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QUOTE OF THE DAY



Betrayal thy name is Congress! The Congress came to power in Telangana by selling false dreams to all sections, especially the youth. Congress leaders like Balmoor Venkat were responsible for filing court cases and cancelling many exams. While leaders like Venkat got an MLC post, those who were hoping for government jobs were left in the lurch. The true colours of the Congress are out for all to see



-KT Rama Rao, BRS MLA

P4

PM says 'aatank' Pak is struggling for 'aata' now

'HYD ALTERED MY IDEA OF WHAT I WANTED TO DO FOR A LIVING'

Sridevi Vijaykumar discusses her comeback to Telugu CINEMA

DON'T MISS...

Police crack Rs 66 lakh ATM heist...

The police solved the major heist within hours by arresting three persons and recovered Rs 66 lakh booty. Addressing a press conference here on Friday, SP Garud Sumit Sunil said that the police cracked the major heist which took place at Punjab National Bank ATM located near the Indian Oil Petrol filling station opposite Ayush Ayurvedic Hospital in Kurnool road here on April 18. Branch Manager in Cash Management Services ...

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Delhi Police to travel by...

In a first, the Delhi Police personnel with weapons will be seen travelling in metro trains during emergency situations to avoid getting stuck in traffic jams and reach the spot sooner, officials said on Friday. According to officials, the Delhi Police has got the go-ahead on its proposal in a recent meeting with the DMRC (Delhi Metro Rail Corporation) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force), which is deployed at the stations for security checks...

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If AI steals our jobs, who'll...

(360Info) Economics has good news for workers fearing joblessness due to the rise of AI - only labour consumes, and the value of consuming populations is growing. The question is one of increasing urgency: What will workers do when technology does most of the work? In April, tech titans Google, Microsoft, IBM, Cisco and SAP, employment website Indeed, along with professional services major Accenture, among others, formed a consortium to explore the impact of...

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Rishabh Pant set for emotional...

An emotional homecoming awaits Rishabh Pant when he leads Delhi Capitals out at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here, hoping to halt the marauding run of Pat Cummins' Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday and continue the resurgence which has come to define his life both on and off the field. The last time Pant was seen at the refurbished stadium, he needed crutches to walk but that now seems a distant memory given how remarkably well he has managed to come back both as a

-SPORTS

'Vote YSRCP for welfare'

Jagan says while Naidu is looking to loot AP, PK is getting him votes

PNS ■ TUNI, KAKINADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has urged the public to support YSRCP's initiative, which ensures 50% reservation for women in nominated positions. Addressing a public gathering in Tuni of Kakinada district as part of his 'Memantha Siddham Yatra' on Friday evening, the Chief Minister accused Chandrababu of seeking to loot Andhra Pradesh and Pawan Kalyan of campaigning to bolster TDP's votes. He labelled the opposition alliance as a facade, asserting Chandrababu's ultimate authority despite having coalition partners.

Regarding Purandeswari, the current BJP chief, Chief Minister Jagan remarked, "She initially aligned with Congress but later shifted allegiance, indirectly aiding Chandrababu."

Continued on Page 2

Jagan Mohan Reddy asks voters to support YSRCP's initiative of 50% reservation for women in nominated positions.



- CM points out Purandeswari's shifting allegiances and indirect support to Chandrababu.
- Jagan thanks public for overwhelming support.
- The YSRCP chief terms elections a class struggle between the impoverished and capitalist interests, calling for the defeat of the anti-poor coalition.
- Says welfare schemes' continuity would be jeopardised if YSRCP is not supported.

Emphasis on healthcare reforms including village clinics, doorstep delivery of medicines, and Arogyasri insurance scheme, warning of disruption under Chandrababu's return to power.



Your vote safe, exercise franchise in large numbers: CEC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Friday dismissed apprehensions about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and assured people that their vote was safe and secure. Kumar asserted that the EVMs were 100 per cent safe as a large number of safeguards - technological, administrative and process-oriented - were in place. "It is a settled issue. It is 100 per cent safe. It has been raised in the honourable Court also. We are awaiting judgment, nothing can happen to the machines. Every stage political parties and their candidates are involved. Mock polls are done," he said to questions on doubts raised on the EVMs.

"There are a large number of safeguards, technological, administrative, and process-oriented. Just enjoy the voting. This is a time to enjoy the voting, not doubt anything," the CEC said. "Enjoy your voting, your vote is safe, secure and will be recorded as you vote," Kumar said.

Continued on Page 2

LOK SABHA POLLS



62.37 % voting in phase 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An aggregate 62.37 per cent voter turnout was recorded in phase one of the Lok Sabha polls on Friday, the Election Commission (EC) said.

While the figures were issued after the conclusion of polls, the commission said people who were in the queue when voting ended at 6 pm were allowed to exercise their franchise.

"The voting percentage is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained as polling is scheduled till 6 pm in many constituencies. Final figures will be known on Saturday after the scrutiny of form 17A," the EC said.

Polling took place in 102 constituencies across 21 states and Union Territories in the first of the seven-phase elections.

The commission described the

turnout as "high", noting that voting remained "largely peaceful".

In the first phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout was recorded at 69.43 per cent. Some of the constituencies were different then and the total number of seats which went to polls were 91.

States, including Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territories of Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep completed their voting process on Friday in single-phase election.

For the first time, people in 56 villages in Bastar in Chhattisgarh cast their vote in polling booths set up in their own villages.

2

Last-minute changes unsettling Oppn alliance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a setback to the TDP-BJP-JSP opposition alliance, struggles continue in fielding suitable candidates in several key constituencies, with changes expected in over half a dozen areas. Despite the advancing election procedures and two days have elapsed since the commencement of nomination filings, the opposition alliance continues to face challenges in aligning candidates with constituencies, according to insider sources.

Chandrababu has a history of making last-minute candidate substitutions, a practice witnessed previously. Despite candidate announcements occurring just a day before the final nomination day, replacements have been made for various reasons.

In recent days, the name of defected YSRCP leader Raghu Ramakrishnam Raju has repeatedly surfaced, compelling opposition leader Chandrababu to find him a suitable constituency before April 25. Initially eyeing the Narsapuram Lok Sabha seat under the BJP, RRR's hopes were dashed as the BJP's allocation of seats within the alliance is limited. Now, pressure mounts on TDP chief Naidu to accommodate RRR in the Undi constituency, already assigned to Siva Rama Raju, potentially leading to internal con-

flicts as Rama Raju has already initiated his election campaign.

Sources suggest Naidu is considering offering the TDP West Godavari district presidency to Rama Raju in an attempt to resolve the situation. It's worth noting that Chandrababu had assured all sitting MLAs of tickets for the 2024 elections, yet Rama Raju, the sitting TDP MLA, is poised to be replaced by RRR for various reasons.

Speculations are rife about change in candidates in around six constituencies as TDP leader Naidu grapples with candidate selections.

Other potential changes include the Anaparthi and Denduluru constituencies, where discussions are underway to swap seats between TDP and BJP, with a resolution expected imminently. Naidu is exerting efforts to persuade Denduluru TDP candidate Chintamaneni Prabhakar.

Additionally, the Madugula constituency is anticipated to witness a candidate switch, with senior TDP leader Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy replacing Paila Prasad (NRI), who was initially announced.

Meanwhile, there's speculation about Shankar Yadav or Sarala Reddy being considered for the Tambellapally seat, potentially replacing the previously announced candidate Jai Chandra Reddy. Furthermore, the party is contemplating replacing Anil Kumar, the Madakasira candidate previously announced, with MS Raju.

Assets of Naidu, family grow at 41% to Rs 810 cr in 5 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Assets of former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his family grew by over 41 per cent in the past five years to Rs 810.42 crore, according to an affidavit filed with the Election Commission on Friday.

Naidu's wife N Bhuvanawari on Friday filed the nomination on behalf of her husband at Kuppam for the Andhra Pradesh Assembly election, which is to take place on May 13.

Bhuvanawari owns the lion's share of the assets, as she holds 2.26 crore shares of Heritage Foods Ltd worth Rs 337.85 apiece (market value).

2

Jagan toying with lives: Naidu

PNS ■ ALUR (KURNOOL DIST)

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has criticised Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing him of abusing his power to wreak havoc and plunder the State.

Speaking at Alur in Kurnool district during the Praja Galam on Friday, Naidu condemned Reddy's actions, stating that he is callously disregarding the welfare of the population, particularly by neglecting to settle the substantial backlog of Arogyasri bills owed to hospitals. Naidu vowed to rectify this issue by clearing pending bills for sarpanches and providing them with adequate resources and responsibilities.

Naidu also lambasted Reddy for plunging the state into staggering debt, amounting to a colossal Rs 13 lakh Cr, while failing to ensure timely payment of employee salaries. Promising a path of development



with support from the central government, Naidu pledged to uplift the standard of living for all residents.

Emphasising TDP's history of championing individuals from middle and lower-middle-class backgrounds, Naidu pledged to pursue

Naidu lambasted Reddy for plunging the state into staggering debt, amounting to a colossal Rs 13 lakh cr, while failing to ensure timely payment of employee salaries. Promising a path of development with support from the central government, Naidu pledged to uplift the standard of living for all residents.

Scheduled Tribe status for the Madasi Kuruba community. He underscored the critical nature of the ongoing elections, asserting their potential to reshape the state's trajectory and improve the prospects of its citizens.

Addressing the TDP's alliance with the BJP and the Jana Sena, Naidu clarified that the partnership is solely aimed at advancing the state's development and supporting its youth during challenging times.

2

TDP candidate pauses campaign to perform C-section

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a noble act, a TDP candidate in Andhra Pradesh, who happens to be a doctor, paused her campaign to attend to a medical emergency to help a critically pregnant woman deliver through surgery.

G Lakshmi (36), a gynaecologist and the TDP candidate for Darsi Assembly constituency in Prakasam district on Thursday evening got a call from a local hos-

pital about an urgent Caesarean section (C-section) while campaigning.

"There was an emergency caesarean section and the patient could not deliver due to some difficulty and the baby was at risk because amniotic fluid levels were very low. So, I stopped my campaign programme and rushed to the hospital to conduct the emergency C-section there," Lakshmi said.



According to the TDP candidate, the mother could not deliver normally as amniotic fluid was zero and the local surgeon was not available.

However, Lakshmi's timely help enabled the pregnant woman to deliver a boy and the emergency ended on a happy note.

"Though it is important to meet people as part of election canvassing, Lakshmi, who comes from a family of politicians, highlighted it is important to save lives.

"I felt that saving a life is more important. I felt very happy to go and perform the delivery," she added.

EC notice to Sharmila over remarks on Viveka case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission (EC) issued a notice to YS Sharmila, President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), on Friday. The action comes after a complaint filed by Vijayawada MLA Malladi Vishnu, alleging inappropriate comments made by YS Sharmila against YS Avinash Reddy in connection with the YS Vivekananda Reddy murder case during the election campaign in Kadapa.

Dastagiri, the approver in the YS Viveka murder case, has also complained with the Election Commission, stating that YS

Sharmila has been exploiting his name for political advantage by falsely claiming that he has not faced punishment.

After thoroughly examining the complaints filed by Malladi Vishnu and Dastagiri, the EC concluded that YS Sharmila had breached the Election Code. CEO Mukesh Kumar Meena has issued a notice to Sharmila, directing her to explain within 48 hours. However, it has been emphasised that failure to respond within the stipulated timeframe will result in action being taken without further notice.

2

India set to become science powerhouse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Science journal 'Nature' has said that India along with being an economic power is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse, as it called for a rise in the country's research and development spending, especially from the private sector.

The prestigious British weekly said in its editorial headlined "How India can become a science powerhouse" cited researchers to highlight that basic research has been neglected by successive governments and that a thriving research system needs much greater autonomy.

"Along with being an economic power, India is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse. This is not yet a given, but it can



happen," it said.

"In this editorial, we discuss a third aspect: how to bridge the funding gap. One thing India's government can do is to boost science spending by encouraging businesses to contribute more, as is the case for other leading economies. If policymakers and industrialists can

get this right, an opportunity to put rocket boosters under the country's impressive scientific achievements is there for the taking," the journal said.

The editorial noted that in 2021-22, according to government data, India had the world's third-largest pharmaceutical industry by volume and was the leading supplier of

"Along with being an economic power, India is also more than ready to take the next step towards becoming a science powerhouse. This is not yet a given, but it can happen," 'Nature' said.

has the world's largest constellation of remote-sensing satellites.

The magazine said India is among the world's most prolific countries in terms of research output after the United States and China.

From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 to 1,113. In the past decade, seven more Indian Institutes of Technology have been established, raising the total to 23. In the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established.

"Now consider that these gains were achieved by a nation that spent just 0.64 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development (R&D) during 2020-21," it said.

2



Exodus to YSRCP continues

PNS ■ KAKINADA

During the 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra, leaders from various political parties joined the YSRCP in the presence of CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday at the campsite.

Nellore Joinings:

JSP Nellore District president Chenna Reddy Manukranth Reddy, Nellore JSP Principal Secretary Praveen Kumar Yadav and TDP Udayagiri ex-MPP Jecherla Subba Reddy.

Guntur Joinings:

Prathipadu TDP Ex-Municipal vice chairman Paila Bose, TDP town chairperson Sativada Rajeshwar Rao, TDP councillor B Veeraju joined YSRCP.

Kakinada Joinings:

Pithapuram congress party in charge Pantha Indira, Pantam Nehru, Pantam Prasad joined YSRCP. JSP State secretary, Ex-mayor of Kakinda Polasapalli Saroja, Peddapuram TDP in charge Tota Subbarao Naidu and Mutyala Srinivas joined YSRCP and State BC welfare President Vasamshetty



Rajeshwar Rao joined YSRCP. Janasena Party leaders, representing Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema District, officially joined the YSR Congress party in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the ST Rajapuram stay point.

Konaseema District's Atreyapuram, Janasena Party Mandal President Chekuri Krishnam Raju, and ST cell executive committee member Seelam Siva officially joined the YSR Congress Party.

Kothapeta MLA candidate Chirala Jaggireddy was also present during the occasion. Key TDP leaders and BC

Praja Sankshema Samithi representing Peddapuram Constituency and Kakinada Rural Constituency officially joined the YSR Congress party in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the ST Rajapuram stay point.

Telugu Desam Party leaders from Peddapuram, Thota Subbarao Naidu and Mutyala Srinivas, joined the YSR Congress Party.

BC Praja Sankshema Samithi, President from Kakinada Rural Constituency, Vasamshetty Rajeswara Rao, also joined the YSR Congress party.

Congress Party leader representing Pithapuram Assembly constituency, Kakinada District, joined the YSR Congress party in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the ST Rajapuram stay point.

Pantham Indira who contested from the Congress party in 2014 from Pithapuram constituency, along with Pantham Nehru and Pantham Prasad officially joined YSR Congress Party.

Kakinada Janasena Party leaders joined the YSR Congress party in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the ST Rajapuram stay point.

Former Mayor Polasapalli Saroja and Janasena State Secretary Polasapalli Cherian officially joined YSRCP from the Janasena party.

Kakinada YSRCP MP candidate Chalamalasetty Sunil, Kakinada City MLA candidate Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy, Kakinada Rural MLA candidate Kurasala Kannababu, Rajahmundry Rural MLA candidate Chelluboina Venugopalakrishna were also present during the occasion.

Vizag-South segment headed for high-stakes elections



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam South constituency, long hailed as the stronghold of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), is once again at the centre of political fervour as elections are nearing. With a rich history of electoral battles and shifting alliances, this constituency promises yet another nail-biting contest in the upcoming polls. This Constituency has been synonymous with TDP's influence, witnessing victories for the party in multiple elections. Notably, TDP candidate emerged victorious in 2009 and 2014, solidifying their grip over the region.

However, the political sphere has witnessed shifts in recent years. The 2019 elections saw a divergence in strategies, with TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP opting to contest separately. Despite this fragmentation, the TDP candidate managed to secure victory once again, highlighting the strength of the party in the constituency. As the 2024 elections approach, a strategic realignment has taken place. TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP have joined forces, forming a formidable alliance. This coalition, seen as a crucial move to consolidate anti-incumbency sentiments, aims to present a unified front against the ruling party.

The stage is set for a showdown between established players and emerging challengers. Vamsikrishna Srinivas, the joint candidate fielded by the TDP-led alliance, stands poised to take on incumbent forces. Meanwhile, Vasupalli

Ganeshkumar, who secured victory for TDP in the previous election but has since switched allegiance to the ruling party, emerges as a formidable opponent. The constituency boasts a diverse demographic, encompassing Muslims, Christians, fishermen, Brahmins, Kapus, Velama, Cheneta (Padmasali), Yadavs, and Marwaris. This eclectic mix underscores the importance of community outreach and targeted campaigning in securing electoral success.

Amidst the electoral frenzy, internal dissent and political manoeuvring have added layers of intrigue to the race. Vasupalli Ganeshkumar's contentious departure from TDP, coupled with opposition from within his community, adds a new dimension to the electoral dynamics. The prevailing sentiment of discontentment towards the ruling party further complicates the electoral calculus. Recent surveys indicate a groundswell of opposition against the incumbent government, providing a fertile ground for opposition parties to capitalize on.

As the clock ticks down to polling day, candidates intensify their campaign efforts, traversing the length and breadth of the constituency to garner support. With alliances forged and battle lines drawn, the Visakhapatnam Constituency braces itself for a pivotal electoral showdown that could reshape the political landscape of the region. Stay tuned for comprehensive coverage and analysis as the electoral drama unfolds.

Special Expenditure Observer inspects monitoring centres

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Special Expenditure Observer of Andhra Pradesh Neena Nigam has issued strict directives to district officials, emphasising the need for maintaining vigilance over financial transactions and expenditures. Stressing adherence to Election Commission regulations, Nigam underscored the importance of impartiality and transparency throughout the electoral process.

During a meeting held at the collectorate, Nigam, accompanied by constituency auditors from Bheemili, East, and South Assembly constituencies, meticulously examined various monitoring centres. They assessed service quality and proposed improvements, actively interacting with staff at command control monitoring centres during their assessments. Particularly commendable was the proactive involvement of auditors, who contributed valuable feedback derived from their observations.

District Election Officer & Collector Dr A. Mallikharjuna, MCC Nodal Officer CM Saikanth Varma, and Commissioner of Police A Ravi Shankar provided comprehensive briefings on the services provided by respective

centres. The visiting team expressed satisfaction with the operations of 24x7 web-casting, and compliance monitoring centres, highlighting the utilization of online dashboards and geo-tagging for monitoring vehicle movements, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

Collector A. Mallikharjuna highlighted stringent measures being implemented, including the establishment of check posts and the seizure of cash and goods. He detailed the deployment of field teams to monitor cash and liquor movements, along with the operation of a 24/7 control room. Additionally, Mallikharjuna outlined the appointment of nodal officers, identification of critical polling centres, and arrangements for webcasting.

Local constituency auditors stressed the importance of adhering to regulations and conducting transparent elections, emphasizing equal treatment for all parties and candidates. Officials from various departments including Police, Revenue, Special Enforcement Bureau, DRI, Postal, Customs, Income Tax, and Banks, provided updates on actions taken within their jurisdictions, underscoring the collaborative effort to ensure fair and transparent electoral processes.

