Memorise
- Awful to look at
- Say again
- A team game with sticks
- Trip over
- A short spell of very wild weather with wind and rain
- Instructions for building houses
- Played make-believe

### DOWN

- Of the same length
- A compass direction
- Less hot
- A flat dish
- Zeros
- Stinging plants
- A hard safety hat
- A large group of singers
- Not asleep
- Unlock

SOLUTION

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | H | E | A | B | F |   |   |   |
| S | P | E | A | R | R | I | V | E |
| P | A | R | A | D | E | I |   |   |
| A | U | T | H | O | R |   |   |   |
| A | R | M | S |   |   |   |   |   |
| G | R | I | T |   |   |   |   |   |
| U | N | I |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| S | A | I | L | E | S |   |   |   |
| S | L | I | P | P | E | R | S |   |



## Queen of expressions embarks on Poland Spring Tour 2024

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Apeksha Niranjani is a renowned Bharatanatyam dancer known for her exceptional skills, artistic depth, and captivating performances. She has gained recognition in the Bharatanatyam community for her unique style and contributions to the art form. Her dance transcends geographical boundaries, serving as a testament to the universal language of art. Apeksha Niranjani continues to push boundaries with her unique style and captivating per-

for-mances, representing India on various global platforms. She earned the title of "queen of expressions" too.

Embarking on her fifth performance tour in Poland, she weaved together her heritage and artistic passion. She shares her connection and cultural exchange moments in Poland. "My connection to Poland is rooted in my heritage, as my grandmother was Polish. This bond has drawn me to perform in Poland multiple times, and I'm excited to say this will mark my fifth performance there.

The Polish audience has always welcomed me with open arms, showing great appreciation for innovative art forms. This time around, I'm introducing a fresh choreography and version of my performance. In a groundbreaking collaboration, I'm joining forces with a local Polish musician to blend Bharatanatyam with Polish folk music—a fusion that, to my knowledge, is being attempted for the first time."

Poland, for obvious reasons, holds a unique place in her heart, not only because her grandmother, friends, and relatives live there but also because they affectionately refer to her as

the "granddaughter of Poland." "This endears me even more to the country. Performing there evokes a distinct sense of emotion within me, a feeling that's heightened by the presence of my loved ones. The cultural richness of Poland resonates with that of India, creating a shared understanding of values and traditions. This cultural connection makes performing in Poland an experience that's deeply special, akin to the warmth of performing in India."

The tour spans various cities and venues, each with its own unique charm and requirements. For the dancing diva, it's

been a pleasure performing in locations like Zabkowice and even in front of a church. "My upcoming performance in Sobótka promises a distinct atmosphere. One of the organisers, whose grandmother

sought refuge in India 80 years ago, has shared her cultural heritage with me, enriching my experience. This cultural exchange extends to her granddaughter as well. As I travel from city to city, I'm not just performing; I'm engaging in a cultural dialogue through various recitals. Each performance is an opportunity to connect with the past and present, creating a tapestry of shared experiences and artistic expression."

Every moment on stage is memorable for an artist, but the first dance always remains memorable. She recalls, "The first time I took the stage in Poland, my nerves were palpable. It was a moment of truth, facing a Polish audi-

ence with anticipation, wondering how they would receive me. I had painstakingly prepared a traditional Indian classical dance, Bharatanatyam, to present to them. Learning that the auditorium was filled to capacity brought me immense joy, yet it was mingled with a touch of anxiety. The applause that erupted at the conclusion of my performance was nothing short of enchanting. Audience members expressed their admiration for my dance; some even approached to touch my feet in reverence. I humbly declined, but they insisted, saying they saw a divine presence in me. These instances are cherished memories, marking my debut performance in Poland as an unforgettable one."

"This aspect of performance is particularly poignant for my tour in Poland, as it underscores the profound truth that even without sight, one can express a world of feelings through their eyes. It's a theme that resonates universally, allowing everyone to connect with the depth of these expressions."



Renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Apeksha Niranjani, who is currently on her Poland Spring Tour 2024, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing her cultural exchange moments in Poland, why was travelling there a liberating experience for her, and more.



## Hear out! Signs your liver is crying for help

The liver, one of the body's most vital organs, performs numerous essential functions, including filtering toxins from the bloodstream, aiding in digestion, and metabolising nutrients. When the liver is under stress or facing dysfunction, it often sends distress signals that shouldn't be ignored.

Here are 11 signs that your liver may be crying out for help:

**Fatigue:** Persistent fatigue and lack of energy, even after adequate rest, could indicate liver impairment as the liver plays a crucial role in energy metabolism.

**Jaundice:** Yellowing of the skin and eyes is a classic sign of liver dysfunction caused by elevated levels of bilirubin, a pigment produced during the breakdown of red blood cells.

