

sunday pioneer

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**BJP-ruled Centre a fascist, racist, oppressive govt: Priyanka**

5

**Will make India ATTRACTIVE destination: Sitharaman**

6

**Steps to enduring glory in RHYTHM with tradition**

Dile

QUOTE OF THE DAY
the pioneer

What did Indira Gandhi do for Medak? When Revanth Reddy was in the Opposition, he said that development took place only in Gajwel and Medak district. Now he is spreading the lie that there is no development. Revanth is the KD and Jodi of BJP. If anyone institutes an Oscar for liars it will go to Revanth.

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

P4

DON'T MISS...

YSRCP complains to EC against...

The YSRCP has formally approached the Election Commission urging immediate action against Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for their alleged derogatory remarks targeting Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The complaint was filed with Additional CEO Harindra Prasad at the Velagapudi Secretariat on Saturday. During the submission, State Planning Board Vice President and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu condemned KR Suryanarayana, the State president of the...

-PAGE: 4

Indian Navy conducts...

The Indian Navy on Saturday said it carried out an extensive exercise along the East Coast as part of efforts to check its preparedness to meet any maritime security challenges. The exercise 'Poorvi Leher' witnessed participation of ships, submarines, aircraft and special naval forces. The Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Leher on East Coast under the Operational Control of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, the Navy said. It said the exercise was aimed at validation...

-PAGE: 5

Cash-strapped Pak makes formal...

Pakistan has made a formal request to IMF for seeking the next bailout package in the range of US\$ 6 to US\$ 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing, a media report said on Saturday. Cash-strapped Pakistan also requested to dispatch the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review mission next month to firm up details of the next bailout package for three years under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). However, the exact size and timeframe of the...

-MONEY

'A third of China's urban...

About a third of China's urban population is estimated to be at risk due to land subsidence, shows a new finding which researchers said is indicative of a global phenomenon. China's urban area below the sea level could triple by 2120, potentially affecting 55 to 128 million residents, it found. Using satellite data, the research team studied 82 cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, with a collective population of nearly 700 million people. The team, including researchers from the University of East Anglia, UK, found that 45 per cent of the urban land area analysed was sinking, with 16 per cent sinking at the rate of 10 millimetres a year. Hotspots included Beijing and the coastal city of Tianjin...

-PAGE: 10

'Naidu worried about defeat'

■ Taking a dig at TDP chief, Jagan says losing villains call heroes kids

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLE

In a fiery speech during the 'Memantha Siddham Yatra' in Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy didn't hold back as he criticised TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu for his alleged failures in propelling the State forward during his 14-year tenure. Chief Minister Jagan emphasised Naidu's resistance to English medium education for underprivileged children, a move aimed at enhancing their prospects and breaking the cycle of poverty.

"We've introduced several progressive initiatives like English medium instruction, Gorumudda, Vidya Kanuka, bilingual textbooks, and TOEFL classes from grade three onwards, all geared towards providing quality education and uplifting families from poverty. Yet, Chandrababu seems averse to the idea of empowering our disadvantaged youth," remarked the Chief Minister.

Aiming Naidu's recent remarks branding him a 'bacha' (kid), Jagan questioned the TDP leader's motives, asking, "Why fear a 'bacha'? After all, Chandrababu had a substantial stint as chief minister, yet he now seeks alliances to stay relevant."

Drawing from historical analo-



- CM criticises TDP chief's governance record
- Accuses Naidu of hindering progress of State
- Jagan highlights his government's achievements

Enumerating the YSRCP government's accomplishments, Jagan pointed to investments, infrastructure projects, and welfare schemes benefitting millions of citizens. He criticized Naidu for reneging on his promises, citing unfulfilled commitments such as farm loan waivers, women's empowerment initiatives, and industrial development pledges.

their reign is in jeopardy," explained the Chief Minister.

Jagan continued his tirade against Naidu's governance track record, highlighting the lack of substantial achievements during his tenure. "During the last 58 months, our administration has ushered in a wave of transformative reforms, from establishing village secretariats and Rythu Bharosa Kendras to delivering quality education and healthcare services at the grassroots level," he asserted.

2

Referring to Naidu's derogatory remark calling him a 'bacha' (kid), Jagan questions Naidu's fear of forming alliances and resorting to personal attacks

gies, Jagan likened Naidu's characterisation to the desperation of villains facing imminent defeat, who perceive all challengers as juveniles.