Amarnath to file nomination on April 24

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Gudivada Amarnath, YSR Congress Party candidate representing Gajuwaka Assembly Constituency, is gearing up to officially file his nomination on the 24th of this month. Addressing party workers and leaders during a meeting at the local party office, Amarnath rallied support for a sizable gathering on the day of nomination filing. Expressing optimism and determination, Amarnath stressed the importance of the rally as the initial step towards victory and called for unified efforts from party members. He emphasized the significance of door-to-door outreach to address internal disparities and ensure



seamless coordination among the party ranks.

Minister Amarnath reiterated his confidence in the party's victory, asserting that diligent efforts from party leaders and workers would secure success. He pledged recognition for those demon-

strating unwavering dedication to the cause. MLA Tippala Nagireddy echoed Amarnath's sentiments, emphasizing the continuation of welfare schemes under the Jaganmohan Reddy government and urging leaders to prioritize coordination efforts.

Both BRS & Cong are corrupt parties: Rajnath

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that the BRS and the Congress are two corrupt parties and that the Congress did nothing for the people. He said that the Modi government is not a mere words only government but an action government.

Addressing a rally of Khammam BJP candidate Thandra Vinodrao on Friday at Khammam,

Rajnath said that people threw out the corrupt BRS government of Telangana.

He said that the BJP government took several key decisions like scrapping Article 370, constructed the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, scrapped triple talaq and many others. He said the BJP government will introduce a Uniform Civil Code as mentioned in its manifesto.

Declaring that he was confident that the Modi

government would be voted to power again, Rajnath said that Nehru, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi had said that they would eradicate poverty. However, poverty kept increasing in the nation till Modi came to power, Rajnath said.

He appealed to the people to ensure the victory of Thandra Vinod Rao and that he will come to Khammam again if people elect Thandra Vinod Rao.



India set to become science...

Continued from Page 1

Whichever political formation is elected to power in the ongoing polls, it must consider how to increase the country's R&D spending, as well as what could be achieved with more money, it said.

Nature said around 60 per cent of India's research spending can be traced to central and state governments and universities, and around 40 per cent to the private sector. In comparable nations, there is often much more private-

sector funding.

"In 2022, the private sector contributed, on average, 74 per cent of OECD nations' R&D spending and 66 per cent of such funding for the 27 members of the European Union. India today has many global companies in construction, information technology, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and more. They could be contributing a lot more to the nation's research -- both in terms of funding researchers and also infrastructure," it said.

'Vote YSRCP for ...

Continued from Page 1

Expressing gratitude for the overwhelming support, Chief Minister Jagan emphasised the impending election, urging the crowd to rally behind the YSRCP government, which he claims defends the dignity of every household in the state.

Chief Minister Jagan said the electoral contest is a class struggle between the impoverished and the capitalist interests led by Chandrababu and his allies. He called upon the public to defeat this anti-poor coalition, emphasising that the election is pivotal for the continuity of welfare programmes over the next five years.

Encouraging voters to support YSRCP, Chief Minister Jagan warned that failure to do so would jeopardise the continuation of welfare schemes, contrasting it with Chandrababu's

alleged hollow promises.

He underscored the significance of voting for YSRCP, highlighting the revival of government services and financial aid for women beneficiaries. Chief Minister Jagan also cautioned against Chandrababu's return to power, predicting a halt to welfare measures and exploitation of the economically disadvantaged. Enumerating the achievements of the YSRCP government, Chief Minister Jagan cited initiatives such as Rythu Bharosa Kendras, free crop insurance, and educational reforms like English medium instruction and Byju's content in government schools. He pledged to uphold these initiatives if re-elected.

Jagan emphasised healthcare reforms, including village clinics, doorstep delivery of medicines, and the Arogyasri insurance scheme, warning of disruption should Chandrababu and his allies regain power.

Your vote safe, exercise ...

Continued from Page 1

The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections got underway across 102 constituencies in 21 states and union territories on Friday.

"We are getting reports from the field that even if rains are happening, people are really coming out in large numbers. Women, youth, old age people... everyone is rushing towards the polling stations. It is really a delightful situation to see that people are dancing to the tune of democracy," Kumar said.

He said the Election Commission has used technology to a great extent to ensure better voter turnout by reaching out to the youth and women voters by mapping parliamentary constituencies where voting has been traditionally less.

Assets of Naidu ...

Continued from Page 1

The total value of the shareholding stands at nearly Rs 764 crore as against Rs 545.76 crore in 2019.

In 2019, Naidu's family owned assets, both movable and immovable worth Rs 574.3 crore, as per the affidavit filed by the TDP chief for the last assembly polls.

Bhuvaneshwari also possesses 3.4 kg of gold and nearly 41.5 kg silver.

The TDP leader individually owns movable assets worth Rs 4.80 lakh and immovable assets worth Rs 36.31 lakh, and the family has total liabilities of over Rs 10 crore. The former chief minister also owns one Ambassador car valued at Rs 2.25 lakh. Naidu's name is mentioned in 24 FIRs related to various cases, the affidavit said.

62.37 % voting ...

Continued from Page 1

The poll authority pointed out that in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, voters belonging to the tribal communities came out in large numbers.

The Shompen tribe of Great Nicobar made history by casting vote for the first time. Voters braved the heat in most parts of the country while, at others, they waited patiently in pouring rain.

Jagan toying ...

Continued from Page 1

He urged members of both parties to unite in their mission to safeguard the state's interests, calling upon minorities to contribute to the alliance's success, citing TDP's history of advocating for their

progress. Naidu accused Chief Minister Jagan of callously toying with people's lives, but expressed confidence in the triumph of righteousness in this battle, promising to revolutionise people's lives by distributing revenue generated from asset creation.

EC notice to Sharmila over...

Continued from Page 1

It is noteworthy that the Kadapa court had recently made a significant ruling about the murder case of YS Vivekananda Reddy, prohibiting any discussion on the matter. Despite this, during the election period, the opposition had been accusing the YSRCP of involvement in Viveka's murder case.

Responding to this, YSRCP leader Suresh Babu sought intervention from the Kadapa court, which instructed key figures including YS Sharmila, N Sunita, Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan, Purandeswari, and Nara Lokesh to refrain from discussing Viveka's murder during the election campaign.

Day 2: 18 nominations filed in NTR district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada witnessed bustling activity on the second day of the nomination process, with 18 filings across the Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies in the NTR district. Political heavyweights from TDP, YSRCP, CPI, and CPM, alongside independent contenders, made their candidature official at the Returning Officers' (RO) office.

Leading the charge, TDP's Kesineni Chinni, Gadde Rama Mohan, and Tataiah, along with CPI's Koteswara Rao, CPM's Babu Rao, and YSRCP's Shaik Asif submitted their nomination papers, marking the intensifying electoral landscape in the region. Rallies of significant scale dotted the cityscape as candidates mobilised their supporters. YSRCP's Shaik Asif led a spirited procession through Vijayawada West, joined by incumbent MP Kesineni Srinivas alias Nani and other prominent figures. Meanwhile, CPM's Ch Babu Rao and CPI's G Koteswara Rao orchestrated rallies in Vijayawada Central and Vijayawada West respectively, drawing enthusiastic participation from party loyalists and leaders.

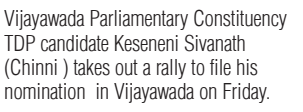
NTR District Collector and District Election Officer (DEO) Dilli Rao disclosed the nomi-



Vijayawada-West Assembly constituency YSRCP candidate Asif goes in a rally for filing nomination in Vijayawada on Friday. MP Kesineni Nani and Mayor Ryana Bhagyalakshmi also participated. Pics by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar



Vijayawada-Central Assembly constituency CPI(M) candidate taking out a rally before filing nomination rally in Vijayawada on Friday.



Vijayawada Parliamentary Constituency TDP candidate Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) takes out a rally to file his nomination in Vijayawada on Friday.

flurry of nominations marked various constituencies. YSRCP's Shaik Asif, CPI's G Koteswara Rao, MCPI(U)'s Khadeer Basha Shaik, and independent candidate Ratnavath Kishore Kumar entered the fray in Vijayawada West, underscoring the competitive landscape. BJP's Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdhary made his bid official in the same constituency, amidst a show of solidarity with alliance partners.

Vijayawada Central witnessed spirited entries from TDP's Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, CPM's Ch Babu Rao, Jateeya Jana Sena Party's K Siva Sankar, and independent candidate Boppana Gandhi, setting the stage for a dynamic electoral contest.

In Vijayawada East, TDP's Gadde Rama Mohana Rao, accompanied by family members, formalized his candidacy, while independent candidates Vemulapalli Prudhvi and Velpuri Kanaka Durga Devi joined the electoral fray under the watchful eye of the RO.

The electoral buzz extended to Jaggayyapet, where TDP's Sriram Rajagopal alias Tataiah and Indian National Congress' Karnati Appa Rao submitted their nominations, adding further depth to the electoral narrative in the region.

tion figures, noting a notable absence of filings in the Nandigama and Tiruvuru con-

Eight nominations filed in Krishna district

Eight nominations were filed in Krishna district, marking the second day of candidacy submissions for the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha constituency and various assembly segments. Former MLA Bode Prasad made his presence known by submitting his nomination papers at the RO office in Penamaluru.

Krishna District Collector and Election Officer DK Balaji confirmed the receipt of one nomination for the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha seat, with Badugu Kranthi Kumar representing the Pyramid Party of India as the sole contender.

Additionally, two nominations surfaced for the Gudivada Assembly Constituency. Vaddadi Govinda Rao, the



Former MLA Bode Prasad filed his nomination papers at the Returning Office along with MP Balashowry, former MP Konakalla Narayana Rao and former MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna at Penamaluru on Friday.



Congress party Gudivada candidate Vaddadi Govinda Rao filing his nomination at the RO's office in Gudivada on Friday.

Indian National Congress (INC) candidate under the INDIA bloc, filed his nomination, alongside Gudivada Bosu Babu, representing the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Notably, the Penamaluru

assembly constituency witnessed two nominations, one by former MLA and TDP candidate Bode Prasad, and another by Bode Hema Chowdhary.

In a show of support, the TDP orchestrated a substantial rally from their office in Poranki to the RO office in

Penamaluru, attended by key figures including Machilipatnam Lok Sabha Constituency Jana Sena Party (JSP) candidate Vallabhaneni Balashowry, former MP Konakalla Narayana Rao, and former MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna.

In a separate development, independent candidate Nadella Giridhar Naidu submitted his nomination papers for the Avanigadda assembly constituency at the RO office in Avanigadda.

However, there were no submissions for the Gannavaram, Pedana, Machilipatnam, and Pamarru assembly segments on the second day of the nomination filing process, as confirmed by Collector Balaji.

Triangular fights in 4 segments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Four Assembly constituencies in the erstwhile Krishna district, namely Tiruvuru, Pamarru, Nuzvid, and Vijayawada Central, are gearing up for a triangular fight in the upcoming elections. Out of the 16 assembly constituencies in the district, these four are expected to see intense competition.

The battle is primarily between the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP, with Congress and CPM candidates also posing significant challenges. Tiruvuru and Pamarru are Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved segments, adding complexity to the electoral landscape.

In Tiruvuru, Congress candidate Lam Thantiya Kumari, daughter of former Deputy

TIRUVURU			VIJAYAWADA CENTRAL		

Chief Minister Koneru Ranga Rao, is facing off against YSRCP's Nallagatla Swamy Das and TDP's Kolikapudi

Srinivasa Rao. Similarly, Pamarru witnesses DY Das from Congress challenging YSRCP's Kaile Anil Kumar and TDP's Varla Kumar Raja.

Vijayawada Central sees CPM's Ch Babu Rao challenging YSRCP's Velampalli Srinivasa Rao and TDP's Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao. Meanwhile, Nuzvid, now in the Eluru district, sees YSRCP's Meka Venkata Pratap Appa Rao, TDP's Kolu Saradhi, and independent candidate Muddaraboyina Venkateswara Rao in contention.

Notably, incumbents from YSRCP and TDP seek reelection in Nuzvid, while Muddaraboyina Venkateswara Rao aims for his second win, having previously served as an MLA.

Panchayat Chamber thanks Meena for release of grant

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Chamber president and former MLC YV Rajendra Prasad has thanked Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena for his efforts in releasing the 15th Finance Commission grant of Rs.988 crore for gram panchayats for the financial year 2023-24. After the grant was released, the State government diverted all these funds without informing the panchayats. However, the PR Chamber complained about this to the CEO on April 15, and later Rs.988 crore was released to the panchayats, he said.

In a press release issued here on Friday, YV Rajendra Prasad expressed happiness over the release of the funds for gram panchayats. Also, he demanded that the State government credit the funds to the tune of Rs.8,629 crore, diverted earlier, to the account of APCFMS immediately.

Further, he said that the Panchayat Raj Chamber and the AP Sarpanches Association will conduct an all-party meeting to discuss the issues being faced by sarpanches, at the Makineni BasavaPunnaiah Vignana Kendra in Vijayawada on Saturday.

APJAC urges EC to take action against staff only after probe

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee - Amaravati (APJAC-Amaravati) and president of the Andhra Pradesh Revenue Services Association, Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, has voiced concerns regarding the Election Commission's handling of baseless allegations against officials and staff involved in election duties. He emphasised the importance of conducting thorough inquiries before taking any actions against accused individuals.

During the ongoing general elections, political leaders have been levying numerous accusations against government officials and staff. In response to these complaints, the Election Commission has taken measures such as suspensions. To address these issues, Venkateswarlu and other leaders from APJAC-Amaravati met with Andhra Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena at the Secretariat on Friday, submitting a formal representation outlining their concerns.

Venkateswarlu highlighted the detrimental impact base-



less complaints have had on government officials, leading to a loss of confidence among them during the election process.

He expressed dismay at the tendency of some political parties to target officials based on caste considerations, despite many complaints failing to substantiate any wrongdoing. This environment of unwarranted pressure has left officials and staff feeling vulnerable, he remarked.

In response to these challenges, Venkateswarlu urged the Election Commission to provide reassurance to officials that thorough inquiries will precede any disciplinary actions. He acknowledged the dedication of many officials

working tirelessly to ensure the smooth conduct of elections, stressing the importance of addressing their grievances regarding baseless allegations.

Furthermore, Venkateswarlu appealed to the CEO to grant special casual leave for officials to cast their postal ballots at their respective assembly constituencies or facilitation centres. Additionally, he requested Meena to expedite the release of funds necessary for conducting elections.

The meeting was attended by APJAC secretary general P Damodar Rao, treasurer VV Murali Krishna Naidu, AP Revenue Services Association general secretary K Ramesh Kumar, and others.

Close affinity of Veddas of Sri Lanka to Indians

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a landmark study published in the journal *Mitochondrion*, 10 researchers from five institutions have unveiled significant findings regarding the genetic history of the Vedda population, an indigenous group of Sri Lanka.

The language isolates Vedda, who are among the least studied indigenous populations in Sri Lanka, have long intrigued scientists and historians alike due to their unique linguistic and cultural characteristics. This study, therefore, unravels the mysteries of their genetic origins and affinities with Indian populations," said Dr K Thangaraj, one of the senior authors of the study and JC Bose Fellow at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad.

The study involved a comprehensive analysis of high-resolution autosomal and mitochondrial genomes, sheds new light on the initial peopling of Sri Lanka and the ancient genetic ties between the Vedda and other populations in Asia. Key findings from the research indicate that despite the lack of close linguistic similarities, the Vedda people share a significant genetic link

with the ethnic populations in India. "Our autosomal analyses suggest a close genetic connection between the Vedda and Indian ethnic populations speaking various tongues, pointing towards a deep-rooted history that predates linguistic diversifications," stated Prof. Gyaneshwer Chaubey, molecular Anthropologist at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi.

"Maternal DNA analysis supports the existence of an ancient link, reinforcing the notion of a shared genetic heritage," said the lead author, Dr Ruwandi Ranasingh, from Colombo University, Sri Lanka.

"This study underscores the complex mosaic of human migration and genetic diversity in South Asia, revealing how the Vedda have preserved their genetic identity over millennia despite massive cultural and linguistic changes around them. These valuable insights will contribute to a better understanding of the genetic diversity in South Asia and foster a deeper appreciation for the unique cultural and genetic heritage of the Vedda people," said Dr Vinay Nandicoori, Director, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad.



'Fulfil poll duties with dedication'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers' (APNGO) Association West Krishna district president and APJAC chairman A Vidyasagar has given a call to all government officials in the district to work transparently and dedicatedly for the successful completion of the general elections. To bring a good name for the district as well as Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, everyone should feel responsible and work hard, he said.



APNGO Association West Krishna President Vidyasagar addressing a meeting of employees at the NGO Home at Gandhinagar in Vijayawada on Friday.

Exploring contemporary narratives in new media

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Liberal Arts and the Department of Media Studies of the Easwari School of Liberal Arts at SRM University-AP have organised a two-day International Conference on New Media and its Publics in India.

In his inaugural address, Vice-Chancellor Prof Manoj K Arora remarked, "We are honoured to host a conference of this magnitude. Media has become an indispensable facet of our contemporary existence; invariably, we all engage with or subscribe to media in some capacity."

Keynote speaker and co-founder of NewsLaundry,



Abhinandan Sekhri, imparted his wisdom to the attendees, emphasising, "As the fourth pillar, media plays a pivotal role in society. We must discern and uphold the principles of authentic journalism."

Prof Vishnupad, Dean-

Vidyasagar said that every employee should utilise their postal ballot as the government has provided the facility. For that, everyone should submit their Form-12 to the respective Returning Office within the stipulated time.

In case of any technical issue, they can bring it to the notice of the Election Commission, he added.

Association leaders P Ramesh, B Satish Kumar, BV Ramana, M Madhusudana Rao, and others were present.

'Fun on vacation' for govt school students

Aim is to ensure that students use their time constructively and meaningfully

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

School Education Commissioner Suresh Kumar has issued instructions to the RJDs, District Education Officers, and Samagra Shiksha APs to ensure that the students use their time constructively and meaningfully during the summer vacations, and to properly implement the 'Fun on vacation-2024' programme for government schools in AP.

A video conference was held with RJDs, DEOs and Samagra Shiksha APs, and a list of programmes and guidelines was issued by SCERT for 'Fun on Vacation-2024' on Friday. "Let us all work together to engage the students and make this summer vacation an unforgettable experience for them by focusing on academics, sports, games, arts, vocational skills and creative activities," he said.

Suresh Kumar said that the main objective of the programme is to provide a platform for students to acquire new skills and knowledge and to ensure

that students do not lose their academic pace during the break, and identify and develop their interests. He explained that it helps develop curiosity, creativity, imagination in the youth, teamwork, leadership, discipline, life skills, values, etc. in the students.

Suresh Kumar further explained that physical activity is also necessary for children to be healthy and happy. PETs are asked to organise various games and sports for interested students and make summer coaching camps successful in local schools or other schools where adequate sports grounds are available.

He said that 'We Love Reading Competitions (WLRC)' with teachers, headmasters, and DIET principles are recommended to promote reading among students and make reading a habit. Suresh Kumar suggested organising these summer programmes in collaboration with various charitable organisations, educational institutions, and local community organisations.

'Thirsty Bowl' to help animals and birds beat the heat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has launched a heartwarming initiative called 'Thirsty Bowl' to ensure the well-being of stray animals and birds during the scorching summer months. This programme aligns perfectly with the ongoing Eco Vizag campaign's focus on environmental sustainability and responsible practices.