**Abdominal Pain and swelling:** Discomfort or swelling in the abdomen, particularly in the upper right quadrant, may indicate liver inflammation or enlargement.

**Digestive issues:** Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea can occur when the liver is unable to produce sufficient bile or process nutrients effectively.

**Loss of appetite:** A sudden decrease in appetite or unexplained weight loss may signify liver dysfunction, as the liver plays a key role in metabolism and nutrient absorption.

**Dark urine:** Urine that appears darker than usual, ranging from amber to brownish in colour, could indicate liver problems due to excess bilirubin excretion.

**Pale stools:** Light-coloured or clay-coloured stools may indicate insufficient bile production, a common symptom of liver diseases such as hepatitis or cirrhosis.

**Itchy skin:** Pruritus, or persistent itching, can result from the accumulation of bile salts in the bloodstream due to liver dysfunction.

**Bruising easily:** A compromised liver may lead to decreased production of clotting factors, resulting in easy bruising and prolonged bleeding.

**Swelling in legs and ankles:** Edema, or swelling in the lower extremities, can occur when the liver fails to regulate fluid balance properly.

**Mental confusion:** Cognitive changes such as difficulty concentrating, memory lapses, or

confusion may occur in advanced liver disease due to the buildup of toxins in the bloodstream.

If you experience one or more of these symptoms, it's crucial to consult a healthcare professional for a comprehensive evaluation. Early detection and intervention can help prevent further liver damage and improve treatment outcomes. Additionally, adopting a healthy lifestyle, including maintaining a balanced diet, limiting alcohol consumption, and avoiding hepatotoxic substances, can support liver health and function. Remember, listening to your body's signals and seeking timely medical attention can make a significant difference in preserving your liver health and overall well-being.

(The author, Dr. Ajay Shah, is the Managing Director of Neuberger Ajay Shah Laboratory.)



## Rajpal Yadav shines in *Kaam Chalu Hai*

TANISHA SAXENA

In 2015, the Bhillore family was struck by tragedy when they lost their cherished son, Prakash Bhillore, in a harrowing accident attributed to a pothole. Seated behind his cousin on a two-wheeler, Prakash was violently ejected from the bike when its front wheel unexpectedly plunged into a pothole. Regrettably, he succumbed to a brain hemorrhage resulting from the accident.

In the aftermath of this heartbreaking incident, Prakash's father, Dadarao Bhillore, embarked on a mission to address the issue by personally filling potholes, a noble effort that continues with over 750 potholes already tended to. And, the poignant story of their resilience has been immortalised in the Zee5 film *Kaam Chalu Hai*.

At the heart of the narrative lies a close-knit family trio: Manoj Patil (played by Rajpal Yadav), alongside his wife Radha (played by Giaa Manek), and their cherished daughter Gudiya (played by Kurangi Vijayshri Nagraj). Set against the picturesque backdrop of Sangli, Maharashtra, the film unfolds with a captivating drone shot capturing the essence of the cityscape. Seamlessly weaving through the tapestry of everyday life, the film delicately portrays scenes of the railway station, vibrant streets, bustling marketplaces, and individuals engrossed in their daily routines, all depicted through evocative black-and-white imagery.

Gudiya and Patil share a deeply touching bond, one that exemplifies the beauty of father-daughter relationships. Despite cricket being traditionally perceived as a male-dominated sport, Gudiya dreams of becoming a cricketer, a passion wholeheartedly supported by her father. Every day, she diligently attends practice sessions, with her father faithfully by her side, offering unwavering encouragement and companionship. Witnessing their tender moments together, from joint workouts to heartfelt cheers, it's evident that their bond transcends the boundaries of mere familial ties.

While Radha, Gudiya's mother, emphasises the importance of academic pursuits over sports, Patil remains steadfast in his unwavering support for his daughter's aspirations. Their dynamic is a testament to Patil's unwavering dedication to

Gudiya, always advocating for her dreams regardless of external pressures.

The viewers are treated to an abundance of heartwarming scenes showcasing the inseparable bond between father and daughter. Gudiya emerges as not only a beacon of inspiration but also as the adhesive that binds her

her



parents together during times of discord. However, tragedy strikes when Gudiya succumbs to a fatal road accident caused by a pothole. Subsequently, about 50 minutes are dedicated to Patil's journey as he grapples with the loss of his beloved daughter, from initial denial to eventual acceptance, culminating in his decision to initiate a revolution by personally filling the potholes.