"Whether it's Kamsa and Krishna, Marichudu and Rama, or Ravana and Hanuman, villains often resort to belittling their adversaries when

**POTHINA MAHESH'S DARE TO PAWAN**

Bare details of donations to JSP through electoral bonds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Potina Venkata Mahesh, a recent addition to the YSRCP, has directed a barrage of questions towards Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan regarding the electoral bond donations received by the party. He has called upon the opposition leader to be transparent by disclosing the details of donations acquired through electoral bonds on the party's official website.

Mahesh has cautioned that failing to divulge these details will lead to the exposure of Pawan Kalyan's undisclosed properties.

During a press conference held here on Saturday, Mahesh stated that it is widely known that the Jana Sena leader received financial support from TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu. He insisted that Pawan Kalyan clarify the origin of any properties obtained after he met with Chandrababu Naidu at Sneha Block

**The YSRCP leader questioned the extent of donations received by the Jana Sena Party from NRIs ostensibly supporting tenant farmers, and how much of these funds were distributed among the intended beneficiaries.**

in Rajahmundry Central jail, where Naidu was detained following his involvement in the multi-crore skill development scam in 2023.

The YSRCP leader questioned the extent of donations received by the Jana Sena Party from NRIs ostensibly supporting tenant farmers, and how much of these funds were distributed among the intended beneficiaries.

Furthermore, Mahesh directed his scrutiny towards Nadendla Manohar, chairman of the Jana Sena Party's political affairs committee, demanding clarity on the source of the reported Rs 10 crore expenditure on a sports car.

Mahesh emphasised that Pawan Kalyan's primary objective appears to be ensuring the victory of TDP in the upcoming state elections. Given Naidu's engagement with Jana Sena supporters via teleconferences, he also speculated on the potential merger of Jana Sena with TDP.

STONE ATTACK ON CM

Bonda sees bid to frame him

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP politburo member and candidate for the Vijayawada-Central Assembly constituency, Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, has made serious allegations against the Vijayawada City police, accusing them of harassment.

According to Rao, on Friday night, approximately 100 police personnel, accompanied by two Assistant Commissioners of Police



(ACPs), four Circle Inspectors (CIs), and six Sub-Inspectors (SIs), surrounded his office.

Speaking at a press conference held at his party office in Ajith Singh Nagar, Rao asserted that the police action also included the arrest of a minor in connection with the alleged stone pelting incident targeting CM Jagan Reddy.

Continued on Page 2

**SSC results tomorrow**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director of Government Examinations, D. Devananda Reddy, has said that the results of the SSC Public Examinations held in March 2024 will be announced on April 22. The unveiling ceremony will take place at 11:00 am in a hotel located in Vijayawada, with the Commissioner of School Education, S. Suresh Kumar, officiating the event. In a press release issued on Saturday, Devananda Reddy said that the results will be promptly accessible to students and the public via the official website: <https://results.bse.ap.gov.in/>.

TDP CHIEF'S BIRTHDAY PROMISE

Free RTC bus travel for women

PNS ■ GUDUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu has promised free travel for women on RTC buses in the State. Addressing a gathering of women on his birthday on Saturday, Naidu emphasised TDP's commitment to women's welfare, asserting that the party stands as a sanctuary for all women in the region.

Reflecting on the legacy of TDP's founder, the late NT Rama Rao, Naidu recalled Rao's advocacy for women's education, underscoring the importance of empowering

women. He highlighted the appointment of a woman as the Finance Minister in the Union Cabinet, symbolizing the financial stewardship of every household by women.

Naidu urged women to support Vara Prasad's candidature for the Lok Sabha from Tirupati and Sunil's bid for the Assembly from Gudur. Emphasizing his dedication to uplifting the disadvantaged and the Telugu community, Naidu envisioned a future where educated women occupy prominent positions globally.

Continued on Page 2

TDP's 'Super-6' schemes will support women

P3

**Avinash submits affidavit with details of Viveka case**

PNS ■ KADAPA

YSR Congress Party's (YSRCP) candidate for the Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency, YS Avinash Reddy, has disclosed details regarding the legal proceedings surrounding the murder case involving former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy.