Officially inaugurated by Commissioner CM Saikanth Varma, Thirsty Bowl embodies the theme, 'where compassion meets action'. The programme directly tackles the critical issue of animal welfare by providing essential water sources and shelters for stray dogs and birds. Commissioner Varma emphasised the initiative's importance, particularly as summer brings the challenge of scarce water for these vulnerable creatures.

Thirsty Bowl goes beyond just providing water bowls. The GVMC is committed to securing permanent shelters and creating a more supportive environment for stray animals to thrive within the city limits. This focus complements the broader goals of the Eco Vizag campaign, which aims to cultivate a culture of environmental consciousness and responsible practices across Visakhapatnam. By prioritising animal welfare, the

GVMC strives to build a more compassionate and inclusive community that values all life forms.

To further engage the public, Commissioner Varma has announced a series of outreach programmes and awareness campaigns. These initiatives will include workshops, volunteer opportunities, and educational programmes designed to foster empathy and support for animal welfare.



INDI alliance underestimating voters

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is a communalist, not a Communist. Pinarayi Vijayan colluded with Prime Minister Modi to defeat Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad. Pinarayi Vijayan and his family are drowning in corruption. These are some of the statements made by Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister of Telangana and a star campaigner of the Congress while campaigning in Kerala a couple of days ago.

Pinarayi Vijayan is not only the Left Democratic Front (LDF) Chief Minister of Kerala but also a member of the politburo -- the highest decision-making body of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). It is worth noting that the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the CPI (M) are the leading members of the LDF -- the coalition that rules Kerala.

While Revanth Reddy was busy denouncing the Chief Minister of the lone Communist government in

the country as corrupt and communal, his cabinet colleague Uttam Kumar Reddy was busy praising the CPI(M) and the CPI as secular parties at a public meeting in Kodad. Uttam, who is the Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister of Telangana, claimed the Left parties - CPI and CPI (M), joining the Congress campaign for its Nalgonda candidate sends out a signal of unity amongst 'secular' forces that are fighting against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Uttam further claimed that the Congress would win 14 parliamentary seats in Telangana with the support of CPI and CPI (M).

The INDI alliance partners' change in stance from state to state has of late become routine. Take, for example, the liquor scam in

While Revanth Reddy was busy denouncing the Chief Minister of the lone communist government in the country as corrupt and communal, his cabinet colleague Uttam Kumar Reddy was busy praising the CPI(M) and the CPI as secular parties in a public meeting in Kodad.

Delhi. The Congress' diametrically opposite stance on the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of AAP - a constituent of the INDI alliance, and Telangana MLC Kavitha Kalvakuntla of the Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) in the liquor scam is a case in point. The Congress opposes Kejriwal's arrest in Delhi and supports Kavitha's arrest in Telangana for their roles in the same scam.

West Bengal is another example. The Left parties - CPI and CPI(M), the Trinamool Congress (TMC), and the Congress are all members of the INDI alliance, but not so in Bengal. In Bengal, the TMC chief, Mamata Banerjee, accused the Congress and CPI(M) parties on Friday of being agents of the BJP - a party whose defeat is the sole goal of the INDI alliance.



KISHORE POREDDY

Let us explore ways to make sense of the contradictory statements by the INDI alliance partners from place to place. The first explanation could be that the leaders of the INDI alliance live in a paral-

lel universe. It is a universe where the internet as well as electronic and social media do not exist and the print media only report news within a state's borders. It is a universe in which voters in each state remain ignorant of happenings in other states or at the national level. In this scenario, the INDI alliance partners feel confident of taking a different stance in each state while keeping a straight face. This explanation leaves the need for the INDI partners' changing stances across state borders unexplained.

A second explanation could be that the INDI alliance partners believe the voters are in their thrall and do not notice their contradictions. Or they assume that the voters have so much faith in them that they will see the INDI

partners' contradictory stances as part of a grand strategy for their benefit, though beyond their comprehension. This explanation does have merit in the sense that it takes into consideration the elitist mindset of the Congress and its friends. Yet it, too, does not explain why these parties resort to such contradictions.

The only comprehensive explanation for the contradictions is that the INDI alliance is a coalition of opportunistic, self-centred, and shameless power seekers with a shallow opinion of Indian voters' intelligence. Its members neither trust one another nor have a common agenda. Hence, each partner in the alliance takes the stand that solely benefits themselves at the cost of their partners at any given place or

time. It explains why Revanth Reddy, fearful of his boss' loss in Wayanad, goes ballistic against Pinarayi Vijayan. It explains why Mamata Banerjee can't spare even a seat in West Bengal for her alliance partners, whom she sees as weak and unwinnable. It explains why both the Communist parties have to eat a humble pie but dare not question the Congress leaders in Telangana for Revanth Reddy's insulting accusations against their leader in Kerala.

In this election, voters have two choices. On the one hand, they have the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with Narendra Modi, a strong and decisive leader driven by a Sabka Saath philosophy and a vision for Viksit Bharat. On the other hand, they have the INDI alliance, whose constituents neither trust one another nor agree on a leader or an agenda. The choice could not be any easier.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

Police crack Rs 66 lakh ATM heist within hours

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police solved the major heist within hours by arresting three persons and recovered Rs 66 lakh booty.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, SP Garud Sumit Sunil said that the police cracked the major heist which took place at Punjab National Bank ATM located near the Indian Oil Petrol filling station opposite Ayush Ayurvedic Hospital in Kurnool road here on April 18.

Branch Manager in Cash Management Services Info System G Venkata Konda Reddy complained about the stealing of Rs 66 lakh cash and the police registered a case under Cr. No.249/2024 U/Sec.380 IPC.

The police arrested Sannamuru Mahesh Babu, Racharla Rajasekhara and Gujjula Venkata Konda Reddy and recovered the case. The SP said that on April 18, CMS (Cash Management Services) staff received cash of Rs 68,00,000



from 5 different banks in Ongole Town to replenish the ATMs of those banks.

They reached Punjab National Bank and parked their cash transport vehicle. Later they went to the room situated behind the ATM centre and had lunch. In the meanwhile, the offenders opened the doors of the van and decamped with Rs 66,00,000. The staff returned to the van noticed the theft and informed the same to the manager who complained to the Taluka Police Station.

The SP said that the police had taken the case as a challenge and alerted Additional SP (Crimes) and SDPO and formed 4 investigation teams. After carrying out an investigation from all angles and using technical knowledge, the accused was identified as Sannamuru Mahesh, who had previously worked in the CMS organization.

On receipt of the information, CI P Bhakthavatsala Reddy took the accused S Mahesh Babu into custody at the outskirts of Parramatta village on Friday morning and recovered the entire stolen cash of Rs.66,00,000.

On the interrogation, the accused admitted to committing the heist. The accused Mahesh is identified as an employee of CMS firm who had resigned very recently. The prime accused confessed that he committed the offence with the support of his relative Racharla Rajasekhara and CMS Manager G V Konda Reddy. The police arrested Rajasekhara and Konda Reddy in the office of the CMS in Lingareddy colony here.

The SP appreciated Additional SP (Crimes) SV Sridhara Rao, SDP Kishore Babu, Inspector P . Bhakthavatsala Reddy, and CI Vijaya Krishna for arresting the accused and recovering the money within hours.

Gold, silver worth Rs 13.32 crore seized

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh said that Rs 13.32 crore worth of gold jewellery, silver ornaments and liquor have been seized in the district and two nominations have been received for Eluru parliamentary constituency.

He told the media here on Friday that 362 complaints received through the c-VIGIL had been resolved so far. The

Collector said that during the two days, two nominations had been received for Eluru Parliamentary constituency and six nominations have been received for Assembly constituencies.

The Collector said that the police and the election officials have seized Rs 1.87 crore in cash, Rs 10.17 crore worth of gold and silver and Rs 1.21 crore worth of liquor so far. He said that so far 1,701 permis-



sions had been given to organize election meetings and campaigns. However, 24

requests seeking permissions are being examined.

The Collector said that 362 complaints had been received through c-VIGIL and they were resolved. Complaints which were received through media on violation of model code of conduct were also resolved. As many as 597 complaints were received through the NGSC portal of which 593 had been resolved and four were being examined.

Role of Micro Observers vital in conducting elections: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector Sumit Kumar has said that the role of Micro Observers is crucial in conducting elections and directed the election officials to take steps to conduct elections peacefully and impartially.

A workshop was organized for the Micro Observers here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that WG district has a population of about 19.50 lakhs and there are over 14.70 lakh voters for which 1,463 polling stations would be set up.

He said that 20 per cent of 282 polling stations have been identified as problematic polling stations, stating that Micro Observers have been appointed for those polling stations.

The Collector stated that the micro-observer should be at the polling station at least 90



minutes before the start of polling. The basic facilities at the polling station should be checked before polling begins, he told them.

He said that appointments would be made only in the problematic polling station, and efforts should be made to conduct the polling peacefully by understanding the conditions there in advance. They should observe whether the

mock polling is conducted as per ECI norms.

The Micro Observers should check whether all the votes in CU have been cleared after the polling and all the slips have been removed from the VVPAT. He said that the EVMs and VVPAT cards should be checked when they are changed either in the case of mock polling or in the case of polling.

If the polling agents complain, they should be kept confidential and appropriate action should be taken, he said, adding that the two observers have been appointed for the WG district.

Nodal officer K Ch Appa Rao, SVEEP nodal officer GCH Prabhakar lead bank manager A Nagendra Prasad and election section superintendent Ch Durga Prasad were among those who were present.

Naidu, Balayya, Botsa, Taneti file nominations

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, BJP State president D Purandeswari, Home Minister T Vanita and film actor N Balakrishna were among those who filed their nominations on the second day on Friday.

Chandrababu Naidu's wife N Bhuvaneshwari filed a nomination on her behalf in the Kuppam Assembly constituency in the Chittoor constituency. BJP state president D Purandeswari filed her nomination papers in Rajahmundry where she is contesting to Lok Sabha.

Ministers Taneti Vanita, Botsa Satyanarayana, RK Roja, Karumuri Nageswara Rao, ruling party MP YS Avinash Reddy, former minister CH Srinaganatha Raju, Government Whip Grnathi Srinivas, film actor TDP sitting MLA and film actor N Balakrishna, TDP sitting



among those who filed nominations today.

Most of the candidates filed nominations on Friday since today is considered to be an auspicious day. The candidates went to the Returning Officer's office in a huge rally to file nominations. No filing of nominations passed off peacefully,



the police said. The filing of nominations began on April 18 and concluded on 25.

After filing the nomination on behalf of her husband Chandrababu Naidu, Bhuvaneshwari she alleged that no section of people had been meted out justice during the YSRCP-led regime. Industries were not established and some of the existing industries had also left the state, she lamented. The state should get rid of Jagan Reddy's anarchic rule; she said and claimed that Naidu worked hard for the progress of the state when he was the Chief Minister.



RRR's wife files nomination in Undi

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader K Raghurama Krishna Raju's wife filed a nomination in the Undi constituency even though the TDP leadership has given B form.

The TDP leadership announced that it is considering giving a ticket to Raghurama Krishna Raju to contest the Assembly from the Undi constituency. However, the TDP has not made clear whether RRR would be given a ticket or not.

Interestingly, TDP sitting Undi MLA Mantena Rama Raju announced that he would file his nominations on April 22. Chandrababu Naidu assured of doing justice to RRR by allocating Narasapuram Lok Sabha seat but BJP leadership did not agree to give the constituency to RRR.

As an alternative, Naidu promised RRR to allocate the Undi constituency. In the backdrop, RRR's wife filed one set of nominations in the RO's office today. on behalf of her husband. Meanwhile, the followers of sitting TDP Undi MLA Rama Raju are angry at Naidu's decision to allocate the seat to RRR to contest from the Undi constituency.

1,079 summer special trains to ensure comfortable travel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To ensure the convenience of passengers and manage the anticipated surge in travel demand during summers, South Central Railway (SCR) has announced 1079 special train services to cater to the additional rush during the summer season of April and May on Friday. The trains have been announced to the destinations that passengers are regularly travelling to and in the directions that have huge waiting lists.

Some of the popular destination pairs for which the trains have been announced towards include - Northern, Eastern directions like Secunderabad - Danapur, Hyderabad - Gorakhpur, Kacheguda - Kochuveli, Secunderabad - Agartala,

Secunderabad - Santragachi, Secunderabad - Shalimar, Secunderabad - Patna, Tirupati - Shirdi, Kacheguda - Madurai, Secunderabad - Kollam, Hyderabad - Cuttack and Hyderabad - Raxaul.

In addition, special trains have also been announced to suffice the needs of the people travelling between the two Telugu states during the holiday season which include destinations like - Secunderabad - Tirupati, Lingampalli - Kakinada, Hyderabad - Narsapur, Tirupati - Visakhapatnam and Secunderabad - Visakhapatnam. To meet the travelling needs of the passengers travelling in general coaches to Prayagraj, Varanasi and Danapur, SCR has also announced 22 unreserved weekly special trains towards Danapur.

'Only Balmoor Venkat became MLC, while youth left in lurch'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

KTR said that "Betrayal" name is Congress. He said, "The Congress party came to power in Telangana by selling false dreams to all sections of the populace, especially the youth.

In just over 120 days of ruling, Congress government betrayed everyone, including the unemployed."

KTR said that the Congress party's bigwigs, like Priyanka Gandhi, promised to roll out unemployment allowance of Rs 4,000 after coming to power. "But after assuming power, Deputy Chief Minister Bhanti Vikramarka backtracked, denying any such promise was made.

The Congress gave front-page newspaper ads about their job calendar, promising to issue job notifications from February 1. In reality, the Congress government is claiming credit for



30k jobs filled during the BRS regime, merely by generating appointment letters," KTR said on X.

He said, "Congress promised to conduct all competitive examinations free of cost. In a shameful U-turn, the Congress government hiked the TET exam fee from Rs 400 to Rs 2,000 (for 2 papers).

Congress leaders like Balmoor Venkat were responsible for filing court cases and cancellation of many examinations. While leaders like

Balmoor Venkat got rewarded with an MLC post, the government job aspirants are left in the lurch. The true colours of the Congress are out for all to see. It's time for the unemployed youth to teach Congress a lesson for ditching them."

Reacting to it, Balmoor Venkat said, "If the cases filed by me are false, then why the court cancel those notifications. Now you are blaming me or the court? You are in the post of MLA, watch what you are talking about! KTR be careful with your words. Know now that your pride is your enemy! You and your family have lost Telangana! Will your party last until the next election or not? I'm not like you! I am always meeting the unemployed, talking on the phone and working to solve their problems. You are sweaty due to the heat, keep the AC on full and sleep at home"

Jagan pushed AP into debts: Sharmila

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Continuing her blistering attack against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, APCC President YS Sharmila has regretted that under the leadership of Jagan Reddy, AP has become debt-ridden.

Addressing an election meeting in Adoni on Friday, she said that the YSRCP is coming out holding 'Siddham' flags. "I want to ask them whether they are ready to borrow huge sums again, they are ready to make hollow promises and they are ready to deceive people in the name of getting SCS," she lashed out.

Questioning the loyalty of the YSRCP to the BJP, Sharmila said that Jagan Mohan Reddy assured of setting up a price stabilization fund by earmarking Rs 3000 crore and questioned what happened to the price stabilization fund.

"If you are ready to deceive people, the people are also



ready to defeat you," she flayed. Stating that the SCS is a lifeline to AP, she felt that if the SCS had been granted, the situation would have been different, adding that at least 100 industries would have been established in each constituency by now. Jagan Mohan Reddy has made AP a capitalless state and put the state on the roads with a begging bowl, she lambasted.

The Congress must come to power to get the SCS, achieve progress and generate employment, she said. While address-

ing another election meeting at Aalur, she said that the state struck in the land, sand and liquor mafias.

Taking a dig at former Labour Minister Gummanu Jayaram, who defected to TDP at the last minute from the YSRCP, Sharmila said he was incapable and useless in the YSRCP and asked whether he would be a capable and useful person after joining the TDP. She wooed the voters to give one chance to Congress assuring them of getting SCS.

INDIA CORNER

Rane files nomination; cites PM's call of 'abki baar 400 paar'

Union Minister Narayan Rane on Friday filed his nomination from Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra's Konkan region and urged supporters to ensure they contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call of winning more than 400 seats. Rane, a senior BJP leader and former chief minister, is making his Lok Sabha poll debut. He was accompanied by Shiv Sena ministers Deepak Kesarkar and Uday Samant as well as Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. It is PM Modi's guarantee that all the development seen in the past 10 years was just a "trailer", while the entire film was yet to come ("picture abhi baaki hain"), Sawant said. "We have to implement UCC (Uniform Civil Code) and One Nation One Election," he added. Speaking on the occasion, Rane said Modi's hattrick of victories will ensure eradication of poverty in the country and also make it fully self-reliant.



White tigress Sneha dies at Nandankanan Zoo in Odisha

A 14-year-old white tigress Sneha died at her enclosure in Nandankanan Zoological Park on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar city on Friday, officials said. The white tigress fell ill on Thursday and was under medication. She was administered saline and medicines but died this morning. According to the official, apart from her old age ailments, she could have been afflicted with the prevailing intense heat wave. Born to Royal Bengal tiger Nishan and white tigress Kusum on March 1, 2010, Sneha delivered three cubs, Mousumi (female), Chinu (male) and rare melanistic Vicky (male), on August 5, 2016, and Luv and Kush during her second pregnancy. On March 28, 2021, she gave birth to three normal male tiger cubs, Rakesh, Rocky and Banshi. Earlier in October 2022, the zoo had lost 11-year-old white tigress Bijaya, who succumbed to a cancerous growth in her lungs.



Chhattisgarh: CRPF jawan on poll duty killed in explosion of grenade shell

A 32-year-old jawan of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) deployed on poll duty in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district was killed on Friday when a shell of Under Barrel Grenade Launcher (UBGL) exploded accidentally, police said. The incident took place near Galgam village under Usoor police station limits when a team of security personnel was out on an area domination operation half a kilometer away from a polling booth, said an official. Bijapur district comes under the Bastar Lok Sabha constituency where voting is underway in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections. The injured jawan, identified as constable Devendra Kumar of CRPF's 196th battalion, was shifted to Jagdalpur, headquarters of Bastar district, in an air ambulance helicopter and admitted to the Medical College Hospital there. But he succumbed to the injuries during treatment, the police official added.



PM says 'aatank' Pak is struggling for 'aata' now

PNS ■ DAMOH (MP)

Taking a dig at Pakistan without naming it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said a country which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terror) is struggling for 'aata' (flour) these days.

Addressing an election rally at Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, he said India, which once bought most of its arms from overseas, was now exporting high-tech weapons to other countries, and referred to providing BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines.

Citing the prevailing situation in the world, he pitched for a strong and stable government at the Centre, on a day when the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, being held in seven phases, kicked off with voting in more than 100 seats.

"There are many countries in the world whose condition has worsened. Many are getting bankrupt. Even one of our



neighbours, which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terrorism), is now struggling for supply of 'aata' (flour)," Modi said, targeting Pakistan.

The PM asserted his government works with the principle of "Rashtra Pratham" (nation first) and never succumbs to pressure from any quarter or bows before anyone.

Defending India's move to purchase oil from Russia in face of international pressure after its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, he said "To

ensure that the people of the country get cheap oil and farmers get adequate fertilisers, we have taken this decision in the national interest."