This approximately one-and-a-half-hour film heavily hinges on Rajpal Yadav's gripping and poignant performance. From the get-go, Yadav captivates audiences with his authentic portrayal of a grieving father. For instance, after completing all the death rituals for Gudiya, Patil sits with his wife at home, still under the illusion that Gudiya is sitting right beside him. He even picks up the bat and tries to repair it for his daughter. In a poignant scene, Patil sits beside the pothole that claimed his daughter's life. He stares at it,

overcome with grief, tossing pebbles into it and even running his hands through its depths. These moments are profoundly emotional, and Yadav skillfully ensures they resonate deeply. His expressions are incredibly natural, drawing viewers into the raw authenticity of his character's sorrow.

Well, the film largely overlooked the other two characters. There was significant potential to delve deeper into the mother's role, for instance, or to explore the daughter's character more fully before her tragic demise. However, it appears that the film heavily relied on Rajpal Yadav to carry the narrative. While the emotional depth of the film is commendable, in a story based on real events, there should have been a stronger factual foundation. If the film aims to portray a father's fight for justice for his daughter's death, then this aspect should have been given more prominence. However, the film becomes too emotionally charged to address anything beyond the central emotional arc.

The film's musical score serves as a unifying thread, seamlessly weaving together the various elements of the narrative. Take for example *Gudiya*, performed by the soulful vocals of Papon, with music composed by the talented duo Palaash Muchhal and Saurabh Singh Senger. This melodic masterpiece not only captures the essence of Gudiya's journey but also evokes a range of emotions that resonate deeply with the audience. Additionally, *Ram Naam Satya Hai Unplugged*, featuring a heartfelt rendition by Divya Kumar and composed by Muchhal, further enriches the emotional tapestry of the storyline. These poignant songs serve as

poignant reflections of the characters' innermost feelings, elevating the viewer's connection to the narrative and adding a layer of depth to their cinematic experience.

REVIEW

**DIRECTED BY :** Palaash Muchhal  
**WRITER :** Palaash Muchhal  
**STARS :** Rajpal Naurang Yadav  
Giaa Manek Kurangi Vijayshri Nagraj  
**RATING :** 2.5



# LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS FACE STERN HOME TEST AGAINST QUALITY CSK BOWLING

**PTI ■ LUCKNOW**

A set of probing questionnaires awaits the Lucknow Super Giants on their home turf as Chennai Super Kings' cerebral bowling unit will look to use its variation to the fullest on a two-paced Ekana Stadium track during their IPL clash here on Friday.

The two teams endured contrasting fortunes in their previous couple of matches. While Rituraj Gaikwad's team, still 'marshalled' by the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni, is coming into the game with back-to-back victories, LSG under KL Rahul have endured a mini-slump with successive defeats.

With LSG's batting unit not exactly inspiring the highest level of confidence despite its firepower, it remains to be seen how it tackles an attack where each bowler brings something different to the table.

Matheesha Pathirana, with his yorkers, is literally unplayable at the death, while Mustafizur Rahman has at least three variations of cutters, including one with scrambled seam.

Ravindra Jadeja, on tracks where the ball grips like it often happens at the Ekana, could be more than a handful. At Lucknow, it could be an option to play the extra spinner in Maheesh Theekshana to make full use of the conditions.

The average first innings score in Lucknow this season has been 175, which is at least 15 sub-par compared to some of the other grounds, and this is exactly the kind of total where Dhoni, like the seasoned 'Concert Master' of an orchestra team, controls the 'pitch and tune'.

Lucknow, on the other hand, have had issues with injuries. Their young pace sensation Mayank Yadav had to sit out of the last two games after suffering lower abdominal

strain after playing just two and a quarter games. The 21-year-old has resumed training on Wednesday and his blistering pace could seriously have an impact on the match as most of the other bowlers playing this game are either medium-fast or fast medium. But there is still no clarity if Mayank will be playing on Friday.

In the spin department, Ravi Bishnoi has been bowling tight spells, but his one dimensional skill of bowling one googly after another has been found out as he got only four wickets in the six game so far. Bishnoi vs a rampaging Shivam Dube will be a mouth-watering contest and will add a spicy sub-plot to the main battle.

The batting is a bigger issue for LSG as one of their mainstays — Quinton de Kock, after consecutive half-tens, has hit a rough patch in the previous three games. The contentious 'Impact Player' rule has also



meant that Krunal Pandya, a more than capable left-hander, has been batting as low as No. 7 and faced 41 deliveries cumulatively in six games — an average seven balls per game. Krunal isn't exactly a finisher, and not using him at optimum level has also been a problem.

Even skipper KL Rahul (204 runs at 138 SR) hasn't been at his best and his safe starts have been more damaging than beneficial. Young Ayush Badoni too seems to be playing for his place in the side. Only Nicholas Pooran, with 19 sixes in six games, have looked dangerous.

While CSK will look to consolidate their place in the points table with what could be their fifth win, a defeat would further push LSG southwards.