Avinash Reddy, who has been nominated as the YSRCP candidate, has outlined the details of the case within the affidavit submitted to the election authorities.

Avinash, a cousin of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, has detailed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) initiated an inquiry into the murder incident dated March 15, 2019, in Pulivendula town, located within the YSR Kadapa district. The charges against the MP include sections under the Indian Penal Code such as 120-B (about criminal conspiracy), 302 (regarding punishment for murder), and 201 (relating to the disappearance of evidence of an offence or providing false information to shield an offender).

Continued on Page 2

OBTUSE ANGLE**SUICIDE PACT**

Woman, 3 kids end life

PNS ■ KADAPA

A heartbreaking incident unfolded in Galiveedu village, Annamayya district on Saturday, as a young mother, accompanied by her three children, lost their life. Nagamani (30) and her three children, Navyasri (10), Dinesh (6), and Jahnavi (3), were discovered in a distressing scene, having drowned in the Gandimadugu irrigation tank in the early hours of Saturday.



According to local authorities, Nagamani, reportedly grappling with overwhelming circumstances, led her children to the tank where the tragic incident occurred.

Continued on Page 2

'It's super Saturday'

US Consulate processes 1,500 visa applications in a day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nearly 1,500 US visa applications were processed in a day at the Hyderabad US Consulate.

The US Consulate said in a tweet, "It's Super Saturday at the Consulate! Hyderabad's Consulate Team opened its doors on the weekend to help meet the demand for visitor visas. 1,500 applicants had their visa interviews today and will travel to the US for business, tourism or to see family members." The US Consul General in Hyderabad, Jennifer Larson, also pitched in for processing the applications.

It's Super Saturday again at the Consulate! Happy to pitch in to help



meet the demand for visitor visas. It was great meeting so many wonderful people along the way," she tweeted.

Visitors said that they were happy. "The Visa Officer patiently asked everything and the staff was also very polite. They know the value of time," a visitor said.



Revanth's viewpoints put Cong on the defensive

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, while trying to strike his own path during interviews outside Telangana or to the national media, often shares or elicits viewpoints that are putting the Congress party's state unit on the defensive. For instance, in *Aap ki Adalat*, he had asked first-time voters whom they would vote. Tad came the reply: 'Modi'. He had to grin and bear it, saying: 'Okay vote for him'. Then in Kerala, he said that the Congress does not trust EVMs. Quick on the uptake, Bharat Rashtira Samithi reminded him that he became Chief Minister because of EVMs. Revanth is taking a stand against alliance partners also. In an interview, he opposed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's remarks on Sanatana Dharma. DMK is Congress-led INDI Alliance partner. He criticised Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in Kerala. Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka had to do the clean-up job while sewing up alliance with the left parties in Telangana.

KCR CHANGES TACK

Bharat Rashtira Samithi chief K Chandrasekhar Rao has of late switched to clean jokes and comparisons while putting down opponents in his public meetings. At the Sultanabad meeting recently, he called the Congress dispensation in the state as 'Lilliput government'. At the Chevella meeting, he characterized turncoat Ranjith Reddy as 'sunflower'. He asked: 'Is he (Ranjith) a sunflower that would turn wherever there is power?'

Noticeably, KCR has been doing such things at the start of the speech, thereby setting the tone and drawing

a huge response. Memes continue to keep alive his humorous twists thereafter. Previously, at a presser, he had come down heavily on certain Congress leaders, for which the Election Commission issued him notices regarding his language. So, in public meetings, he has changed tack, which is funny, but not vulgar. The party cadre believe that this clean humour from KCR is giving BRS an edge over Revanth Reddy, who continues to use language that some circles say is unbecoming of a chief minister.

social media. However, a spoof by its opponents titled 'Gulabila Dongalamma' but with the same tune is far more popular. So, now BRS is back to the drawing board to come out with a catchy number. BRS feels that it might take time for '*Mudu rangula jenda*' song to fade and give space for a new number.

IN POLITICS, BLOOD IS NOT THICKER THAN WATER!