"We have seen in the last 10 years how a stable government works in the interest of the people. During the COVID-19 crisis, there was chaos world over, but a strong BJP government brought back its citizens from all over the globe," he said.

The BJP's star campaigner emphasised the next five years

are crucial for making the country a big global power.

The PM said when war clouds are hovering in different parts of the world, there is a need for a government which is capable of tackling any exigencies, comments coming in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war, conflict in West Asia and rising Iran-Israel tension.

He said India has become self-reliant in the defence sector and is in the process of exporting weapons worth Rs 21,000 crore to other countries this year.

Modi underscored that while he is delivering a speech here (in Damoh), India is exporting the BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles system to the Philippines.

The PM accused the opposition of weakening the country's defence sector and said they are guided by their own vested interest even when it comes to purchase of weapons for the defence forces.

Man killed over argument at wedding in Shahjahanpur

PNS ■ SHAHJAHANPUR (UP)

A man was allegedly murdered following an argument at a wedding ceremony here, police said on Friday.

Rajesh Kumar (40) was found dead in the morning in Dakhnaou locality under Allahaganj police station area, Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena said.

He added the body, which had an injury on the head, has been sent for a post-mortem.

According to the police, Kumar on Thursday night attended a marriage function where he allegedly got into an argument with the guests. He was a relative of the bride.

"The deceased had some argument with some people from the groom's side over taking pictures.

The matter was resolved by other guests there. Our teams are trying to investigate if the murder is linked with the argument that night," SP Meena said.

'BJP skipped 3 LS seats as it failed to win people's hearts'

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah on Friday said the BJP had not fielded its candidates from the three Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir as the party and its government have allegedly not been able to win people's hearts after the abrogation of Article 370.

"The importance of this election in itself is that it is the first time after August 2019 that the Lok Sabha elections are being held here. Also, in 2019, the BJP had fielded its candidates on all the seats (in the valley), this time the (Union) Home Minister (Amit Shah) says that we will first win the hearts of the people and then field the candidates.

"This simply means that they could not win the hearts of the people and the 2019 decisions have made people more angry and alienated," Abdullah told reporters here.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister alleged the BJP was not directly contesting the elections in the



Kashmir valley, but it was "holding the reins from behind".

"If the BJP had left the field, it would have meant a lot in itself. But, they have not left the field. They are holding the reins from behind. (BJP national general secretary) Tarun Chugh's arrival in the past days here and meeting some political parties.

"When the (Union) home minister talks about defeating the NC-Congress INDIA alliance, but he does not talk about defeating other political parties. You get to know with whom the BJP is connected,"

Abdullah added.

When asked to comment on People's Conference (PC) chief Sajad Lone calling him a "tourist" and belonging to an "elite class", the NC leader said there was no secret that his fight in the north Kashmir constituency -- from where Lone is also contesting -- is against Delhi. "Tarun Chugh comes to Srinagar and immediately calls Sajad Lone. And he (Lone) runs to meet him. And the home minister talks about defeating the NC, Congress and India alliance, but he does not talk about defeating the PC.

SC seeks Centre, Assam's reply on plea challenging CAA rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought replies of the Centre and the Assam government on a plea challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, meant to operationalise and regulate the process of grant of Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants who came from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 31, 2014.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions of a lawyer representing petitioner Hiren Gohain, a Guwahati resident, and issued notices to the state government and the union ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs.

The top court also ordered that the fresh plea be tagged with those pending on the issue.

The latest plea on the hugely contentious issue said, "The uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam has caused huge demographic

changes in Assam. The indigenous people, who were once the majority, have now become a minority in their own land."

Recently, the bench, while refusing to stay the operation of the CAA Rules, 2024, meant to operationalise and regulate the process of grant of Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants who came from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 31, 2014.

apex court has disposed of the pleas challenging the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Gohain, in his plea, said the CAA Rules, 2024 are "ultra-vires to the Constitution" as they are "palpably discriminatory, manifestly arbitrary, illegal and against the basic structure of the Constitution".

"It is stated that the impugned Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 violates the petitioners' fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (right against discrimination on basis of religion, race, caste etc), 19 (freedom of speech and expression), 21 (right to life and personal liberty) etc of the Constitution," it said.



Himanta sure of winning by 5 lakh vote margin

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

As BJP candidate for the Guwahati Lok Sabha constituency Bijuli Kalita Medhi filed her nomination on Friday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma exuded confidence that the party will retain the seat with a margin of over 5 lakh votes.

"The enthusiasm of the people here today shows the support for BJP and our candidate. It is a big encouragement for us," Sarma said, addressing a gathering before Medhi filed her papers.

The CM, who is a voter here and also represents Jalukbari Assembly segment of Guwahati, said, "This support shows that we will win here by a margin of over 5 lakh votes. As it is, we are already winning all the five seats where elections are taking place today."

Sarma maintained that the support was for Narendra Modi and to make him the prime minister for the third successive term.

"We want to take Assam forward, Modi ji is trying to make Bharat the 'Vishwa guru' and we will present these things during campaigning," he added.

Medhi, who is a vice-president of the state BJP and former president of the party's women wing in the state, also sounded confident of winning the seat.

Congress, Left ideologically bankrupt, says Nadda

PNS ■ WAYANAND (KERALA)

BJP chief J P Nadda said on Friday that parties within the INDI Alliance, such as the Congress and the Left, have become 'ideologically bankrupt.' He highlighted their fierce electoral battles with each other outside of Delhi while maintaining cordial relationships within the national capital to oppose the BJP.

Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of a roadshow organised by the BJP-led NDA in Sulthan Bhatery for his candidate K Surendran, the BJP chief cited the electoral battle between Congress

leader Rahul Gandhi and LDF's Annie Raja of the CPI in the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat.

He pointed to this fight between the Congress and the Left parties to reinforce his claim, highlighting the apparent camaraderie among their top leadership in New Delhi despite the rivalry elsewhere.

"The double standards and hypocrisy of Rahul Gandhi, the Indian National Congress, CPI(M), and CPI are visible here. CPI general secretary D Raja's wife (Annie Raja) is contesting against Rahul Gandhi as a LDF candidate. However, in Delhi, D Raja sits between Sonia



Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. They are ideologically bankrupt, and the outcome is evident here," Nadda said.

When asked about Congress

leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's allegation that if there is no glitch in the EVM, the BJP is not going to win more than 180 seats, the BJP chief hit back at her, saying the Congress leaders have no issues with the EVMs when their party wins polls like Karnataka.

Calling both Priyanka and her brother Rahul "political tourists," Nadda said, "They come for the election and then vanish. How can you take their statements seriously?"

"When they win in Karnataka, they have no issues with EVMs. When they ruled Rajasthan for five years, they had no issues with

the EVMs," the BJP chief said.

He said the BJP will have a strong presence in the southern states in the Lok Sabha polls.

"In the south, I saw much enthusiasm... the road show in Wayanad for Surendran. The participants were enthused; many turned out in large numbers," he said.

Earlier, while addressing the gathering in Sulthan Bhatery, Nadda launched a scathing attack on Rahul Gandhi accusing the Congress's Wayanad Lok Sabha candidate of believing in dynastic rule, which, according to him, is detrimental to Indian democracy.

Vote for candidate backing PM for development: Ajit Pawar

PNS ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday asked voters of Osmanabad Lok Sabha constituency to vote for a candidate who strengthens the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as it would lead to development.

Addressing a rally for the Nationalist Congress Party candidate Archana Patil, Pawar said, "PM Modi has started many welfare schemes. Please must choose the candi-

date who is backing our PM," he said.

Citing development projects for the region, Pawar said water supply for Dharashiv (Osmanabad) from Ujani dam was not enough and there was need to get water from Krishna-Bhima stabilisation project through a tunnel.

"Maharashtra will contribute 50 per cent of the cost of the Dharashiv-Tuljapur-Solapur railway line. To get these development works done, people should vote for the candidate who is supporting Narendra Modi," he told the gathering.

The Osmanabad Lok Sabha seat is witnessing a fight between Omprakash Rajenimbalkar of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and Archana Patil of the ruling alliance, which also consists of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the BJP.

Patil is the wife of BJP MLA Ranajit Singh Patil and she joined Ajit Pawar-led NCP just before the Lok Sabha polls. Speaking about the possibility of former MP Ravindra Gaikwad, who is part of the Shinde-led Sena, contesting as a rebel, Pawar said he has spoken to him on avoid such a situation.

Delhi Police to travel by Metro with weapons during crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, the Delhi Police personnel with weapons will be seen travelling in metro trains during emergency situations to avoid getting stuck in traffic jams and reach the spot sooner, officials said on Friday.

According to officials, the Delhi Police has got the go-ahead on its proposal in a recent meeting with the DMRC (Delhi Metro Rail Corporation) and CISF (Central Industrial Security Force), which is deployed at the stations for security checks.

As of now, the Delhi Police personnel are not allowed to travel in metro with weapons.

According to a Delhi Police officer, the final modalities for the SOP (standard operating procedure) have been chalked out, and if possible, it may be implemented before the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi.

"We have got the approval for travelling in the metro with weapons during crisis or law and order situations from the DMRC.

On April 16, a meeting was held with all the stakeholders, including the DMRC and CISF, regarding the matter," the officer said.

The officer further said a group of personnel can travel without the token, but before the journey, their in-charge or



head, will have to inform the DMRC about the reason and details of the personnel.

A coach might be dedicated to the personnel depending on the situation, he said.

"The journey will be on payment basis and each travelling personnel will be wearing the uniform," the officer added.

Citing an example of riot-like situation where extra force

is required, their movement in large numbers in buses becomes difficult due to heavy traffic in Delhi, the officer said. Sometime it even takes more than an hour to reach

from one district to another, he said.

The metro line has spread almost every parts of Delhi and it can be utilised in saving the time to reach the spot at the time of crisis, he added.

Another police officer said, as per the plan, transportation will be provided to the force for 'pick and drop' from metro stations to reach the spot.

This also includes the movement of paramilitary personnel, if they are to be deployed in the national capital during emergencies.

Delhi has witnessed communal riots in Trilokpuri and North-East Delhi, in 2014 and 2020, respectively.

The Delhi Police has got the go-ahead on its proposal with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation and Central Industrial Security Force, which is deployed at the stations for security checks

Plea in HC seeks removal of top Delhi govt official as waqf board administrator

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking removal of Ashwani Kumar, Principal Secretary (Home) of the city government, as the administrator of the Delhi Waqf Board accusing him of acting against the interest of waqf properties.

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora has listed the matter for hearing on April 30.

The plea said the administrator of the waqf board is also the chairperson of the religious committee which has recommended "removal and demolition" of several waqf properties.

"The administrator in an organisation is appointed for the welfare and betterment of the organisation and such person has to protect the interest of that organisation. However, in the present case, the administrator of Delhi Waqf Board is acting totally against the waqf properties. Instead of protecting them, he is sitting to destroy the waqf properties," the plea, filed by Secular Front of Lawyers, alleged.

The petitioner, represented by senior advocate Salman Khurshid and lawyers Imran Ahmad and Rohit Sharma,

said in the last one year, the religious committee has recommended removal/demolition of several waqf properties including Dargah Mamu Bhanja, Sunehri Bagh Masjid, Masjid Madarsa Kungal Shah and Akhoondji Masjid.

The petition said a major portion of Dargah Mamu Bhanja has been demolished and Akhoondji Masjid, which was more than 600 years old, has been completely razed on the "erroneous recommendation" of the religious committee.

It said the Delhi Waqf Board was dissolved on August 26, 2023 as its statutory term of five years had expired. Ashwani Kumar was appointed as the administrator of the board on January 10, 2024.

"As a chairman/ head of the religious committee, he is passing orders for removal/demolition of waqf properties which are outside his jurisdiction. In the capacity of administrator, the respondent no.3 (Kumar) is sitting over the Delhi Waqf Board interfering in policy matters and in the capacity of Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue, he is the head of the Revenue Department from which the board receives Grant-in-aid for its expenses," the plea said.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Theatre of the absurd

The ever-falling state of polity touches a new low, trivialising life for political gains

In the realm of politics, where governance and public welfare should reign supreme, a disturbing trend has emerged — the trivialisation of human life for the sake of political benefits. Recent events surrounding Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal exemplify this worrying trend, where his health crisis has become a point of one-upmanship and is being used to serve narrow political narratives rather than addressing the genuine concerns of his health. The case took a curious turn when the Enforcement Directorate (ED) claimed that Kejriwal intentionally indulged in a high-sugar diet to fabricate grounds for bail. Kejriwal's colleague Atishi has countered this assertion, alleging a conspiracy to deny the jailed Chief Minister access to essential insulin and home-cooked food, potentially putting his life at risk. Both claims, while patently opposite, underscore a distressing reality — the callous politicisation of a health crisis. In the theatre of politics, where power dynamics often overshadow ethical considerations, the sanctity of human life seems to have been direly neglected. The focus has shifted from genuine concern for an individual's well-being to exploiting their vulnerabilities for partisan gains. Such a narrative not only reflects poorly on the integrity of political discourse but also raises profound questions about the moral compass of those entrusted with governance.



The ED's assertion of Kejriwal deliberately manipulating his health for legal advantage is a damning indictment of the extent to which political opponents are willing to go to discredit their adversaries. It underscores a culture where the personal struggles of individuals are weaponised for political advantage. Conversely, Atishi's allegations of a plot to endanger Kejriwal's life highlight the dangerous consequences of unchecked political rhetoric. Accusations of attempted murder, if unsubstantiated, not only sow seeds of distrust but also trivialise the gravity of such heinous crimes. At its core, the Kejriwal saga underscores a broader crisis within the polity — the prioritisation of political expediency over human dignity. In the relentless pursuit of power and influence, the inherent value of human life is often sacrificed at the altar of partisan interests. This erosion of empathy and decency not only corrodes the fabric of democracy but also threatens the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Without delving into the merits of the case or passing judgment on who is truthful, Kejriwal, like everyone else, must be given the best treatment at the moment, even if the illness is self-inflicted. To reclaim the integrity of polity, it is imperative for political actors to realign their priorities with the values of compassion, integrity and accountability. The welfare of individuals should never be subjugated to the exigencies of political gamesmanship. Instead, leaders must demonstrate a commitment to upholding the dignity and wellbeing of every citizen, irrespective of their political affiliations. The Kejriwal saga serves as a sobering reminder of the perils of allowing politics to trump humanity.

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PICTALK



School students with their faces and hands painted as part of voter awareness campaign pose for photos, in Jammu PTI

Aung San Suu Kyi: Prison or house arrest?



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Concerns over Suu Kyi's whereabouts as the junta stares at defeat

The news website, *The Irrawaddy*, cites "informed sources in Naypyitaw and Yangon" as saying that Aung San Suu Kyi (78), the emblem of the Myanmar's struggle for democracy and Win Mint (72), incarcerated president of the country's democratically-elected Government ousted by the coup on February 1, 2021, remain in prison. This, indeed, is likely to be the case given the high level of credibility that the website enjoys. It would be instructive to read what it has to say in this connection. The ball, so to say, was set rolling late on the afternoon of April 16 when a pro-regime media outlet said that both had been moved to a new location. It was followed by the regime's spokesman, Major-General Zaw Min Tun telling the Burmese services of VOA and the BBC: "Not only Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint but also some [other] older prisoners were given necessary care since the weather is extremely hot." However, he did not say that Suu Kyi had been moved to a new location. When media outlets pressed him for further information, he did not provide any details. Despite this and the absence of any photographic or other evidence showing their having been moved to house arrest, both local and international and news agencies carried stories saying that it was the case. That this is not so is further suggested by Aung San Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, who to told Kay Burley of *Sky News* during a breakfast interview, "They are saying house arrest. She only has one house and she's not there." Given the utterly unsavoury reputations that the junta and news outlets which act as its mouthpieces enjoy, the confusion may, in all likelihood, have been deliberately created by both acting in tandem. If this, indeed, is the case, what purpose was sought to have been achieved? The most plausible answer would be that it was to show that the junta cared. Why suddenly? It has been known for some time that Aung San Suu Kyi was very ill in prison and the junta was



not providing her the kind of medical attention she needed. It has also been speculated that the junta could murder her in prison and claim that she had died of old age or other natural causes. Whatever it is, it would serve the generals well to create the impression that it was not their fault if something untoward happened to her. The other reason could be differences within the junta, a section of which wants to do a deal with her to end the civil war they are losing and another would hear nothing of it. The Sit-Tat (which and not Tatmadaw, is the real name for Myanmar Army), is now facing defeat at a none-to-distant future. It has been suffering one major reverse after another since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth Alliance) launched its current offensive, codenamed Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. The latest, the loss of Myawaddy, an important border town, on April 11, 2024, to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Army, is clearly the most devastating blow suffered by



THE JUNTA IS REPORTEDLY PREPARING TO LAUNCH A COUNTER OFFENSIVE. WHETHER IT MATERIALISES AND, IF IT DOES, WITH WHAT SUCCESS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN

the junta since the Alliance's current offensive began. A key trading hub close to the eastern end of Myanmar's border with Thailand—the total value of imports and exports passing through it has been valued at \$ 1 billion in 2023—it is also regarded as Myanmar's opening to South-East Asian countries. The Junta is reportedly preparing to launch a counter offensive. Whether it materialises and, if it does, with what success, remains to be seen. But even if it is successful and the Sit-Tat is able to retain the town after regaining it, the event is unlikely to be a turning point in the civil war which is going overwhelming in favour of the Alliance—comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), active in the Kokang Special Region of northern Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in the Shan State and the Arakan Army (AA), based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part. Acting in close cooperation opposition National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Defence Force (PDF) and other ethnic armies like the KNLA and KLA. At the time of writing, the AA has brought almost the entire Rakhine State under its control. By early April, it had captured some 170 junta camps and posts, several larger bases, battalion headquarters and training facilities. It seized the important town of Paletwa on January 15, 2024. Kyaukphyu, where China is developing a port and a special economic zone spread over 1,600 hectares, is about to fall. The AA is pressing hard on Sittwe, an important port town, after seizing control of the small towns around it and cutting off access to it through road and waterways. India shifted its staff from its consulate there to Yangon earlier in April, 2024. Initially, one had thought that the Junta's ouster, even though inevitable, would take a long time to come about. It now seems that it would be defenestrated much sooner than one had thought. India must bear this in mind. (The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP'S STRATEGIC MANIFESTO

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A Vision for India's Global Leadership", published on April 19, this is my response. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto signals a shift towards a policy-centric approach, departing from traditional electoral strategies. By highlighting achievements and projecting a vision for India's future, it aims to secure votes based on governance rather than populist promises. The absence of significant Pakistan-centric rhetoric suggests a nuanced understanding of foreign policy priorities, focusing instead on global engagement and regional stability. Prime Minister Modi's emphasis on "Neighbour First" and "Act East" policies reflects a proactive stance in regional diplomacy, enhancing India's influence and fostering solidarity among neighbouring nations. The manifesto's commitment to global advocacy for the Global South underscores India's aspirations for a leadership role in international affairs. However, challenges persist, particularly in integrating India into global supply chains and enhancing the rupee's acceptability. Yet, the manifesto's articulation of strategic goals and pledges for collaboration within the Indo-Pacific region portrays a coherent vision for India's role in the evolving geopolitical landscape. Sneha Gupta | Delhi

OTT LANGUAGE DEBATE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "How justified is abusive language on OTT?", published on April 19, this is my response. India's OTT platforms have reshaped entertainment, offering diverse content but facing criticism for excessive profanity. The Supreme Court's recent ruling defends free speech, sparking debates on cultural integrity. Profanity may enhance realism yet risks societal norms, especially impacting youth. While OTT isn't solely responsible, it amplifies existing trends. Education reforms emphasise cultural values, conflicting with profanity's normalisation. Rishab Vashisht | Bhopal

Political quagmire



Apropos the news article, "Corruption and political defections: A telltale sign of democratic decay", published on April 19, this is my response. The article delves into the unsettling reality of political manoeuvring, where corruption probes seem to act as a revolving door for politicians, raising questions about the integrity of the system. It draws a sharp contrast between the flawed current State of affairs and the ideal governance system envisioned in ancient scriptures like Manusmriti. The Manusmriti's principles, though controversial, present a compelling blueprint for a more righteous governance model, emphasising a party-less system, voter recall rights and alignment with moral principles. The chasm between this ideal and the existing political landscape is vast, highlighting the urgent need for reform. While achieving perfection may be a distant goal, even partial adoption of Manusmriti's principles could yield significant improvements, reducing electoral malpractice, corruption and divisive politics. As the nation awaits potential reforms under the Modi Government, India, with its rich spiritual heritage, can transcend its current challenges and emerge as a global exemplar of moral governance. Ishaan Shukhi | Ludhiana

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Transformative trends in India's higher education



ARITRA GHOSHAL

The surge in EdTech presents opportunities for democratising education but also highlights challenges such as the digital divide and ensuring quality

India's higher education landscape is undergoing a transformative shift. With initiatives like the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, skill development programs by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the encouragement of 100 per cent FDI in education, the landscape is ripe for innovation and investment. Additionally, UGC's push for setting up international campuses in India and the Ministry of Education's focus on global learning is reshaping our educational framework. The market size of the Indian higher education system was estimated at around \$40 billion in 2023, growing at a CAGR of 15 per cent. With over 1,200 universities, 49,400 colleges and 12,600 stand-alone institutions, India hosts one of the largest higher education ecosystems in the world. Catering to more than 50 million students — a number expected to grow substantially in the next five years — these institutions are crucial in achieving an enhanced Gross Enrollment Ratio and improving the skill set of our future workforce.