**SQUAD:**  
**Chennai Super Kings:** MS Dhoni (wk), Aravelly Avanish (wk), Devon Conway, Rituraj Gaikwad (c), Ajinkya Rahane,

Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadhav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana, Sameer Rizvi.

**Lucknow Super Giants:** KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yudhvir Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur, Amit Mishra, Shamir Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Shivam Mavi, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Mohd. Arshad Khan.

## Started preparing for freight train called SRH: DC bowling coach James Hopes

**PTI ■ AHMEDABAD**

Delhi Capitals bowling coach James Hopes said his team is looking forward to beginning its home stretch against the "freight train" called Sunrisers Hyderabad as it aims for a resurgent run after some early setbacks in the ongoing IPL.

Delhi defeated Gujarat Titans by six wickets after bowling them out for 89 runs in a clash on Wednesday. The team will now play three back-to-back home games, starting with the contest against SRH on Saturday. SRH have been flying high and have twice posted record-breaking IPL totals in this edition. They registered the highest ever in the tournament history — 287/3 — in their last game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

"We're running into the freight train next game, which is SRH. We've already started preparing for that. So we're hopeful if we have a good week and a half we would be top-four," Hopes said in a media interaction here on Wednesday night.

DC are currently placed sixth on the points table.

Hopes said DC skipper Rishabh Pant seems to be hitting his stride at just the right time, with his batting showing improvement and his leadership inspiring those around him.

"It's pretty good. Last year, we tried really hard to cover that gap. It's very really hard to cover a world-class keeper, if not the best keeper but batsman in the world.

"Now he's back, you can just see everything about his game. His keeping, his captaincy is becoming very sharp. His batting has been pretty good from the start of the tournament actually," Hopes said.

"He's rounding in some pretty good form at back half of the tournament, and he's leading really well as well," Hopes said.

Hopes was confident that Wednesday's win would negate the 106-run defeat against Kolkata Knight Riders on April 3



that hurt the team's net run rate.

"Hopefully that negates the 270 game and the net run rate. So, yeah, it's been a good night, but we've got a pretty quick turnaround to our next game," he said.

**GILL NOT UNDER PRESSURE:** Gujarat Titans batter David Miller defended skipper Shubman Gill, who had a rare bad day. Gill got out for eight as four of GT's top-six failed to reach double-digit scores and the 2022 champions folded for their lowest IPL total of 89 in 17.3 overs.

"I don't think it affected the result. We have got seven-eight batters and everyone is capable of winning games," the veteran South African batter said at the post-match interaction.

Asked whether the burden of captaincy is weighing Gill down, the South African said: "No, not at all. He has scored 250-plus runs (267) from seven games, so he's batting superbly.

"It was just a bit sticky tonight, he played a bit early and got caught to cover another day he would hit it for four. He's batting

superbly. He's got a lot of runs so far and a lot still to come."

"A couple of wickets were really unlucky and strange dismissals. I thought the wicket was a bit sticky. But it was certainly not a 89 all out wicket... Definitely below par tonight. We can make all the excuses in the world but at the end of the day we didn't play good cricket."

He further backed their head coach Ashish Nehra who was widely credited for GT's historic triumph in their IPL debut season in 2022.

"No, there's nothing wrong with him at all. We really enjoy his enthusiasm, his passion for the game. Off the field, he's got a gift for really making a lot of time for every single player, getting around and making sure that guys are in a good space, whether they're not playing or if they're playing."

"He's so passionate. He really wants the guys to do well and very supportive at the same breath. So, there's nothing wrong with him at all, just a lot of passion," Miller said.

## Pant mobility will give him and Team India management encouragement: Pietersen

**PTI ■ AHMEDABAD**

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen feels Rishabh Pant and the Indian team management should feel very encouraged by the comeback-man's mobility in the IPL game against Gujarat Titans here as the T20 World Cup draws closer.

Pant grabbed two catches, effected a stumping and then played a 16-run cameo in Delhi Capitals' six-wicket triumph over Gujarat Titans here on Wednesday. He was adjudged 'Player of the Match' based purely on his keeping skills, a first in IPL since Dinesh Karthik won one in



2009 edition in South Africa. Pant is the top contender for the wicketkeeper's slot in the Indian squad that will be chosen for the showpiece in June. "His mobility was

something that will give him great encouragement, which will also encourage Team India. Of course, he needs game time, as everyone does when coming back from an

injury," Pietersen said on 'Star Sports Cricket Live'.

"He's returning from a horrific injury, so game time is crucial for him. To prepare for the T20 World Cup, he should play these 14-15 IPL games because it's significant leading into a T20 World Cup. If he plays that much cricket, he will be ready," he added referring to the life-threatening car crash in which Pant suffered multiple injuries in 2022.