The proverb 'Blood is thicker than water' signifies that family relationships and loyalties are the strongest and most important ones. In politics, it may not be so. So it seems when we look at politics in Andhra Pradesh, where APCC president YS Sharmila reacted surprisingly to the injury her brother and AP CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy suffered in stone pelting during his yatra. Sharmila tweeted: "We believe this incident was accidental. But if someone purposefully carried out this attack, then everyone should condemn it. There shouldn't be any scope for violence in a democracy. I pray for the speedy recovery of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy." This reaction surprised political circles and people. For, as a political rival, she has been outdoing Telugu Desam Party chief Chandrababu Naidu in criticizing Jagan's policies. And, after the stone pelting incident, several politicians, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed their shock and condemned it. It is a different matter Chandrababu Naidu reacted in his own style. People feel she reacted more as APCC president than as a sister.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate and SNCN Acharyulu)

REPORTERS' DIARY

BRS SCOUTING FOR A SONG TO BEAT MUDU RANGULA JENDA

Wherever Chief Minister Revanth Reddy goes, singer Nalgonda Gaddar's catchy number '*Mudu rangula jenda*' follows him. Revanth is so captivated by this song that even when he goes outside the state, he ensures that it is played. The evocative song has not just the masses on a roll, but is being played in colleges and during performances by DJs at functions. The BRS is yet to hit upon a comparable, hummable song that it can own. It is learnt that when Nalgonda Gaddar had offered to sing a song for BRS before the Assembly elections, KTR was reluctant to go ahead. Unlike BRS, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy went ahead with '*Pulivendula Puli*' song for YSRCP by the same singer. BRS did release '*Gulabila Jendalamma*' song ahead of Bathukamma before the Assembly elections and pushed it a lot on

Fear of defeat driving TDP to 'criminal politics': Vasireddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chairperson of AP State Women's Commission, Vasireddy Padma, has raised serious concerns about the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) tactics, accusing them of resorting to criminal activities out of fear of defeat, with tragic consequences seen in the recent murder of a YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) activist in Tadepalli.

Addressing media personnel at the YSRCP office in Tadepalli, Padma criticised TDP leaders, including Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh, for allegedly instigating violence against YSRCP supporters. She pointed to instances such as the assassination attempt on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Vijayawada, where



Padma also challenged the TDP's record in governance, questioning their failure to implement initiatives like setting up secretariats and volunteer systems for better service delivery. She called attention to the lack of development in key sectors such as infrastructure and healthcare under the TDP regime.

purported involvement of TDP leaders surfaced in police investigations.

Padma emphasised that as the TDP faces potential electoral losses, its leaders are resorting to desperate and malicious tactics, in contrast to Chief Minister Jagan's call for voters to judge based on the government's performance. She condemned the recent killing of YSRCP

activist Venkata Reddy in Tadepalli, attributing it to TDP elements and demanding justice for the victim.

Highlighting a series of attacks on YSRCP leaders and supporters across various districts, Padma questioned the motives behind such actions, suggesting a sinister agenda on the part of the opposition. She criticized Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for their

divisive rhetoric, which she claimed incites hatred and encourages violence.

Padma also challenged the TDP's record in governance, questioning their failure to implement initiatives like setting up secretariats and volunteer systems for better service delivery. She called attention to the lack of development in key sectors such as infrastructure and healthcare under the TDP regime.

FAMILY FIGHT

YSRCP candidate faces wife in Tekkali

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

The electoral battleground of the Tekkali Assembly constituency in braces itself for an unprecedented clash as Duvvada Srinivas of YSRCP finds himself in an unexpected showdown against none other than his own spouse, Duvvada Vani. The entry of Vani into the electoral fray as a rebel candidate has injected a fresh layer of intrigue into the political landscape of the constituency.

Srinivas, who was endorsed by the YSRCP as their official contender for the Tekkali Assembly seat, now confronts



a challenge from an unexpected quarter within his household. The decision of his wife to file nomination papers as an independent candidate promises a gripping electoral battle, setting the stage for a familial clash in the political

arena. Historically, the Tekkali Assembly constituency has been a stronghold of TDP, witnessing significant political manoeuvres over the years. Incumbent MLA and TDP president Kinjarapu Atchannaaidu seeks a third consecutive victory in the upcoming

elections. Meanwhile, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy aims to challenge TDP's dominance in the region by backing Duvvada Srinivas as the official YSRC nominee. However, the political dynamics took an unexpected turn with Vani's decision to challenge her husband's candidacy.

Despite her significant role in local politics, including a previous victory in the Tekkali Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) election, Vani expressed her dissatisfaction with the party's decision and chose to contest independently.