Amidst this expansion, the post-pandemic era has seen a significant influx of digitalisation in learning, with universities offering online programs and various platforms providing a broad spectrum of courses online. Considering our current infrastructure and the expected demand, it is essential for the country to further explore online learning and skill development opportunities. Aligning these opportunities with the next 10-year growth plan is crucial for preparing a skilled workforce that enhances graduate employability. However, the selection of courses among students has also seen a paradigm shift. India is moving beyond tra-

ditional domains like engineering, medicine and management. Today, students are increasingly drawn to interdisciplinary programs and new-age courses that promise quicker skill acquisition and certification. There is a significant opportunity for institutions to expand their offerings in these certification/degree courses where students can learn new skills in less duration. The surge in EdTech has been transformative and represents a key area ripe for investment and innovation. By providing everything from career guidance to student counselling digitally, these platforms have democratised access to education, ensuring that students from all regions have better career opportunities. Yet, realising the full potential of these advancements requires overcoming significant challenges. Addressing the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology and improving internet connectivity, especially in underserved areas, are critical. Moreover, as the field rapidly diversifies, strengthening quality assurance and adapting accredita-

tion and regulatory frameworks are essential to maintaining standards and credibility. These bodies must adapt to the changing dynamics of higher education to uphold academic integrity and student outcomes. The Ministry of Education's current focus on the internationalization of higher education in India is set to have profound effects, not only on educational practices but also on the broader economy and society. This strategic emphasis will enable transnational education and student/faculty exchanges, thereby building a globally competent workforce and fostering knowledge exchange between nations. As we look ahead, the future of higher education in India is not just about scaling up but also about smart scaling. By embracing these trends and addressing inherent challenges, we can ensure that the sector not only expands but also elevates, providing every student with a world-class education and global opportunities. (The writer is the founder and director of OneStep Global; views are personal)

Despite honouring women in tradition, derogatory language persists, undermining societal respect. Education institutions oppose abuse, but OTT exposure challenges efforts. A balanced approach is crucial, fostering dialogue on artistic freedom versus cultural preservation. OTT's influence demands responsible content creation, respect for diverse audiences and societal values. Ultimately, societal progress intertwines with cultural preservation, demanding nuanced solutions to maintain integrity amidst evolving entertainment landscapes. Rishab Vashisht | Bhopal

INSIGHTS ON INDIAN JEWELRY
Madam — Apropos the news article, "Heritage Indian jewellery dazzles the world", published on April 19, this is my response. Dr Alka Raghuvanshi's posthumously published masterpiece, "Rendezvous with Traditional Indian Jewellery," transcends the boundaries of a mere book. It's a heartfelt journey delving into the soul of India's cultural heritage, where artistry intertwines with pro-

found symbolism. The meticulous attention to detail reveals a rich tapestry of craftsmanship, history and significance. The book's thematic chapters unravel the evolution and diversity of Indian jewellery, from the majestic influences of the Mughal era to the intricate designs of South India. It showcases stunning visuals and explores the deep symbolism ingrained in each piece, reflecting social, religious and cultural narratives. Moreover, it sheds light on the craftsmanship and techniques passed down through generations, preserving the essence of traditional jewellery-making. Regional variations highlight the unique aesthetics across India, celebrating its diverse cultural tapestry. This book is a captivating ode to India's cherished art form, offering insights for enthusiasts, historians and admirers alike, encapsulating the beauty and legacy of Indian jewellery. Lavanya Sharma | Lucknow

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

MIND, THE KEY TO HIDDEN FORTUNE

True wealth lies not in material possessions but in the freedom of mind



RAVI VALLURI

Once upon a time lived a woman. She was struck with an unexpected tragedy as her husband passed away untimely. The lady was now left with only one son and precious jewellery. Since she was hounded by creditors to repay the debts accrued by her husband, she conjured a trick to hide the wealth.

In sheer desperation to keep the jewellery safe from creditors, the lady wrapped the precious wealth in a piece of cloth and hid it under a tree. The mother and son lived in an impoverished State. Her mind was always disturbed by the fact that she did not share this piece of vital information with her only son. As it turned out, she carried this secret to the grave.

Consequently, the son inherited plenty of debt, a barren hut and a cot. The son had to work hard for sustenance and to repay the ever-rising liabilities. He toiled hard to survive and regretted his misfortune. 'Property is not the sacred right. When a rich man becomes poor it is a misfortune, it is not a moral evil. When a poor man becomes destitute, it is a moral evil, teeming with consequences and is injurious to society and morality,' opined Lord Acton. Indeed, the impoverishment of the poor is heart-wrenching.

One day while cutting the branches of a tree, he stumbled upon the jewellery. Dumbfounded and stupefied, the strapping youngster hid the bijouterie in a pit he dug in the hut, petrified that the creditors would appropriate the wealth. He too committed the cardinal mistake of not sharing the secret with his wife and carried it to his grave. The mother and son were not mindful and wakeful enough to be in the Present Moment and remained prisoners of their past and future.



Two Buddhist monks were once discussing a flag flapping in the wind. While one felt it was the wind moving, the other conjectured it was the flag fluttering. The imbroglio could not be resolved and they sought the intervention of a Zen Master. The master impassively said, 'It is the MIND that moves, neither the flag nor the wind.'

Humans need freedom from their past and future to be in the present. And being in the NOW or present is true enlightenment and mindfulness. The past is full of sorrows and regrets while the future brims with anxieties and worries and humans are caged in that mindset, thereby postponing their happiness quotient. To appreciate true happiness and joy, the human mind should not vacillate between the past and the future but remain in the PRESENT.

A young monk was once travelling in pursuit of happiness and truth. During his travels, he encountered a massive river that he could not cross. A short while later, he saw a senior monk on the other side of the river. He hailed him and sought assistance to cross the river to reach the other side. The senior monk pondered and replied, 'You are already on the other side.'

This fact can be appreciated only when the mind is centred. Breathing techniques such as Sudarshan Kriya, Pranayama, Yoga, Meditation and Vipassana all help in dissolving the mind so that it becomes centred. 'True happiness is not possible without freedom. We have to learn the habit of being free. We do not allow our past, the future, our projects, or our fear to get hold of us. We are free. Every step is free. Every step is nourishment. Every step is healing. Every step is joy,' says Thich Nhat Hanh.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Human-elephant conflict: The way out

To ensure the protection of these majestic creatures, it is imperative to revisit and revise legislative frameworks with a focus on ecological sustainability



BKP SINHA



ARVIND JHA



India's rich biodiversity includes a significant population of Asian elephants, which are not only an integral part of the country's wildlife heritage but also hold cultural and religious significance. However, the increasing instances of human-elephant conflict (HEC) have become a pressing concern for both conservationists and those living near elephant habitats.

The root causes of HEC are multifaceted, primarily stemming from habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities. As India's population expands, so does the need for land for agricultural and developmental activities. This expansion often leads to encroachment into elephant territories, resulting in the destruction or fragmentation of their natural habitats. Consequently, elephants are forced to venture closer to human habitations in search of food and space. Mining activities, in particular, lead to deforestation and habitat degradation, disrupting elephant migratory routes and undermining the scope and health of elephant habitats. Similarly, urbanisation and infrastructure development often intersect with elephant corridors, pushing these gentle giants into unfamiliar and potentially dangerous territories. Climate change is another significant factor in this conflict. Changes in climate patterns can affect the availability and distribution of food and water sources in elephant habitats. Extreme weather events like droughts, floods and high temperatures can force elephants to migrate in search of these resources, often bringing them into conflict with humans. The current State of HEC in India is alarming. Over 500 humans are killed annually in encounters with elephants and more than 100 elephants lose their lives due to human-related activities, including poaching for ivory, poisoning, electrocution and collisions with trains. Train collisions are the second-highest cause of unnatural elephant deaths in the country, following accidental electrocution. Over the past decade, train collisions have claimed the lives of more than 200 elephants.

As mega-herbivores, elephants consume up to 150 kilograms of forage and drink up to 190 litres of water per day. This necessitates a large foraging area, typically spanning 100-1,000 km² for a family herd, to provide a diverse diet of grasses, shrubs and fruits. However, navigating large areas to find sufficient food and water becomes a challenge when these areas overlap with human activities. This often results in crop raiding, property damage, and, in some tragic instances, human casualties. These incidents, unfortunately, lead to retaliatory actions from humans that can be fatal for these majestic creatures, further intensifying their fear and mistrust of humans. Farmers, particularly those with limited resources struggle to cope with crop losses. This hardship breeds resentment towards elephants, undermining conservation efforts and trapping both humans and elephants in a cycle of violence.

Since 2019, there have been over 1500 human fatalities reported due to elephant attacks. In 2023-24 alone, Odisha reported 149 elephant deaths due to HEC. Mineral-rich districts like Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Sundargarh have been hit the hardest, with Dhenkanal alone witnessing 130 elephants and 227 human deaths over the last decade.

In August 2023, three elephants were electrocuted at the Rani Tea Estate near Guwahati due to low-hanging high-voltage

wires. This was not an isolated incident; back in October 2021, sagging power lines near the Dihing-Patkai National Park claimed the lives of another three elephants. The situation worsened in October 2022, when within a single week, 11 elephants across Assam lost their lives to human-related hazards including electrocution, crop poisoning and train collisions.

Western Maharashtra, a region not traditionally known for elephant habitation, saw a significant change in 2002 when elephants migrated from Karnataka. This movement was largely attributed to their displacement from the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, a place they had inhabited comfortably until 1990. The construction of the Kali hydro-electric project is believed to have been the catalyst for their relocation to the districts of Kolhapur and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, leading to notable incidents of crop raiding. A similar pattern emerged in 2022 when a herd of 22 elephants trekked from Chhattisgarh to Maharashtra, settling in the lush forests along the Wain-Ganga, Pranhita and Dina river basins. This migration has been linked to increased human encroachment, the construction of two canals in Odisha and mining disturbances in their traditional corridors.

The Wayanad region, a vital watershed for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, is currently facing a multitude of environmental challenges such as deforestation, irresponsible tourism and unscientific development. Such activities are posing a significant threat to the ecological balance of the region, endangering the lives of both humans and wildlife. Wayanad plays a critical role in maintaining regional biodiversity. However, ongoing habitat degradation in this region could potentially intensify the water crisis in the Kaveri basin and escalate the HEC, which has tragically led to 41 fatalities already. Similarly, in the northeastern States of Assam and West Bengal, expanding tea plantations and human settlements have encroached on elephants' traditional grounds, leading to frequent HEC incidents. Addressing HEC requires a multi-

pronged approach that balances the needs of wildlife conservation with the socio-economic realities of human populations living near elephant habitats. This includes securing and restoring elephant corridors to ensure safe passage for elephants between different habitats, thereby reducing the likelihood of them entering human-dominated landscapes. Recognising this need, the Indian Government has launched an ambitious initiative known as Project Elephant. This program focuses on enhancing elephant habitats by creating a network of reserves, corridors and protected areas. To address the common issue of crop raiding in human-elephant interactions, the project employs innovative technologies such as early warning systems and elephant-proof barriers. It also implements various strategies like durable and solar-powered electric fences and biological deterrents including bio-fencing with cacti, beehive fences and chilli smoke to deter elephants.

Enhancing the natural food supply within forests is another essential strategy for preventing elephants from entering human territories. This involves improving water conservation, regenerating forests by replanting and nurturing native trees and plants, implementing fire protection and removing invasive species. Programs focused on ecotourism and livelihood diversification not only engage local communities in conservation but also provide them with sustainable economic alternatives. Success stories from the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape underscore the effectiveness of community-led conservation endeavours, strategic land-use planning, trans-border collaboration and habitat restoration in diminishing conflict incidents. Kerala has also taken a bold initiative to relocate people from forest regions and reforest agricultural lands, despite the central Government's refusal to fund this Rs. 620 crore project. The State's declaration of HEC as a State-specific disaster and the involvement of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority in

conflict management, are significant steps towards addressing this complex issue.

Statutory support is fundamental in the conservation efforts addressing the HEC. Elephants, listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List, are protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Recent amendments to the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 have raised concerns regarding their impact on elephant reserves and corridors, particularly within the 100 km strip of India's boundary where the majority of these reserves and corridors are located. These changes could potentially worsen the fragmentation and degradation of these vital habitats, thereby intensifying the HEC. The Forest Rights Act of 2006, while well-intentioned in empowering forest-dwelling communities, has also had unintended consequences. Its implementation has sometimes resulted in further encroachments and habitat fragmentation, which can force elephants to venture into new areas in search of refuge and resources, increasing the likelihood and severity of conflicts. Post-project monitoring, particularly in the mining industry, is often insufficient, leading to a neglect of wildlife protection measures that were stipulated during the project's approval. This oversight can result in significant harm to elephant populations and their habitats, undermining conservation efforts.

As we move forward, let us remember that our fates are intertwined with those of the elephants and all wildlife. Their survival is our survival. Their well-being reflects the health of our planet and their continued existence enriches our world in ways that cannot be quantified. It's high time we recognise our role and act responsibly, ensuring a future where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, each playing their part in maintaining the balance of our shared ecosystem.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are personal)

Rahul Gandhi holds on to Wayanad despite speculation

The decision comes as a strategic move, influenced by a variety of factors, including local dynamics and broader political alliances in Kerala

Even as the Indian National Congress was burning midnight oil about the Lok Sabha constituency from where Rahul Gandhi would contest this time, The Pioneer has reported that the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi clan would not leave Wayanad from where he was elected with a mammoth majority of four lakh votes in the 2019 edition of the General Election. The report was prepared after speaking to a cross-section of the electorate in the Wayanad constituency who were unanimous in their opinion that Rahul Gandhi should contest from Wayanad itself. Those who reacted to the queries posed to them included hardcore CPI(M) members and activists who



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

made it known that Rahul should register a much bigger majority than that of the 2019 poll because the opponent happened to be Annie Raja of the CPI and K Surendran of the BJP. Annie, the spouse of D Raja, CPI's national general secretary, had rubbed Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the wrong way and the CPI(M) cadres consider it as a cardinal sin.

Raja too had publicly questioned the capability of Vijayan and this made the CPI(M) activists furious. Had the Congress or BJP leaders criticized Vijayan, they would not have bothered but the CPI had crossed the Lakshman Rekha (it could be Stalinist Rekha since the comrades do not accept Ramayana). The CPI(M) comrades would certainly teach Annie Raja a lesson or two in the art of politics. The truth is that the CPI(M) leaders wanted Rahul Gandhi to contest from Wayanad so that the CPI would lose one seat for sure.

The decision to field Surendran, the Kerala State president of the BJP, was made much later. Surendran himself knows that he would

lose by a big margin but he has to kowtow the party line. The information coming out of the BJP office is that he may be given a gubernatorial position even if he loses the security deposit. There are no suitable candidates in Kerala BJP to challenge the supremacy of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress. The question being asked by Wayand voters is that how many people remember the names of the 2019 challengers to Rahul Gandhi.

What is interesting is that the animosity between the CPI(M) and Congress has come down drastically with Gandhi filing the nomination from Wayanad. Though the Congress leaders lambast the CPI(M), it is just a façade to convince the hardcore mem-

bers of these parties that there is no alliance between them. But what the people of the State see in TV channels and newspapers is the video images and pictures of Sitarum Yechury and D Raja hugging and kissing Rahul Gandhi while in Tripura former CPI(M) Chief Minister Manik Sarkar openly campaigning for the Congress party's candidates.

Kerala is the only State where they act as if they are rivals and enemies. By the next election, one can see the Congress and the CPI(M) fighting it together in Kerala against the BJP-led front (provided the Hindutva party leadership throws out all the rotten eggs from its basket). There is no difference between the Congress and

the CPI(M) as of date. Political pundits have been asking both parties to officially legalize the ties so that the entire secular parties could be arrayed under the flag of the Congress across the country against the "communal and fascist" forces. The secular parties include the Muslim League! In Marxist parlance, they say that whoever aligns with the CPI(M) is secular while the BJP is "communal and fascist". The CPI(M) does not have any issues in accepting the former NDA constituents as allies once they call off the marriage of convenience with the BJP. Telugu Desam of Andhra Pradesh, BJD of Orissa, BSP and JD(U) are some of the major political outfits whose secular cre-

dentials depend on their ties with the BJP. The press meeting addressed by A K Antony, the Bheeshma Pitamah of the Congress on 9 April 2024 at Thiruvananthapuram was an indicator of how political marriages take place in Kerala. While Antony was cursing his son Anil Antony who is contesting from Pathanamthitta as a BJP candidate and asking the electorate to ensure the defeat of his son, he was waxing eloquence on Anto Antony, the Congress candidate who is pitted against Anil. The former defence minister lambasted the BJP as anti-nationals, communalists and dictators. But what stood out was his silence on the CPI(M) candi-

dates. Antony's ties with the CPI(M) are infamous as he had sailed with the Marxists for almost two years during 1980-1983.

The CPI(M) and the Congress-led by Antony fought the 1980 general election together and ruled Kerala for almost two years. The Congress faction was pushed out of the LDF by the CPI(M) which demolished the offices of the Congress across the State with the police looking the other way. It is not without any reason political pundits say that politics make strange persons into bedfellows. Do we need more proof than A K Antony?