Pietersen was also impressed by Pant's captaincy during the game, saying he used his resources quite tactfully. DC dismissed GT for 89 runs in 17.3 overs before overhauling the target in 8.5 overs.

## Down with hip strain, RCB Maxwell unlikely to play against KKR on Sunday

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**

On a "mental and physical break" to fight his poor form, Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has revealed that he is also nursing a "hip strain" and is unlikely to return for his team's away IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders here on Sunday.

The 35-year-old, who has managed just 32 runs in six innings with an average of 5.33, pulled out of their previous match against Sunrisers Hyderabad saying "physical and mental toll probably just wore me down a little bit."



On ESPN's 'Around the Wicket' show he also disclosed his hip injury.

"I've actually got a little bit of a hip strain so I've got a few more days off and during recovery," he said.

"So I've got a little period here where I'm still training, still trying to get myself right. If there is a spot that becomes available, I'll obviously put my hand up and take it."

"It's not one of those things where I've set a date that I'll be out for three games then I'll come back whenever I'm ready. That's that's not how it works. I haven't been at a level that's good enough to warrant a spot on the side this year."

### OTHER SPORTS

## Zhou will be a star regardless of who wins the Chinese Formula 1 race in Shanghai

**AP ■ SHANGHAI**

Formula 1 returns to China this weekend after a five-year absence. And, no matter who wins on Sunday, the star locally will be China-born driver Zhou Guanyu.

Despite his so-so results, Zhou is being promoted as a celebrity in China. He's the subject of a new film as the first Chinese driver to compete in F1. And he's, of course, a favourite of sponsors who want a Chinese connection.

Ahead of the first Grand Prix weekend in Shanghai since 2019, Zhou described it as more than a race for him, saying "with a Chinese driver on the grid, we will write history."

By the time he got to the driver's news conference on Thursday, where the questions to him ranged from China's economy and politics to its burgeoning auto industry's future potential in F1, Zhou had spent more than a week doing promotional work and meetings with sponsors, backers and fans.

"I've been extremely busy, you know - the busiest man, probably, in Shanghai over the last week and a half," he said. "A lot of activities done. It's great to see the support from the country already." Zhou has never won a



Formula 1 race. In 48 races since 2022, he's yet to even reach the podium — meaning a finish in the first three places. In the last F1 race almost two weeks ago in Japan, his Sauber retired with a gearbox failure and he placed 18th out of 20.

In the season standings in 2023, he was also 18th with only six points from 22 races. But, the numbers don't matter much in the search for a hometown hero in F1.

"The pressure, of course, this race is a little bit higher, but I don't think it gets much more than for me than my debut in Formula 1," he said.

"Because by now everything feels a lot more familiar than back in the day. First day here is completely different... Now's the third season. So, I'm just going to use that."

Zhou was born in Shanghai

and, though he's spent many of his formative years in England, Sunday's Chinese GP is a homecoming for him - and the race. The last F1 in China was run contested in 2019, and the next four were cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He noted that tickets sold out quicker than ever for the Chinese GP, with interest in the sport growing exponentially since he watched his first F1 race.

"For me, of course, it's been 20 years waiting until this Grand Prix," Zhou said. "Coming back here being an F1 driver... Yeah, I can't wait."

"A lot of mixed emotion, of course, but I want to treat it as much as the normal race weekend."

A film about Zhou's life will be released Friday by the Shanghai Media Group, a state-owned company and one of China's largest media conglomerates.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes — he's moving next season to Ferrari — won the 2019 race in China amid his era of dominance when he won four straight season titles between 2017 and 2020.

However, the race two weeks ago in Japan was the 49th in a straight that Hamilton has failed to win. His last victory was in 2021.



## Juventus ordered to pay Ronaldo more than USD 10 million in salary dispute

**AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)**

Juventus has been ordered to pay Cristiano Ronaldo more than USD 10 million by an arbitration board following a salary dispute. The dispute regarded a move by Juventus players to defer part of their salaries during the coronavirus pandemic.

The 9.8 million euros (USD 10.5 million) that Juventus was ordered to pay Ronaldo is half the amount that the five-time Ballon d'Or winner had been seeking from the Turin club in back wages. Juventus said in a statement late Wednesday that "with the support of its

legal counsel" it's "reviewing the decision made by the arbitration board, reserving all assessments and initiatives to preserve its rights."

Ronaldo played for Juventus from 2018-21, helping the club to two Serie A titles.

Former Juventus president Andrea Agnelli and the entire club board resigned in 2023 amid an investigation into false accounting - which then resulted in a 10-point penalty for Juventus in Serie A and a ban by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) from Europe for this season.