Free RTC bus...

Continued from page 1

Expressing concern over local leaders exploiting natural resources for personal gain, Naidu outlined his vision for industrial development in the region to provide opportunities for youth. Criticizing the current government for alleged corruption and mismanagement, he reiterated his aspiration to elevate the Telugu community to a leading global position.

Looking ahead, Naidu predicted implementing a one-nation-one-election system by 2029, advocating for women's representation through reservations. He affirmed TDP's commitment to empowering women through the 'Maha Sakthi' scheme, aiming to make them the most influential segment of society.

CM reaches out to old woman waiting for him

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

In Pulaparthi Village, a heartwarming moment unfolded during the Bus Yatra led by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. An elderly woman, eagerly waiting to meet CM Jagan, was filled with joy when she saw him stepping out of the bus. She couldn't contain her happiness as she approached him.

Wrapping her arms around him, she expressed her gratitude, thanking him for his dedication and commitment to the welfare of the people. With a wide smile, Chief Minister Jagan



Mohan Reddy embraced the elderly woman, reciprocating the warmth and appreciation. The moment was captured in a heartwarming video, creating a cherished memory for the old woman.

From healer to hope for Araku LS seat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a captivating blend of medical prowess and political aspiration, Dr Gumma Thanuja Rani has surged into the limelight as the YSRCP (Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party) contender for the Araku Lok Sabha seat. Her lineage, deeply entrenched in political heritage, coupled with a career dedicated to healthcare, signifies a profound commitment to public welfare and a fervent pursuit of societal transformation.

Born into the prominent political legacy of her father, G Syama Sundara Rao, Dr Thanuja Rani was raised amid the nuances of governance and the potency of community leadership. However, it was her personal experiences within the medical domain that ignited a fervour for broader societal welfare.



As the electoral fervour escalates, Dr Gumma Thanuja Rani emerges as a dynamic contender, transcending the confines of profession and politics to embody a fresh era of leadership in Araku.

Following the completion of her MBBS degree from the International University of Kyrgyzstan and an internship at King George Hospital, her focus seamlessly transitioned towards the intersection of healthcare and governance.

The metamorphosis from the healer to lawmaker was not abrupt but rather a gradual evolution, catalyzed by

Dr. Thanuja Rani's active participation in her father's political campaigns, notably during his endeavours for the Sarpanch elections. Little did she foresee that this initial venture into grassroots politics would carve a path for her candidacy in the Araku constituency. Amidst the whirlwind of electoral campaigning, Dr. Thanuja Rani remains steadfast in her medical roots, often

halting to extend aid to those in need along the campaign trail. Her unwavering dedication to both healthcare and political duties epitomizes a rare fusion of empathy and leadership, resonating profoundly with the populace of Araku.

Looking towards the horizon, Dr Thanuja Rani elucidates a vision for inclusive governance, accentuating the significance of welfare schemes and infrastructural development in uplifting marginalised communities. She draws solace from the accomplishments of the YSRCP government, pledging to perpetuate their legacy of progress if elected. However, in the face of scrutiny, Dr Thanuja Rani fearlessly confronts her adversary, Kothapalli Geetha, denouncing her for political opportunism and wavering allegiance.

Woman, 3 kids end life

Continued from page 1

Despite rescue efforts, all four individuals drowned in the tank. The family, originally from Chilakuripet village, now ran into debt. Distraught family members shared that Nagamani had engaged in a heated argu-

ment with her husband, Vikram, concerning financial matters the previous night. Subsequently, she left their residence in a state of distress around 10 pm on Friday. The police have taken Vikram into custody for questioning in connection with the incident.

Bonda sees bid to..

Continued from page 1

Additionally, he claimed that the parents of Vemula Satish, who was under remand, were unlawfully detained by the police.

Rao further criticised the Director General of Police (DGP) KV Rajendranath Reddy, Vijayawada Police Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata, and ACP Prasad,

accusing them of conspiring to harass TDP candidates in the district. He described these police officials as being manipulated by criminal elements, adding that the harassment extended to Satish's parents over two days. "The police have allegedly subjected Satish and his parents to torture to extract a confession implicating us.

Avinash submits..