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

MONEY MATTERS

HCC Rs 350 crore rights issue oversubscribed 2.5 times

Industan Construction Company Limited (HCC) on Friday said its rights issue has been oversubscribed by 250 per cent, with the company receiving applications worth Rs 877 crore against an issue size of Rs 350 crore. The company, in a statement, said it has retained an amount of Rs 350 crore, corresponding to 100 per cent of the rights issue size, with the balance being refunded to investors. Equity shares have been allotted to the applicants as per the basis of allotment finalised with the designated stock exchange BSE Limited, it added. HCC Vice Chairman Arjun Dhawan said, "We are grateful to our shareholders for their overwhelming support as we chart a new chapter in HCC's growth". Through the rights issue, the company said the number of shares in HCC has increased by 16,66,66,666 - from 1,51,30,28,244 to 1,67,96,94,910, and the paid-up share capital has increased by Rs 17 crore - from Rs 151 crore to Rs 168 crore.



Wipro Q4 net profit falls 7.8% to Rs 2,835 crore

IT services company Wipro on Friday reported a 7.8 per cent year-on-year drop in its consolidated net profit to Rs 2,834.6 crore for the March quarter. The company's revenue from operations was down 4.2 per cent on-year to Rs 22,208.3 crore, according to an exchange filing. The net profit (attributable to equity holders of the company) declined to Rs 2,834.6 crore in Q4FY24 from Rs 3,074.5 in the year-ago period, translating into a 7.8 per cent fall. For the April-June quarter, Wipro has given sequential guidance of (-) 1.5 per cent to +0.5 per cent in constant currency for IT services revenue. "We expect revenue from our IT services business segment to be in the range of USD 2,617 million to USD 2,670 million," the company said in its outlook for the first quarter of 2024-25. For the full year FY24, the revenue from operations came in at Rs 89,760.3 crore, almost 0.8 per cent lower than the previous fiscal. The net profit fell by 2.6 per cent to Rs 11,045.2 crore over the previous fiscal.



Dell expects new hiring, economic growth to drive commercial PC sales in India

PC maker Dell Technologies is banking on new hirings, replacements and growth in the Indian economy to drive sales of its commercial devices this fiscal, a senior company said. While speaking at the launch of a new commercial personal computers portfolio, Dell Technologies India, Senior Director and General Manager, Client Solutions Group, Indrajit Belgundi said that faster technology adoption is another factor that will drive sales of commercial devices unveiled by the company. "Every year new students are joining the workforce. Refresh cycle is also coming in. New version of technology is now coming in and many customers who took devices during the pandemic are now looking to upgrade. Also, India's GDP is expected to grow at 6.8 per cent. I personally think the opportunity for us to grow will be higher than that GDP growth," Belgundi said.



InterGlobe, Archer Aviation plan electric air taxis in India in 2026

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 19 (PTI) InterGlobe Enterprises, the parent company of India's top airline IndiGo, and US-based Archer Aviation will launch an all-electric air taxi service in India in 2026, that will carry passengers from Connaught Place in the national capital to Gurugram in Haryana in just 7 minutes. Archer Aviation will supply 200 electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that can carry four passengers besides a pilot and operate just like helicopters but with lesser noise and better safety. The 200 planes, each having 12 rotors, will cost around USD 1 billion. Besides Delhi, the joint venture between InterGlobe and Archer Aviation will launch similar services in Mumbai and Bengaluru to start with. The cost of the seven-minute



Archer Aviation will supply 200 electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that can carry four passengers besides a pilot and operate just like helicopters but with lesser noise and better safety. The 200 planes, each having 12 rotors, will cost around USD 1 billion.

flight operated with the company's five-seater eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) aircraft from Connaught Place to Gurugram in Haryana could be around Rs 2,000 to 3,000, according to Archer Aviation executives. Archer Aviation Founder and CEO Adam Goldstein on

Friday said discussions are going on with the US regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the certification process for its aircraft is at an advanced stage. The certification is expected next year and once that is in place, the process will be initiated by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). In an interview with PTI in the national capital, Goldstein said the company expects to start flights in India in 2026 and aims to have 200 of its Midnight planes for the operations. Initially, Archer Aviation will be focusing on Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. With its flight, the duration will be around 7 minutes from Connaught Place in Delhi to Gurugram and the cost could be Rs 2,000 to 3,000. In a car, for the 27-kilometre distance, it would take around 90 minutes and the cost would be about Rs 1,500, according to Goldstein. The five-seater Midnight aircraft will be able to accommodate the pilot and four passengers. The plane, which will have six battery packs, will get fully charged in 30-40 minutes and one minute charge broadly translates to one minute of flight, its Chief Commercial Officer Nikhil Goel said. Archer Aviation will be having a joint venture with InterGlobe Enterprises and the final contours are being worked out. The US-based company is also in discussions with various municipalities with respect to infrastructure and other aspects of the flight operations. Goel said it will use the full strength of InterGlobe, which is a conglomerate, and the joint venture might choose partners for the eVTOL operations in India.

CAG, SAI Bulgaria to enhance international collaboration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has signed an agreement with SAI Bulgaria, the Bulgarian National Audit Office, in Sofia, in a bid to foster international cooperation. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), inked by the two Supreme audit institutions, aims to enhance collaboration and the exchange of expertise in the field of auditing between the two nations, the CAG said in a statement. Through the MoU, a platform will be established for the exchange of knowledge and experience amongst auditing professionals and technical teams through collaboration in training programs, and mutual assistance in conducting



audits, it said. Girish Chandra Murmu, the CAG of India, expressed confidence in the partnership and said the MoU will further strengthen bilateral cooperation. "We look forward to working closely with you and assure you of our support and commitment to energize our capacity development initiatives and exchange of knowledge and information between our SAs," he said. The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Goritsa

Grancharova - Kozhareva, Acting President of the Bulgarian National Audit Office. Murmu further highlighted the broader implications of the MoU, stating it will also help cementing the ties that already exist between the two nations. "I am positive that the MoU will also yield many opportunities for greater exchange of knowledge and experience between members of our SAs and will also foster the spirit of cooperation and friendship between our SAs," he added. The CAG said the signing of the MoU marks a significant milestone in promoting closer ties and collaboration among the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of India and Bulgaria, underscoring a shared commitment to excellence in auditing practices.

Stock markets stage strong rebound

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets rebounded from early lows to close higher on Friday, snapping the four-day losing streak on heavy value buying in banking and auto shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked fur-



ther 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade. However, the index rebounded in the second half on value-buying in banking shares. The NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 22,147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777.65 in early trade before paring its losses to end in the green.

Nod for demerger of Madura Fashion & Lifestyle biz

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd on Friday said its board has approved a proposal to demerge Madura Fashion & Lifestyle business, while it plans to raise Rs 2,500 crore equity capital within 12 months of demerger with promoter participation. Earlier this month, the company announced plans to demerge its fast fashion and retail business Madura Fashion & Lifestyle into a separate listed entity to unlock opportuni-

ties for value creation. The board authorised the management to evaluate the vertical demerger. The board of directors of Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL), at its meeting on Friday, has approved the proposal for vertical demerger of ABFRL into a newly incorporated company Aditya Birla Lifestyle Brands Ltd (ABLBL), which will be listed separately on completion of the demerger, the company said in a statement. "The demerger will be

implemented through an NCLT scheme of arrangement, and upon its completion, all shareholders of ABFRL will have identical shareholdings in both the companies," it added. Upon completion of the demerger, as per the share entitlement ratio approved by the board and recommended by the independent valuer, the shareholders of ABFRL will get one share of ABLBL for every one share in ABFRL, in addition to their existing shareholding in ABFRL, it added.

Andromeda expects 20% growth in loan disbursals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Loan distributor Andromeda expects around 20 per cent growth in loan disbursals to around Rs 1 lakh crore during the current fiscal, driven primarily by mortgage demand. Loan disbursals have seen a 23 per cent growth to Rs 75,397 crore in FY24, from Rs 60,000 crore in the previous fiscal, Andromeda Sales and Distribution Pvt Ltd Co-CEO Raoul Kapoor said. Despite the increase in housing prices, the demand for housing loans remains robust, he said, adding, the average ticket size of housing loans has witnessed an increase.

In addition, he said, digitalization, faster approvals, and increased availability and flexibility have fueled higher demand for personal loans. The home loan business surged to approximately Rs 33,918 crore in FY24, up by over 22 per cent from Rs 27,798 crore in FY23. In FY24, he said, the loan against property distribution was at Rs 24,776 crore, an increase of 10.33% from the preceding year's Rs 22,456 crore. Meanwhile, business loans experienced a notable surge of approximately 32 per cent, rising from Rs 5,255 crore in FY23 to Rs 6,927 crore in FY24, he said.

Fire breaks out at NTPC's North Karanpura plant

PNS ■ RANCHI

A massive fire broke out at NTPC's North Karanpura superthermal power plant in Jharkhand's Chatra district on Friday, officials said. The fire was first spotted around 2 pm, they said. "The fire broke out at the BHEL material yard of unit 3 in the power plant. So far no casualty has been reported," a senior BHEL said. Efforts are underway to douse the blaze, he said. The installation is a 660X3 mw coal-based power plant.

IREDA Q4 net profit grows 33% to Rs 337 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned IREDA on Friday posted a 33 per cent rise in its net profit to Rs 337.37 crore for the quarter ended March 2024, aided by higher income. It had clocked Rs 253.61 crore net profit during the January-March period of the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, the company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income surged to Rs 1,391.63 crore in the fourth quarter of FY24



from Rs 1,036.31 crore a year ago. Its expenses were Rs 911.96 crore in the period under review, as against Rs 747.93 crore in the year-ago period. IREDA under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, is a non-banking financial institution engaged in promoting, developing and extending financial assistance for setting up projects related to new and renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency/conservation.

Infosys shares decline nearly 1% after Q4 earnings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Infosys on Friday ended nearly 1 per cent lower after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations. The stock fell 2.87 per cent to Rs 1,379.70 during the day on the BSE. It finally ended at Rs 1,411.60 apiece, lower by 0.63 per cent. On the NSE, it declined 2.85 per cent to Rs 1,378.75 in intra-day trade. Shares of the company ended at Rs 1,411.95 each, down 0.51 per cent. The company's market capitalisation (mcap) declined by Rs 3,655.37 crore to Rs 5,85,936.45 crore. In volume terms, 8.65 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and over 206.04 lakh shares on the NSE during the day.

PE/VC investments decline marginally in March quarter: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Investments by private equity and venture capital funds have declined by 1 per cent year-on-year to USD 13.5 billion in the March 2024 quarter, according to a report. However, it was 41 per cent higher compared to the preceding December quarter, the report by consultancy firm EY and industry lobby grouping IVCA said. When looked at from a volume perspective, the number of deals was 33 per cent higher at 292 in January-March 2024 against 220 in the year-ago period, it added.

"We believe the markets and PE/VC investment activity will be range-bound till clarity emerges on election results and the risk of escalation in the geopolitical conflicts eases down," EY partner Vivek Soni said. The infrastructure sector received the maximum PE/VC investments in the quarter at USD 6.5 billion across 23 deals, 138 per cent higher than the USD 2.7 billion across 14 deals in the year-ago period, it said, adding that the same was led by the USD 2 billion investment by Brookfield in ATC India Tower Corporation.



If AI steals our jobs, who'll be left to buy stuff?

PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA

(360info) Economics has good news for workers fearing joblessness due to the rise of AI - only labour consumes, and the value of consuming populations is growing. The question is one of increasing urgency: What will workers do when technology does most of the work? In April, tech titans Google, Microsoft, IBM, Cisco and SAP, employment website Indeed, along with professional services major Accenture, among others, formed a consortium to explore the impact of Artificial Intelligence on IT job roles. The joint effort will enable workers to find and access relevant training programs and,



The jobs that AI can do are multiplying by the day. While this may be frightening for some workers, economics, which is often called the "dismal science", does offer a rosy outlook.

according to the companies, is expected to help more than 95 million people around the world over the next 10 years. The jobs that AI can do are multiplying by the day. While this may be frightening for some workers, economics, which is often called the "dismal science", does offer a rosy outlook. While advancements in AI potentially herald a future with no limits on production and income, the implications for workers, may not be as scary as initially feared. In an economy-wide view (economists call this 'general equilibrium'), all resources of

capital and labour combine to produce all goods and services. Technology then boosts productivity, removing the limits set by resource constraints. However, a study of consumer demand (so-called microeconomics) says that consumption depends on an individual's income, and only

'labour' consumes. The crux is this: Increased productivity is ultimately pointless if there is no market for the goods and services being produced. The focus of many international managers, often reflected in statements given to the media, is thus increasingly on future consumption - and, therefore, on countries with large and growing consuming populations, including India. Author Ruchir Sharma has argued that no country can grow faster than the rate of growth of its population. Since India has a large population where consumers are expected to grow for the next decade or so, the focus of global managers seems justified.

SJVN Green Energy forms JV with Assam Power discom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned power producer SJVN on Friday said its wholly-owned arm SJVN Green Energy has incorporated a joint venture company with Assam Power Distribution Company to generate electricity from renewable sources. The joint venture company -- SGEL Assam Renewable Energy, shall carry out business in the field of power generation from all renewable energy sources including hydro power by setting up power plants, SJVN said to the filing.



in a regulatory filing said. SJVN Green Energy will hold 51 per cent in SGEL Assam Renewable Energy. SGEL Assam Renewable Energy has authorised capital of Rs 1,000 crore, it said. The approvals to create this joint venture were taken from authorities like NITI Aayog, DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Power, Government of India etc, according

what's brewing?



Filmmaker Kiran Rao's emotional account of coping with 'many miscarriages'

Filmmaker Kiran Rao, who was once wed to actor Aamir Khan, recently talked candidly about parenthood and revealed that she experienced "many miscarriages" prior to giving birth to her son Azad. Kiran revealed that she "tried very hard to have a child" at the time and that she was experiencing health problems. In a recent interview, she revealed, "Azad was born in the same year that *Dhobi Ghat* was created. And I had made a lot of effort to become a parent. I had suffered numerous miscarriages and physical health problems for five years. Simply put, I was having a terrible time becoming a parent. Since I was eager to become a parent, I was spared from having to choose. Of course, my only goal in

life was to raise my child." After Azad was born, Kiran left the film industry, and she stated she has no regrets about the more than ten years she spent without directing a picture. "Having Azad was so much fun. I had some of my best years ever during those years. I will never feel guilty for not making a movie in ten years. I truly enjoyed it, so I don't regret anything," she remarked. During that same conversation, Kiran responded, "No, not at this point," when asked if Azad wanted to be an actor. "He has no interest in anything related to movies. He has no interest in watching movies." She further said, Azad is particularly interested in "art, music, and animation".



Metro.... In Dino will now arrive on Nov 29

Bollywood enthusiasts are eagerly awaiting the release of Aditya Roy Kapur and Sara Ali Khan's highly anticipated film *Metro... In Dino*, which has now received a new release date. Earlier slated for release this September, the rom-com is now set to hit cinemas on November 29, as confirmed by Aditya on his Instagram handle. Helmed by Anurag Basu, the anthology film stars Aditya alongside Sara Ali Khan, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Anupam Kher, Meena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, and Konkona Sen Sharma in lead roles. Originally, the film was slated to hit theatres on March 29 this year. *Metro... In Dino* marks Aditya and Anurag Basu's second collaboration. The duo first worked together in *Ludo*. *Metro... In Dino*, a film that apparently draws its title from the popular song *In Dino from Life in a... Metro*, will showcase bittersweet tales of human

relationships based in contemporary times. Sharing more details about the film, Anurag Basu had earlier said, "*Metro... In Dino* is a tale of the people and for the people! It has been a while since I am working on this one and I am glad to be collaborating with a powerhouse like Bhushan Kumar yet again who has always been like a pillar to me!" He added, "The storyline is very fresh and relevant as I look forward to collaborating with amazing artists who bring that essence of contemporary aura with them. As music plays a very important role in any film, I couldn't be happier to be collaborating with my dear friend Pritam who has literally added life to the characters and story with his work." Anurag Basu is known for his films like *Barfi*, *Life in a Metro*, *Ludo*, and *Jagga Jasoos*. He will also be directing *Ashiqui 3* which stars Kartik Aaryan in the lead role.

GURINDER CHADHA AIMS TO CREATE A FESTIVE CLASSIC WITH CHRISTMAS KARMA

The news that Gurinder Chadha will be making a comeback with a new movie was released yesterday, April 19. Inspired by Dickens' beloved *A Christmas Carol*, *Christmas Karma* is a modern Bollywood musical set in contemporary London. *Big Bang Theory* celebrity, the main actor in the cast as Scrooge is Kunal Nayyar, who portrayed Raj in the television series. The cast also includes Danny Dyer, Bilal Hasna, Eva Longoria, Boy George, Billy Porter, Hugh Bonneville, Leo Suter, Charithra Chandran, Pixie Lott, Allan Corduner, Tracy-Ann Oberman, Rufus Jones, Eve, and Nitin Ganatra. Gurinder Chadha, a BAFTA nominee who has previously helmed movies such as *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging*, and *Blinded by the Light*, is writing, directing, and producing the feature.



Gary Barlow, a six-time Ivor Novello winner, is the composer. Director and writer Gurinder Chadha commented, "Just as I have enjoyed Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* for many years, my aim with *Christmas Karma* is to create a festive classic for our times and for generations to come. By adapting one of history's greatest novels - Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol* - I am making a British Film from my unique, original point of view but one that resonates with Dickens' masterful statement on the human condition." She added, "I am delighted to be working with Anushka Shah and her lovely team at Civic Studios who have supported me on this project very early on. What a pleasure and honour it's been for me to work with amazing Indian female producers."

Josh Hartnett transforms into a 'serial killer' for Trap

The first teaser for M Night Shyamalan's next movie *Trap* is now out. In the suspenseful film, Josh Hartnett plays a serial killer who brought his daughter to a pop star's concert and is now entangled in the web that the police have set up to get a deranged murderer who is on the run.



The official description of the film reads, "Warner Bros Pictures presents a new experience in the world of M Night Shyamalan—*Trap*—featuring performances by rising music star Saleka Shyamalan. A father and teen daughter attend a pop concert, where they realise they're at the center of a dark and sinister event. Written and directed by M Night Shyamalan, *Trap* stars Josh Hartnett, Ariel Donoghue, Saleka Shyamalan, Hayley Mills and Allison Pill. The film is produced by Ashwin Rajan, Marc Bienenstock and M Night Shyamalan. The executive producer is Steven Schneider."

tion as soon as the trailer was released. A user remarked, "I respect the fact that Shyamalan is taking a break from the supernatural stuff and is focusing on something that's very simple." It appears that Shyamalan is aiming for a howcatchem mystery along the lines of *Dial M for Murder* or *Columbo*. I agree wholeheartedly," said another commenter. "So that's a movie entirely from Villain's pov!!!" exclaimed one enthusiast. That's really awesome.

Fans showered the renowned director with praises in the comment sec-

On August 9, *Trap* will be released in theaters.