## Real Madrid beats Man City 4-3 on penalties to advance to the Champions League semifinals

**AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)**

Real Madrid weathered the storm, silenced the crowd and ultimately ended Manchester City's brief hold on the Champions League.

The all-time kings of Europe moved a step closer to a record-extending 15th title in the competition they have dominated after a 4-3 win Wednesday on penalties at Etihad Stadium. But not before being pushed to the limit by defending champion City.

"I was pretty much dead on my feet at the end," Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham said. "It's so difficult. They are continuously probing with the ball and move you around. Most teams would fall apart when City get on top of you, but we stood up really well."

The game had gone to the uncertainty of a shootout after ending 1-1 on the night and 4-4 on aggregate.

City dominated the chances after going behind to Rodrygo's goal in the 12th minute, but only had Kevin de Bruyne's leveler in the 76th to show for its superiority, which included 64% of possession and 18 corners to Madrid's one through extra time.

That counted for little as Antonio Rudiger struck the decisive spot kick after Bernardo Silva and Mateo Kovacic both saw their



penalties saved. "In this competition, that's the way football happens," City manager Pep Guardiola said. "In other sports, for (these) statistics, we would have won." Guardiola had few complaints. He accepted his team had failed to capitalize against a Madrid team that was forced to defend deep against wave after wave of attack.

Erling Haaland hit the bar with one header in the first half De Bruyne sent an effort sailing over from inside the box in the second. Madrid dug deep, held on and now faces Bayern Munich in the semifinals after the Germans beat Arsenal 1-0 on Wednesday and 3-2 on aggregate.

"Today it came down to mentality," Bellingham said. The defeat ended City's bid to become the first English team to win back-to-back Champions League titles and its pursuit of successive trebles. It is still challenging for the Premier League title

and FA Cup. Victory for Madrid saw the Spanish giant advance to the semifinals for the fourth year in row — denying City the chance to emulate that feat. "This was about survival," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Madrid is a club based on always fighting to stay in situations where there seems to be no way out — but we always find a way. By the time the penalty shoot-out came, we were totally convinced we'd go through."

Ancelotti has already won the Champions League a record four times as a coach — one more than Guardiola — and could extend that record by lifting the trophy for a third time with Madrid.

For Guardiola it is back to the drawing board after watching his team relinquish the trophy it won for the first time last year and ending his own 12-year wait to triumph again in European club soccer's most demanding competition.



## Chiranjeevi felicitates Maharshi Raghava for his 100th blood donation

The Chiranjeevi Blood Bank, a beacon of hope and life in the Telugu states, recently witnessed a heartwarming event. Actor Maharshi Raghava, a dedicated supporter of the blood bank, achieved a remarkable feat by donating blood for the 100th time. This incredible act of selflessness and commitment to saving lives deserves immense praise and recognition.

Maharshi Raghava's connection with the Chiranjeevi Blood Bank goes back to its very inception. He was the second person to donate blood, following in the footsteps of Murali Mohan, when the bank opened its doors in 1998. Chiranjeevi, recognising Raghava's dedication, had promised to be present for his 100th donation. Despite being in Chennai at the time, Chiranjeevi ensured

that Raghava's milestone was celebrated. He invited Raghava and his wife, Shilpa Chakraborty, to his residence for a special felicitation ceremony. Murali Mohan, the first donor, also joined the celebration, adding to the significance of the occasion. During the ceremony, Chiranjeevi expressed his heartfelt appreciation for Raghava's unwavering commitment. He lauded Raghava's dedication to donating blood every three months, highlighting the profound impact it has on saving lives. The presence of key figures from the Chiranjeevi Blood Bank, including Chief Financial Officer Sekhar, COO Ramanaswamy Naidu, and Medical Officer Dr. Anushgar, further emphasised the importance of this achievement.

## Teja's 'Super Yodha' movie titled *Mirai*

People Media Factory has set the stage for a grand cinematic experience with their upcoming venture, titled *Mirai*, starring the charismatic Teja Sajja as the enigmatic Super Yodha. Directed by the talented Karthik Gattamneni, this project is backed by the vision of TG Vishwa Prasad, promising top-tier production values and technical brilliance.

The unveiling of *Mirai* commenced with a title that speaks of the future - depicted in a striking Japanese font on Thursday. Teja Sajja's first look as the Super Yodha, set against the backdrop of a volcanic eruption, is nothing short of awe-inspiring. The poster captures the essence of the character's fierce demeanor, heightened by the eclipse looming in the background.

A teaser glimpse unveiled the profound backstory of *Mirai*, rooted in the historical context of King Ashoka and his secretive 9. The narrative weaves around the divine knowledge guarded by 9 warriors across generations, with an impending eclipse threatening this sacred wisdom. Teja Sajja shines as the Super Yodha, poised to protect the legacy of Ashoka's secrets through exhilarating combat sequences.