Taylor Swift's *The Tortured Poets Department* is a melodic voyage of heartbreak

Taylor Swift released her highly anticipated record *The Tortured Poets Department* on Friday -- the 11th studio album from the megastar who is already having a blockbuster year. "All's fair in love and poetry... New album *THE TORTURED POETS DEPARTMENT*. Out now," she wrote on her Instagram account, ending the announcement with a heart emoji. Swift had revealed the album's release at the Grammys in February, a night that saw the 34-year-old billionaire win a record-breaking fourth Album of the Year prize. With the drop of *Tortured Poets* in the United States at midnight Eastern time (0400 GMT Friday), the artist could be on track for a fifth. Since her bombshell announcement, her loyal legion of Swifties has been working around the clock shelling out fan predictions. The working theory is that the album centres on her ex, British actor Joe Alwyn, who Swift dated starting in 2016 until they broke up about a year ago.

Alwyn (*The Favourite*) and fellow actor Paul Mescal (*Normal People*) revealed in 2022 that they had a group chat entitled "The Tortured Man Club," which also included Andrew Scott (*Fleabag*, *Ripley*). The Swifties think their queen's album title is a likely reference to that text circle. Before their breakup, Alwyn had multiple songwriting credits on her albums under a pen name, William Bowery. Swift already revealed the tracklist, with titles including *So Long, London*, *I Can Fix Him (No Really I Can)* and *The Smallest Man Who Ever Lived*. Florence + The Machine is among those set to make cameos on the album, as is Post Malone, who Swift said will feature on her first single *Fortnight*. "I've been such a huge fan of Post because of the writer he is, his musical experimentation and those melodies he creates that just stick in your head forever," she wrote on Instagram. Swift said a video companion for the track will come out late Friday after the album drops.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



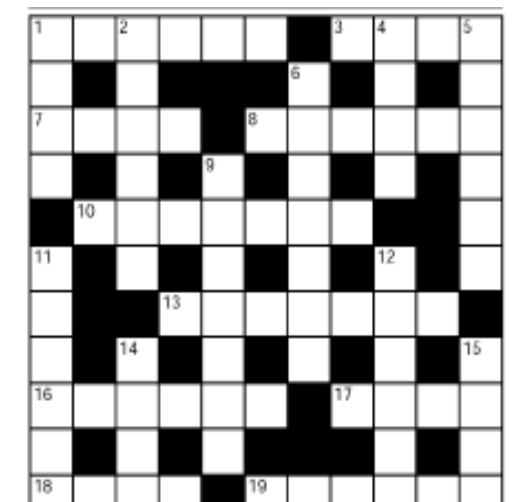
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

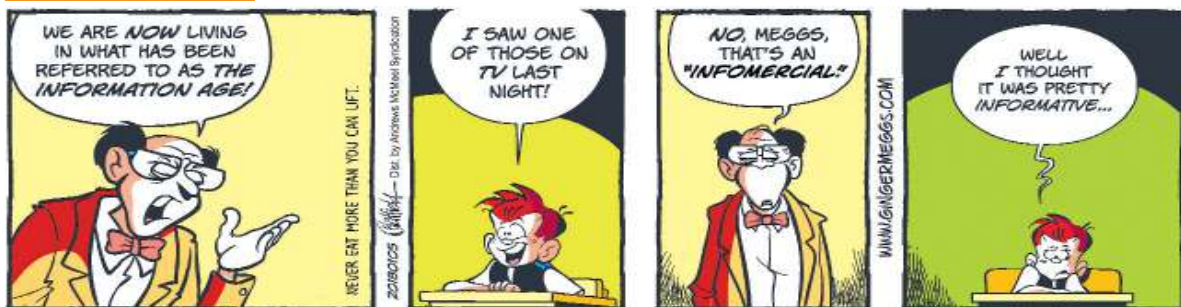
- 1 Begins
- 3 A worshipped statue
- 7 Keep a pet bird in this
- 8 Yells
- 10 A citizen of Israel
- 13 Took no notice of
- 16 People invited
- 17 A large public building for meetings, functions
- 18 One third of twenty-seven
- 19 A pie's covering

DOWN

- 1 Unwell
- 2 A month
- 4 A musical instrument played with sticks
- 5 Use your ears
- 6 Opposite of deep
- 9 Badly behaved
- 11 We need this gas to stay alive
- 12 Leave
- 14 Very unkind
- 15 Potters use this



GINGER MEGGS



Dr. Nabat Lakhani, who firmly relocated to Hyderabad from Kolkata, gets candid with *The Pioneer* for our weekly segment of *Hyderabad*, sharing her association with the city, recalling the times of migration, and more.

'Hyd altered my idea of what I wanted to do for a living'



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Let's avoid discussing any hidden implications, but during our interview with Dr. Nabat Lakhani for our weekly *Hyderabad* feature, we discovered that she formerly relocated to Hyderabad from Kolkata with her parents to live in total comfort. Awaiting her was her new residence! A positive subliminal shift in her life that she hadn't anticipated at such a young age.

"My association with Hyderabad is deeply personal and profound," she tells us during our conversation. "Since class 8 when I arrived here, this energetic city has become my home away from home, if not more."

The city extended a warm welcome to her, providing her with a multitude of cultural experiences, chances, and warmth. Her favourite thing about Hyderabad is its distinct fusion of modernity and history!

"I got jitters going from my new school, which I was very nervous about because I studied in an all-girls convent in Kolkata, to a coed here. However, at that point, our principal at Niraj, Dr. Jyothi Reddy, was actually a blessing in disguise for me. She gave me unrivalled love and inspiration," shared the obstetrician and gynecologist at Rainbow Children's Hospital, Secunderabad. God brought her another angel, Dr. Bhavani, a gynecologist and the wife of Dr.

Gurava Reddy when she completed her undergraduate studies. Dr. Bhavani completely altered her idea of what she wanted to do for a living and taught her more than just medicine; to her, she was like a second mother.

The practitioner says, "There were several other wonderful people I met in my journey here in Hyderabad, including Dr. Pratibha Narayan, Shrimati Chitra Narayan (my Bharatnatyam guru), who were instrumental in my life, and some who always support me, Dr. Manjula Anagani and Dr. Chimmayee Ratha." Even at the youthful age of 14, she had no intention of leaving her beloved Kolkata, but apparently, Hyderabad and its inhabitants disproved her.

"On the rainbow, Kolkata and Hyderabad are two distinct colours for her. Hyderabad begins its day when Kolkata is nearly half gone (she laughed out loud). This was a noticeable contrast for me when I first arrived. I have learned and can function fairly well, but I miss my Bengali language, and I have never been fond of Telugu. But I don't think I could have returned home without the independence that Hyderabad gave me as a girl. Thus, certainly, there is salt and sugar in both towns," says the renowned doctor from the city.

The city has consistently provided her with chances to develop, serve, and forge connections with not only the families she cares for but also with colleagues in the hospital, both junior and senior. She has forged some truly lovely relationships that she will always treasure. Actually, she also said, "With pride, Hyderabad can boast of possessing top-notch, cutting-edge health infrastructure, as well as the know-how to effectively utilise it for the benefit of its citizens' health and that of those who travel both domestically and abroad to use it."

According to our interviewee, women in Calcutta historically found it challenging to exercise their freedom, even among the most independent of them. However, she recalls that since moving to Hyderabad, she has driven around the entire city by herself without experiencing any problems with safety. That was the best Hyderabad could give her. This isn't possible in Calcutta because it makes women feel uneasy.

Additionally, "Hyderabad has such a rich heritage that relatives would like to visit each one and perhaps bring back memories with a dash of paradise and Karachi bakery. To be honest, Hyderabad is more than just a city to me—it's a sensation, a sense of community that has improved my life in ways I never would have thought possible. It has improved my overall well-being by teaching me the value of flexibility, resiliency, and accepting new experiences. I sincerely appreciate being able to live in Hyderabad."



TANISHA EYES GREY ROLES IN PUSHPA AND ANIMAL FRANCHISES!

In an interview with *The Pioneer*, actress Tanisha Mukerji offers an intimate glimpse into her role in the film *Luv You Shankar* and shares insights into her experiences on set.

K. RAMYA SREE

Shreyas Talpade and Tanisha Mukerji starrer *Luv You Shankar*, graced the cinemas on Friday. We reached out to the actress to know how excited she was about the film's release in Telugu along with Hindi, Tamil, and Kannada. Interestingly, she openly expressed her desire to work in the *Pushpa* franchise as a villain.

That being said, beginning the interview about her character in this latest flick, Tanisha expressed her delight at playing a mother on screen for the first time. She described, "In *Luv You Shankar*, I am playing mother for the first time, and I think the relationship between the mother and the child is beautiful because it's more of a friendship than a very strict mother-child relationship. This is the first time I played this mother character. I have no children, so I have taken inspiration from all my relationships with my niece and nephew and watching my sisters interact with their children, and I have really enjoyed playing it."

Set against the backdrop of the sacred city of Banaras, the film revolves around the endearing bond between an eight-year-old boy and Lord Shiva, thus making the film a complete family entertainer.

Reflecting on her decision to join the project, Tanisha recalls how the director and casting team approached her for the role. They sought a unique face opposite Shreyas Talpade's character, Panditji, and Tanisha was excited to be part of a film centered around Lord Shiva, offering an adventurous and entertaining experience for children.

Regarding the film's mythological context, Tanisha emphasises that her character draws from personal experiences, particularly her relationships with family members.

Recalling a memorable moment from filming *Luv You Shankar*, Tanisha vividly describes a scene at the banks of the River Ganga in Banaras, where she and co-star Shreyas performed a pooja. She shared, "The most memorable moment was when Shreyas and I had to go

and do Pooja in the ghat by the banks of the Ganga, and that may be the second or third time I had been there, but it was the first time that I was in Banaras. It was my first time on the ghats of Banaras, and the feeling was just unbelievable, we had to put the diyas into the water. Standing there, I was filled with so much immense joy, and my feet were in the water, and we had to put the diyas in for the shot. It was like, I just felt like I was getting the moment through the cinema that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise; I was just very happy to have that moment."

Reflecting on her takeaway from the project, Tanisha praises the director's brilliance in crafting a beautiful film. She commented, "I think the biggest takeaway from the project is the brilliance of the director. Because he really crafted a beautiful film out of *Luv You Shankar*, he was put together when he was narrating the subject, with lots of animation and then characters. Then, the way he directed all of us, he was really the captain of the ship. At any one point, he was the one who knew exactly what was happening in the film, and he was just very clear, like what he wanted, and clear with what he was saying. So I would say our director is very brilliant, and he knows children's films very well, like he knows what children want to see."

Looking ahead, Tanisha remains optimistic about future projects, hoping that exciting opportunities will emerge post-*Luv You Shankar*. As an artist, she seeks out roles that challenge her. She expressed, "Age is a concept that I don't believe in. I think at this stage of my life as an actor, considering the body of work I have done, I would like to play something that would challenge me. I want to play the negative lead in *Pushpa 2* or *Pushpa 3* or wherever; please make me the vamp of *Pushpa 2* or *Pushpa 3* whichever film or even *Animal* I don't mind, Sandeep Vanga Reddy if you are listening, I want to be the negative lead. I want to be the villain of any film, for the south directors especially."

Furthermore, transitioning to personal reflections, Tanisha shared her perspective on challenges in both work and personal life. She expressed gratitude for her upbringing and family background as she is the sister of renowned Bollywood actress Kajol and daughter of renowned Tanuja, viewing obstacles as blessings that have shaped her identity positively.

"I have lots of gratitude for who my mother is. I never look at anything as too much of a challenge; I always look at everything as a blessing. Even though there have been difficulties, I always understand the difficulties because of who I am, and I am lucky to be who I am. So I never look at anything as a negative challenge; I will always take it as positive," she concluded.



Managing diabetes with physiotherapy

Diabetes manifests as a metabolic disorder primarily caused by defective insulin secretion, impaired insulin utilisation, or both. Individuals with diabetes typically exhibit elevated plasma glucose levels compared to non-diabetic individuals, potentially leading to metabolic disturbances and various diabetic complications including nephropathy, neuropathy, retinopathy, foot diseases, and gum diseases. India ranks second globally in terms of diabetic prevalence, with 74.9 million cases projected to increase to 124.9 million by 2045 among individuals aged 20-79 years. While pharmacological treatments have traditionally been the mainstay of diabetes management, their adverse effects, including heart failure, increased fracture risk, bladder cancer, and weight gain, often outweigh their benefits. Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on non-pharmacological approaches to diabetes management, with physiotherapy emerging as a cost-effective, customisable treatment option for individuals with pre-diabetes, early type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), and advanced cases with multiple complications.

IS PHYSIOTHERAPY EFFECTIVE IN MANAGING DIABETES

Consistent engagement in physiotherapy can yield significant benefits for individuals living with type 2 diabetes, particularly among older adults and those with multiple comorbidities. Physiotherapy intervention operates within two primary domains: preventing the progression of symptoms and effectively managing existing diabetic symptoms.

How Physiotherapists can Help Manage Diabetes?

Physical therapists play a crucial role in assisting individuals with diabetes in participating in safe and effective exercise programs, leading to lower blood sugar levels. They focus on improving mobility, enhancing daily activities, and alleviating pain. Moreover, physical therapy treatments expedite the healing process of diabetes-related skin issues.

ASSESSMENT AND PERSONALISED TREATMENT

Physical therapists evaluate patients' blood glucose records and examine their skin for wounds. Additionally, they conduct comprehensive assessments of patients' strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, and skin sensation, particularly in the feet. Based on these findings, they design tailored treatment plans to address specific needs and challenges.

IMPROVING MOBILITY

Physical therapists employ specific activities and

treatments to restore normal movement, starting with passive movements performed by the therapist and progressing to active exercises and stretches for self-practice.

BUILDING STRENGTH AND FLEXIBILITY

Through targeted exercises, physical therapists help patients regain strength gradually and safely. They also address muscle tightness by teaching gentle stretching techniques to improve flexibility.

ENHANCING ENDURANCE AND BALANCE

Rebuilding endurance and balance is essential to prevent falls and facilitate daily activities. Physical therapists guide patients through exercises to improve endurance and restore coordination.

WALKING ASSISTANCE AND PAIN MANAGEMENT

If needed, physical therapists adjust footwear and may introduce supportive inserts to enhance walking comfort. They also provide techniques to manage chronic pain effectively, utilising various treatments and technologies while prescribing safe exercises.

BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL AND WOUND HEALING

Prescribed exercise programs aid in lowering blood sugar levels, contributing to better glucose control. Additionally, physical therapists apply dressings and treatments to expedite the healing of wounds, offering guidance on foot and skin care to prevent complications.

HOME EXERCISE AND RECOVERY GOALS

Physical therapists educate patients on strengthening, stretching, and aerobic exercises for home practice, tailored to their needs. They collaborate with patients to set recovery goals aligned with activity objectives, ensuring a safe and efficient rehabilitation process.

Physiotherapy stands as a valuable ally in the holistic management of diabetes. By addressing mobility issues, enhancing strength and flexibility, and promoting overall wellness, physical therapists play a pivotal role in empowering individuals with diabetes to lead healthier, more active lives. Through personalised assessment and targeted interventions, physiotherapy offers a multifaceted approach to diabetes management, helping individuals navigate the complexities of their condition with confidence and resilience.

(The author, *Tamilarasu Kumarappan*, is the Chief Physiotherapist at INJL)



RISHABH PANT SET FOR EMOTIONAL HOMECOMING

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An emotional homecoming awaits Rishabh Pant when he leads Delhi Capitals out at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here, hoping to halt the marauding run of Pat Cummins' Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday and continue the resurgence which has come to define his life both on and off the field. The last time Pant was seen at the refurbished stadium, he needed crutches to walk but that now seems a distant memory given how remarkably well he has managed to come back both as a wicketkeeper and batter after enduring a life-threatening car accident in 2022. Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix. In all, they have three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far. Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad have set a different template altogether with two of the highest-ever totals of 277/3

and 287/3, which will require a lot of heart and skill to counter. Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a track which will have good bounce and carry for a change. Travis Head (235 runs) — IPL's foreign flavour of the season — will be keen to build on his 39-ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover either. Both have a penchant for taking the aerial route during powerplay. Head and Abhishek's intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for the pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar. Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen, who is also striking at 199, who is one of the best finishers in international cricket with propensity to hit balls out of the stadium, which gives SRH's batting a scary look. But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist spin could well prove to be a game-changer and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin option alongside Axar Patel (6.75). Pant, who is himself



getting back to the top of his game, wouldn't mind if he can win the toss and opt to bat. But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches. While SRH's batting has been top-notch on batters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than eight runs per over, which is considered good in T20. However, the seasoned duo of Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (10.45), have both been average while the tweakers — wrist spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shabbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) — have been sent on a leather hunt. The best option for Pant would be to open the batting and go for the jugular against SRH, putting a scoreboard pressure on the rampaging Orange Army. In case Capitals have to chase, the idea would be to keep SRH down to 210-220 which would be chaseable against an attack

which may not be able to hold its own on a good batting track.

TEAMS (FROM):

Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Warner, Abhishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra (wk), Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhye Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shabbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan



It was my dream to play sweep shot against Bumrah: Ashutosh

PTI ■ MULLANPUR (PUNJAB)

Punjab Kings' batting sensation Ashutosh Sharma said he lived a "dream" when he swept "world's best fast bowler" Jasprit Bumrah during his team's IPL clash against Mumbai Indians here. The 25-year-old Ashutosh put the Bumrah-led Mumbai Indians' bowling to sword here on Thursday when he hammered seven sixes and two fours to make 61 off a mere 28 balls, a knock which brought PBKS back from the brink after an early collapse. PBKS were 17/4 inside the powerplay but courtesy the stunning fightback from Ashutosh and Shashank Singh (41), they were able to get close to MI's 193-run target before losing by nine runs. It was in the 13th over of Punjab's chase when Ashutosh got down low on his front to convert an attempted yorker from Bumrah into a full toss and smack it for a six over backward square leg. "It was my dream to hit a sweep shot against Bumrah. I was practising for that shot but it came against the best bowler in the world - it is a part of the game," Ashutosh told the media here after the match. Ashutosh said he was confident of taking Punjab over the line. "I had belief in myself that I would be able to win the game



for the team," he said. Ashutosh credited former India player and coach Sanjay Bangar, head of cricket development at PBKS, for his improvement this season. "Sanjay sir told me that I am not a slogger and that I can play proper cricket shots. It was a small statement but carried a huge meaning for me. I am only following it - I am not a hard-hitter, I am playing proper cricketing shots and that is what has changed my game," Ashutosh said.

"Back home, I was working with my coach Amay Khurasiya who had told me that the longer you stay on the pitch, the more your team has a chance of winning," he added. The right-handed batter, who made some gestures towards the PBKS dugout after completing his fifty, said the celebrations were meant for his team management. "That celebration was for our Sanjay (Bangar) sir, I have been working a lot with him and I keep asking him

questions," Ashutosh said. "He gave me a chance, and also the entire Punjab team which showed belief in me. Our head coach Trevor Bayliss, Ashish (Tuli) paaji, Shikhar (Dhawan) paaji, everyone believed in me, so it was for all of them," he added. Punjab slumped to their fifth defeat in seven matches as well as to the ninth spot in the points table, but Ashutosh said his side has been playing well. "Winning and losing are part of the game. How you are playing is something that matters and we are playing well as a team. If we will play well, we will win," he said. Mumbai Indians' pacer Gerald Coetzee conceded his side was tense after Ashutosh's stunning onslaught. "He really brought it to us. We just wanted to be really clear tactically what we wanted to do. We executed really well to hit him in the back end to shut it down and win the game," the South African bowler said. "But it was tense, as I think everyone saw. But it was just all tactical discussions," he added. Coetzee conceded Mumbai Indians could've been better with their slower balls, something that PBKS used perfectly in the first half. "We just really learned from their innings. We adapted our plans and I think it worked," Coetzee added.

Impact Player not ideal for coaches but fans have last say: Ponting

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Impact Player rule in IPL might be hampering the growth of all-rounders but Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting said on Friday that fans should be able to decide on the future of this contentious system. Ponting has never been a strong advocate of the Impact Player and the debate gained momentum after Rohit Sharma in a recent YouTube podcast said that he is not a "fan of the rule" as it hurts development of Indian all-rounders. "Look, I think, I read some really, really interesting answers from Rohit Sharma on this yesterday. This Impact Player is taking the all-rounders out of the game a little bit," Ponting said ahead of DC's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Saturday. "You know you can play your specialist batsman down till No. 8. Pretty much. But look, I think for a coach and for the players, it's probably not ideal, but I think you know a lot of what this game tries to do is to entertain people," Ponting explained his point of view. "The T20 game is an entertainment package and it's probably better asking the spectator what they think about the impact player, because if everyone is loving the fact that teams are making, you know, 220 up to 250 in a lot of the games, and the spectators like seeing it, then it should stay. "But if the spectators aren't



liking it as much, then there's no reason why I couldn't go back to the old," he added. "Warner is around 85 to 90% fit" David Warner, who missed the last match due to a knuckle injury, was seen batting at the nets and also hit some balls into the stands while facing throwdowns. Ponting said he is nearly 85 to 90% fit. "David did a fitness test on game day in which he got close. He's probably sort of 85 or 90% a couple days ago. We'd expect that there would be a little bit more improvement from him today. "But he will have to do a lot of batting today against some fast bowling stuff to make sure that the pain is not there anymore," Ponting replied to a query from PTI. The coach was happy with the pitch on which DC will play its first home game. "A lot more grass on the entire square than we used to see here. You know, this is the main reason that we moved away from those couple of games at the back of WPL.

Hardik Pandya fined for slow over rate against Punjab Kings

PTI ■ MULLANPUR (PUNJAB)

Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya has been fined Rs 12 lakhs for his team maintaining a slow over rate during their thrilling nine-run victory over Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League. Mumbai Indians, thanks to Suryakumar Yadav's blazing 78 off 53 deliveries, posted a competitive 192/7 and then dismissed PBKS, despite Ashutosh Sharma's stunning 28-ball 61 and Shashank Singh's 41, for 183 in 19.1 overs. MI rose to seventh from ninth position on the points table following their third win in seven games in IPL 2024,

while PBKS dropped a spot to ninth after their fifth defeat. "Hardik Pandya, the Mumbai Indians captain, has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match against Punjab Kings at the PCA New International Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur on April 18," said an IPL statement on Friday. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Pandya was fined Rs 12 lakhs," the statement added. Mumbai Indians next play Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on April 22.

OTHER SPORTS

Olympic organisers to use AI in sports

AP ■ LONDON

Olympic organisers unveiled their plans Friday to use artificial intelligence in sports, joining the global rush to capitalize on the rapidly advancing technology. The International Olympic Committee outlined its agenda for taking advantage of AI. Officials said it could be used to help identify promising athletes, personalize training methods and make the games fairer by improving judging. "Today, we are making another step to ensure the uniqueness of the Olympic Games and the relevance of sport. To do this, we have to be leaders of change," IOC



President Thomas Bach said at a press event at the former London Olympic Park, which hosted the Summer Games in 2012. "We are determined to exploit the vast potential of AI in a responsible way," Bach said. The IOC revealed its AI strategy as it gears up to hold the Paris Olympics, which are set to kick off in just under 100 days. The IOC's AI plans also include using the technology to protect athletes from online harassment and to help broadcasters improve the viewing experience for people watching from home. The IOC earns billions of dollars through the sale of broadcast rights for the games.



Andy Murray back on practice court

AP ■ LONDON

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray has returned to the practice court after confirming that he's not going to have surgery on his injured ankle. The 36-year-old Murray tore ligaments in his left ankle during a match at the Miami Open last month. Murray's team said this week he's "out of the walking boot," wouldn't be having surgery, and was "hoping to start hitting again on court soon." A short video on Murray's Instagram account on Friday showed the former world No. 1 hitting forehands on an indoor court. There was no timeline for his return announced. The two-time Wimbledon champion, who has said he's unlikely to play past this summer, has been hoping to compete for Britain again in the Paris Olympics.

Group condemns searches by security at Barcelona stadium

AP ■ PARIS

The director of a group that advocates for female sports fans says she and other Paris Saint-Germain supporters were subjected to "abusive" searches while entering Barcelona's stadium for a Champions League match earlier this week. Anoush Morel, the director of Her Game Too France, told L'Equipe and RMC Sport that her breasts, buttocks and groin were touched by a female security officer during a pat-down at the Luis Companys Olympic Stadium on Tuesday night. Other women reported similarly aggressive searches, she said. Paris Saint-Germain won the match 4-1 and advanced to the Champions League semifinals. In a letter Thursday, the organization

condemned the practice and called on "relevant authorities" to take action. "It's unacceptable that spectators, fans and women in general were particularly targeted by these intrusive and humiliating searches that constitute sexual aggression," the letter read. The group said there have been similar complaints at other stadiums in Europe, usually impacting visiting fans. It called on teams, organizers of the games and stadiums to ensure their security protocols avoid the "unfair treatment" of supporters. It asks UEFA to provide answers on whether visiting fans in particular are being subjected to more aggressive searches. A request for comment from UEFA sent on Thursday evening was not immediately answered.

Punia, Sujeet to miss Asian qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a huge setback for the Indian wrestling contingent at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek, two of the country's best wrestlers, Deepak Punia and Sujeet Kalakal, will miss the continental event as they could not report for the weigh-in on time as their flight arrived late in the Kyrgyzstan capital owing to bad weather in Dubai. While both Punia and Kalkal eventually managed to reach Bishkek after being stranded at the Dubai international airport due to incessant rain and flooding, they could not report for the mandatory weigh-in on time, according to sources.



The sources added that the organisers did not allow late weigh-in despite request from the Indian coaches. Punia (86kg), who had come close to winning a medal at the Tokyo Games, and Sujeet (65kg), were on their way to Bishkek to participate in the Asia Olympic qualifiers - the second-last qualifying event for Paris



SRIDEVI VIJAYKUMAR DISCUSSES HER COMEBACK TO TELUGU CINEMA

K. RAMYA SREE

Actress Sridevi Vijaykumar, renowned for her impactful performances in Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada cinema, is making a resounding return to the limelight after a brief hiatus dedicated to motherhood. As the daughter of legendary actors Vijaykumar and late Manjula, Sridevi has left an indelible mark on the South Indian film industry with notable films like *Eeswar*, *Ninne Istapaddanu*, *Aadi Lakshmi*, and *Pelikani Prasad*, among many others.

After taking a break to focus on raising her daughter, Sridevi is now back in action, engaging actively in television shows like *Super Jodi* on Zee Telugu, where she serves as a judge alongside her close friend, actress Meena.

Recently, it was announced that Sridevi will be playing a pivotal role in actor Nara Rohit's 20th film, *Sundarakanda*, marking a significant return to cinema. Without any further delay, we rang the actress to know about her return to cinemas, and to our surprise, Sridevi shared that she has signed three films

in Tollywood now.

In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, Sridevi shared insights into her decision to return to films and her upcoming projects.

Sridevi revealed, "Of late, I've been focused on television due to convenience after my daughter was born. I didn't accept much work, it was only those that were convenient to me. Now that she's seven years old and settled into a routine, I felt it was the right time to dive back into films. I'm currently working on three Telugu movies and am in discussions for Tamil projects as well. Apart from *Sundarakanda*, I am doing another film called *Magic* with director Gowtam Tinnanuri and another one with Naga Shaurya. The shoot is going on. It feels nice to be back on movie sets. I never felt like being away, although there was a gap, because something or another was always happening with TV. Moreover, my entire family is into movies, so I am always surrounded by this circle. But, directly, being on movie sets is always fun and special."

Discussing her evolving roles and the changing landscape of cinema, Sridevi expressed enthusiasm for exploring diverse characters. "Today, age, marital status, and family don't limit actors. It's all about the content," she noted, adding, "That's the good thing for actors now to try different genres, and I

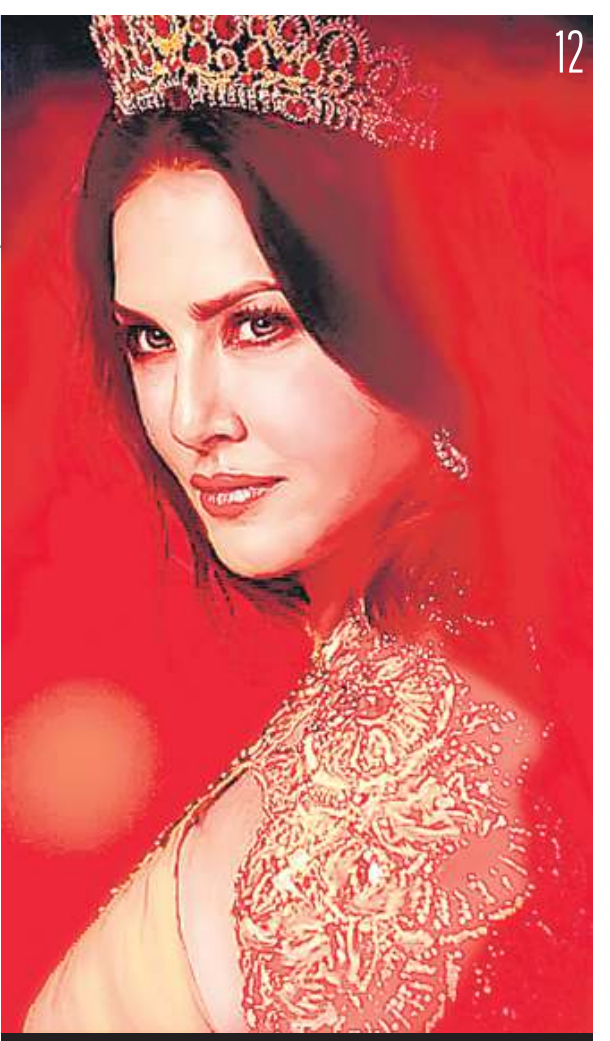
would love to try different genres and characters. I want to portray impactful characters, even if it's a single scene."

Speaking about her job as a judge for the highly-rated Telugu dance show *Super Jodi* and how it feels to return to television, the actress shared, "I had an association with Zee already where I worked for *Drama Juniors*, which was a successful show. It is a continuation of coming back on board with them for *Super Jodi*. This is a dance show, so it's more fun because entertainment is much more important. It is a double dhamaka for Meena and I to be on set together. It has been only happy times till now."

Reflecting on her role as a judge on *Super Jodi*, Sridevi emphasised the unique dynamics of the show, where celebrity contestants showcase their dancing skills. "It's not your typical dance show. These are actors, not professional dancers, who are learning and improving with each performance. We are now close to the semi-final, and it is so nice to watch them improve their skills on this journey. They are also taking it seriously and trying to give their best in spite of being busy as actors," she shared.

As Sridevi embarks on this exciting phase of her career, fans can anticipate her captivating presence on both the silver screen and television, embracing new opportunities and pushing boundaries in the world of entertainment.

In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, Sridevi shared insights into her decision to return to films and her upcoming projects.



SUNNY LEONE'S 'MANDIRA'S' FIRST LOOK LOOKS FRIGHTENING!

There is good demand for films that fall under the genre of horror comedy. Sunny Leone's first-look poster from *Mandira* was released. Although she looks beautiful as a queen, the character she plays as a ghost is going to frighten the audience. The poster surely created curiosity for the movie. The shooting of this movie was already complete. The film unit is busy with post-production activities. The rest of the details will be announced soon.

'I take pride in telling meaningful stories without glorifying negativity'

PNS | HYDERABAD

Celebrated filmmaker Sekhar Kammula's seminal work, *Happy Days*, has returned to theaters, evoking nostalgia and joy among audiences. The 2007 coming-of-age drama was a turning point for Kammula, receiving critical acclaim and striking a chord with viewers for its relatable college narrative.

In honour of his 25th year as a director, Sekhar Kammula engaged with the media, reminiscing about his illustrious career, memories from *Happy Days*, and upcoming ventures.

Reflecting on the enduring charm of *Happy Days*, Kammula noted, "The film encapsulated the essence of college life, evoking nostalgia with its timeless music. Revisiting it recently, I found the film as fresh and vibrant as ever. Its re-release is a celebration for the youth." While considering a sequel to *Happy Days*, Kammula

shared the challenges of crafting a compelling narrative. "I intended to create a sequel but struggled to capture the essence of the original," he explained.

Delving into his filmmaking ethos, Kammula emphasised the importance of upholding personal values. "Crafting successful films aligned with my values is a challenging yet rewarding endeavour," he affirmed, adding, "I take pride in conveying meaningful messages without glorifying negativity." In discussing his deliberate storytelling approach, Kammula stressed the significance of conceptual clarity. "Each film requires careful ideation to convey a clear message and propose plausible solutions," he elaborated.

Looking forward, Kammula teased an ambitious project starring Dhanush and Nagarjuna, centered around a profound philosophical theme. "Both actors embody the essence of the narrative," he revealed.

Expressing a desire to revisit *Leader* with Rana Daggubati, Kammula reaffirmed his commitment to addressing complex societal issues through cinema. "Crafting stories with political undertones demands a pragmatic approach," he concluded, emphasising the need for viable solutions.

As Sekhar Kammula continues to push creative boundaries, audiences eagerly anticipate his upcoming projects, anticipating thought-provoking narratives and impactful storytelling.

THARUN BHASCKER, EESHA REBBA'S NEW MOVIE ANNOUNCED

Director Tharun Bhascker, who has already proven his acting prowess in several films, is doing a lead role in another intriguing project, where Eesha Rebba will be the leading lady opposite him. Billed to be a hilarious entertainer, Sanjeev AR is directing, while Srujan Yarabolu, Vivek Krishnani, Sadhik, and Aditya Pittie together are bankrolling it on S Originals and Movie Verse banners. The makers have announced the project officially today.

The first shooting schedule of this yet-to-be-titled flick is happening in and around Rajahmundry, with the lead cast



film's first look soon. Deepak Yeragara is the cinematographer, while Jay Krish provides the music. Nanda Kishore Emani penned the dialogues.

MAD sequel announced

Sithara Entertainments is known for encouraging young directors, and they have been successful far more often than not in delivering surprise blockbusters with such young teams. *DJ Tillu*, *MAD*, *Jersey*, and *Tillu Square* can be described as the best examples of their fearlessness and content driven approach.

They delivered a surprise blockbuster with all young, inexperienced actors and technicians - *MAD*, in October 2023, and now they are gearing up to deliver its sequel, *MAD Square*.

Kalyan Shankar, who debuted with *MAD* as a writer-director, worked as one of the writers for *Tillu Square*, and now he is coming up with his *MAD* comic caper sequel, titled *MAD Square*.

Narne Nithin, Sangeeth Shobhan, and Ram Nithin—the original *MAD* trio—are back for the sequel. The girls gang is yet to be announced. Makers have stated that the movie will be twice as mad as the original.

They have stated that we know "The Boys... The Bond..." and confirmed that "The Madness... Is not done yet." Makers have further made a big promise by stating, "This

time...MADness will be MAXimum."

The *MAD* team has officially started the movie with a puja ceremony. Regular shooting is progressing at a brisk pace, and makers are super confident about the sequel to repeat double blockbuster success like *Tillu Square* with this sequel, too.

Star Boy Siddhu Jonnalagadda and Jathirathalu fame director CV Anudeep have graced the event as chief guests. Siddhu Jonnalagadda has handed over the script to director Kalyan Shankar. Both

Mohanlal to begin shooting his 360th film next week

Malayalam superstar Mohanlal is set to commence shooting for his 360th film, with the highly successful duo of Mohanlal and Shobana making a comeback in this project. Shobana herself announced the news, expressing her delight at working together again and marking their 56th collaboration.

This upcoming film, which is the 14th production under Renjith's Rejaputra Films, features Mohanlal in the role of a taxi driver, harking back to iconic roles that contributed to his superstar status.

Directed by Tarun Murthy and written by K.S. Sunil, the film boasts cinematography by Shaji and includes popular comedian-turned-character actor Jagdish in a significant role.

The film's shooting is scheduled to commence on Monday in Chennai, with an anticipated release during the Puja holidays in October. Fans eagerly await this milestone film featuring the legendary Mohanlal and Shobana.



Manamey teaser offers a fresh experience

Actor Sharwanand is set to enthrall audiences with his landmark 35th movie, *Manamey*, directed by the talented Sriram Aditya and magnificently produced by TG Vishwa Prasad under the banner of People Media Factory. The film's promotional materials, including its first look, glimpses, and debut single, have received tremendous acclaim. Recently, the makers unveiled the film's teaser, providing a captivating glimpse into the enchanting world of *Manamey*.

The teaser introduces a narrative centered around two individuals with contrasting mindsets encountering an unexpected twist in their journey with the arrival of a young boy, portrayed by Vikram Aditya. The protagonist, played by Sharwanand, initially appears innocent but reveals a playful, carefree persona. Krithi Shetty portrays a responsible, candid character, bringing depth to the story.

Director Sriram Aditya pre-

BAAK release postponed to May 3

Tamannaah Bhatia, Raashii Khanna, and Sundar C star *Arammanai 4* is set to release in Telugu as *Baak*. The Sundar C-directed horror comedy, originally scheduled for release on April 26, 2024, has now been postponed to a new date.

The producers have officially announced that the movie will hit screens on May 3, 2024, a week later than originally planned. Consequently, the Telugu dubbed version of the film, titled *Baak*, has also been rescheduled and will release on the same date by Asian Suresh Entertainment LLP, alongside the Tamil version.

Produced by Sundar's wife, Khushbu Sundar, and ACS Arun Kumar, the movie features a stellar cast including Kovai Sarala, Yogi Babu, Vennela Kishore, Srinivasa Reddy, Sunil, KS Ravikumar, and others in pivotal roles. The film's music is composed by Hiphop Tamizha.

A3 Labels's next starring Tony Kick, Sunita Marasyar officially launched

At Hyderabad's Film Nagar Sannidhaman on Friday, the latest movie from A3 Labels, starring Tony Kick and Sunita Marasyar, had its premiere. Bullet Bandi Laxman is directing this film, which Girish Kumar is producing. "I am happy that Pradeep and Girish are producing the film together under the banner of A3 labels," Chinnikrishna stated. "I've listened to sixty different scenes of this story. It is known that in South India, Ram and Laxman's records were enormous hits. An animated narrative based on their album's song *Allah Hey Allah* is in the works. After this film, Bullet Bandi Laxman will remain the greatest director. I hope this film becomes a huge success." He also uttered,



"I want everyone to bless the team." "Once we entered the film industry, we faced difficulties and went back," said director Bullet Bandi Laxman. "Folk music helped us win over the audience, nevertheless, Girish Kumar, our producer, stepped forward to make the film after realising my ambition of a movie. He lacked financial resources. I have attempted to tell a story in four minutes of song so far. Our producer has now expressed interest in creating a two-hour movie. Our goal with each and every song is to entice them to the theater and win their hearts. Our team's willpower is behind me. Similar to the support I've received on YouTube, I hope to receive the same in the film."