The glimpse leaves viewers captivated, setting the stage for an epic battle across generations.

*Mirai* is a testament to the collaborative efforts of a skilled team, with Karthik Gattamneni handling the screenplay alongside Manibabu

Karanam for dialogues. Sri Nagendra Tangala's art direction and Vivek Kuchibhotla's co-production further enhance the film's visual appeal.

Anticipation is sky-high as *Mirai*



gears up for a multi-lingual release, including Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Marathi, and even Chinese, scheduled for April 18th, 2025. This ambitious project promises to deliver an unparalleled cinematic experience in both 2D and 3D formats, marking a milestone in the realm of Indian cinema.

## Market Mahalakshmi : Made for family audience

PNS | HYDERABAD

### Plot:

A government clerk (played by Kedar Shankar) meticulously plans his son's (played by Parvateesam) future, aiming for a prosperous match with a girl who can offer a substantial dowry. However, his scheme falters when Parvateesam falls for Mahalakshmi (played by Praneekaavika), a spirited vegetable

seller at the market. Mahalakshmi, burdened with family responsibilities due to her father's paralysis and her brother's (played by Mahaboo Basha) alcoholism, is initially skeptical of love. As Parvateesam endeavors to win her heart, the story unfolds with unexpected twists.

### Performances:

Parvateesam shines in a settled performance, complemented by Praneekaavika's refreshing portrayal of Mahalakshmi.

Mukku Avinash and Mahaboo Basha also leave a mark in their respective roles.

### Technicalities:

Director Mukkshesh's extensive experience in short films is reflected in his cohesive storytelling. Surendra Chilumula's cinematography captures the essence of the narrative, enhancing the film's visual appeal. Joe Emnav's music stands out. Producer Akhilesh Kalaru's dedication to nurturing talent is evident in the impressive production values.

### Analysis:

Despite its title suggesting a female-centric narrative, *Market Mahalakshmi* is grounded in profound family values. Director Mukkshesh draws inspiration

from real-life experiences, delivering a compelling story that challenges traditional norms. The film's strength lies in its witty dialogues and comedic moments, although certain scenes may test audience patience.

The film's pacing improves significantly in the second half, delivering engaging performances and heartwarming family values.

### Verdict:

Overall, *Market Mahalakshmi* offers a heartfelt cinematic experience, blending comedy with strong family values.

While the first half may feel slow-paced, the film picks up momentum post-interval, delivering memorable performances and engaging storytelling.

It is recommended for its genuine portrayal of relationships and commitment to entertaining family audiences.



Prithviraj Sukumaran has returned to the director's chair after the success of *Aadujeevitham*. Following the triumph of his directorial debut *Lucifer*, which became a critical and box office hit in Malayalam cinema, Prithviraj is now filming *L2: Empuraan*, featuring the legendary Mohanlal in the lead role.

Currently shooting its fourth schedule in Chennai, Prithviraj recently shared behind-the-scenes glimpses from the set, expressing his excitement with the caption, "On to

home turf next! #L2E #EMPU-RAAN."

In the shared images, Prithviraj Sukumaran can be seen directing his team on set, showcasing his versatility both in front of and behind the camera. His acclaimed performance as Najeer in *Aadujeevitham* has heightened anticipation for his directorial venture, *L2: Empuraan*.

The sequel to the 2019 blockbuster features a stellar cast including Mohanlal, Manju Warrier, Tovino Thomas, and Indrajith Sukumaran, promising an exciting cinematic experience for fans.

## Prithviraj returns as director

## Aadi Sai Kumar next is *Krishna From Brindavanam*



In a glittering event at the Venkateswara Temple, Kakatiya Hills, the launch of Aadi Sai Kumar's latest venture, *Krishna From Brindavanam*, witnessed the presence of esteemed personalities from Tollywood. Producer Dil Raju and director Anil Ravipudi, along with actor Sai Kumar. The event, marked by traditional rituals, saw Dil Raju initiating the muhurtham shot with the clapperboard, while Anil Ravipudi undertook the honorary directorial duties. Sai Kumar contributed by switching on the camera, symbolising the auspicious beginning of this much-anticipated family entertainer.

Aadi Sai Kumar, expressing his gratitude, acknowledged the presence of Dil Raju and Anil Ravipudi, highlighting the significance of reuniting with director Veerabhadram Chowdary after their previous success with *Chuttalabhai*. Aadi assured that *Krishna From Brindavanam*

would be a delightful treat for families, filled with elements of village drama, comedy, and heartfelt emotions.

Director Veerabhadram Chowdary echoed Aadi's enthusiasm, emphasising the film's engaging storyline and the pivotal role played by Digangana Suryavanshi, who reunites with Aadi after *Crazy Fellow*. The production, led by Thumu Narasimha and Jami Srinivasa Rao under Lakshmi Prasanna Productions, promises to captivate audiences with its engaging narrative. *Krishna From Brindavanam* is slated to commence shooting in June, with music maestro Anup Rubens onboard to deliver another stellar album. With a talented cast and crew on board, the film is poised to deliver an unforgettable cinematic experience, blending drama, comedy, and heartfelt emotions for audiences of all ages.



## Satyam Rajesh: Embracing authenticity in cinematic narratives

PNS | HYDERABAD

In the bustling city of Hyderabad, where stories unfold behind every apartment door and the echo of daily life resonates through the corridors, Satyam Rajesh found himself drawn into the depths of *Tenant*, an upcoming film that promises to unravel the intricacies of everyday relationships.

Directed by Y. Yugandhar, Megha Chaudhary, Chandana Payyavula, Esther Noronha, and Bharat Kant play key roles in this film hitting theatres today (April 19). Produced by Mogulla Chandrasekhar Reddy under the banner of Mahateja Creations, this film has gotten an A certificate, which is drawing everyone's attention.

As he sat down for a candid conversation with the media, Satyam shared glimpses of the movie's essence, infused with his passion for authentic storytelling. "*Tenant* delves into everyday scenarios, focusing on the intricate problems faced by a married couple," he explained, his eyes reflecting the depth of the narrative. "Set within an apartment, the film unfolds as a realistic depiction of life events." One question that lingered in the air was about the film's 'A' certificate, a stamp that added weight to its authenticity. "The film features a scene where a character falls from a height, depicted realistically for authenticity," Satyam revealed.

The conversation then steered toward Satyam's affinity for unconventional films. "I prioritise concept-driven narratives over mainstream genres like action or romance," he shared adding, "My goal is to contribute meaningfully as an artist, exploring stories that resonate with authenticity rather than commercial elements." Reflecting on the film's production journey, Satyam praised the director's vision. "Every shot was part of the film, seamlessly woven into the trailer. Director Yugandhar's storytelling capti-

ated me from the start, ensuring a cohesive and engaging narrative," he remarked.

When asked about the decision to opt for a theatrical release for *Tenant*, Satyam's response was rooted in the film's compelling storyline: "The film surpassed our expectations during the production process. Inspired by its quality, we decided to release it in theaters to reach a wider audience."

The conversation delved deeper into the nuances of *Tenant*, particularly its writing and music. "Varma Srinivas' writing is natural and devoid of unnecessary dialogues," Satyam praised, further adding, "Sahitya Sagar's music breathes life into the film, evoking genuine emotions that resonate deeply."

Looking ahead to future projects, Satyam expressed enthusiasm for character-driven roles aligned with his artistic vision. "I gravitate towards nuanced roles akin to Prakash Raj and Raghuvaran," he revealed, his passion for diverse performances evident. In closing, Satyam left viewers with a glimpse of what to expect from *Tenant*: "The film offers a compelling murder mystery intertwined with suspense. Audiences will be intrigued and empathetic towards the characters."

Actor Satyam Rajesh, who will next be seen in the upcoming film *Tenant*, speaks to the media here sharing his passion for authentic storytelling, some insights on *Tenant*, and more.

## Sree Vishnu launches *Raja Raveendar* teaser

In a recent unveiling, the teaser of the eagerly anticipated family drama *Sarangadariya*, starring Raja Raveendar, was revealed with support from actor Sree Vishnu. The film, produced by Umadevi and Sarath Chandra under the Saija Creations banner and directed by Padmarao Abbiseti (Alias Pandu), is currently undergoing post-production with a planned release date in May. Speaking about the film, the teaser portrays *Sarangadariya* as a poignant and emotional family entertainer. It centers around a middle-aged man striving to lead a respectable life within society alongside his wife and children—a narrative fraught with challenges and societal scrutiny.

Commenting on the teaser release, producers Umadevi and Sarath Chandra expressed grati-

tude to Sree Vishnu for his support. They highlighted the film's heartwarming emotions and reaffirmed their commitment to the May release schedule.

Director Padmarao Abbiseti (Pandu) shared his enthusiasm for the project, marking his directorial debut with *Sarangadariya*. He emphasized the film's exploration of middle-class family struggles and its portrayal of universal themes of love and family bonds. Abbiseti echoed the producers' sentiments, underscoring the film's status as a quintessential family entertainer.

With its compelling narrative and relatable themes, *Sarangadariya* promises to strike a chord with audiences upon its release in May, offering a heartfelt portrayal of familial relationships and societal challenges.