Continued from page 1

Additionally, Avinash Reddy is involved in another ongoing criminal case, registered in Mydukur, within the YSR Kadapa district in 2018. This case involves charges of wrongful restraint and disobedience to orders duly promulgated by public servants. Furthermore, the MP has disclosed that he

and his spouse possess movable and immovable assets valued at Rs 18.78 crore. The allegations against Avinash Reddy regarding the Vivekananda Reddy murder case have taken centre stage in the campaigning efforts within the Kadapa constituency, particularly with the entry of Jagan Mohan Reddy's sister and state Congress chief, Sharmila, into the electoral fray.

Naidu worried..

Continued from page 1

Enumerating the YSRCP government's accomplishments, Jagan pointed to significant investments, infrastructure projects, and welfare schemes benefiting millions of citizens. Meanwhile, he criticized Naidu

for reneging on his promises, citing unfulfilled commitments such as farm loan waivers, women's empowerment initiatives, and industrial development pledges. As the political rhetoric heats up ahead of the elections, Chief Minister Jagan rallied his supporters, urging them to scrutinize Naidu's record and hold him accountable for his past failures.

NDA will come to power in State: Kesineni Chinni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kesineni Sivanath, popularly known as Chinni, the TDP candidate for the Vijayawada Lok Sabha Constituency, expressed optimism about Andhra Pradesh's future under the leadership of TDP supremo and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Sivanath stated that within the next two to three years, Andhra Pradesh would emerge as a leading state in the country, with the TDP-led NDA assuming power in the upcoming elections. Celebrations commemorating former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's birthday took place at the NTR Bha van in Gurunanak Nagar,



Vija yawada, over the weekend. Sivanath, along with other TDP leaders, participated in cake-cutting festivities at the party office.

Addressing the media thereafter, Sivanath emphasised Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, asserting that he is poised to rectify the state's current financial challenges. Sivanath highlighted Naidu's esteemed

reputation on the global stage, anticipating that it would contribute significantly to the state's economic recovery in the foreseeable future.

TDP National Official Spokesperson K Pattabhi Ram, former Mayor of Vijayawada Koneru Sridhar, and other party members graced the occasion with their presence.

-POMPOUS NOMINATION RALLIES-

Candidates splurge huge amounts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Despite scrutiny by election expenditure observers over the spending of contesting candidates, major political party leaders are organising extravagant rallies to flaunt their prowess against opponents, lavishing crores of rupees with apparent impunity. Before filing their nomination papers at the offices of Parliamentary Constituency (PC) and Assembly Constituency (AC) Returning Officers, candidates have been splurging substantial sums to muster crowds for their processions.

While the Election Commission of India (ECI) stipulates a spending limit of Rs 95 lakh for candidates in each Lok Sabha constituency and Rs 40 lakh for Assembly constituency candidates, prominent parties like YSRCP, TDP, BJP, and JSP are reportedly surpassing these limits by spending approximately Rs



1 crore solely on the day of filing nominations.

Curiously, expenses incurred during the nomination filing processions are not factored into the candidates' expenditures, as noted by expenditure observers. Party leaders have been mustering thousands of attendees, alongside their cadre, for these rallies.

To achieve this, parties are paying individuals Rs. 300 each, with additional costs of Rs.

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1,500 for autos and Rs. 3,000 for cars for transportation, yet these expenses are not reflected in the

candidates' spending.

Recently, TDP Vijayawada Lok Sabha candidate Kesineni Sivanath, also known as Chinni, orchestrated a massive rally from Radham Centre to the NTR district collectorate, with the participation of thousands, facilitated by paid wages from TDP, BJP, and JSP.

Various artists were hired to showcase their talents during nomination filing processions, with BJP's Vijayawada West Candidate Sujana Chowdary and YSRCP's Vijayawada West Candidate Shaik Asif organizing similar events.

Likewise, other candidates in NTR and Krishna districts plan to stage large rallies following their nomination filings before respective Returning Officers.

Every MP and MLA candidate is vying to organize the most substantial rallies, intending to gather thousands of attendees by offering daily wages of Rs. 300.

Moreover, candidates are expending funds on necessities like buttermilk and drinking water due to soaring temperatures. After these nomination filing rallies, nearly all party candidates distributed biryani packets to attendees.

Political analysts estimate that major parties are conducting rallies with 5,000 to 10,000 attendees, with about half being brought in through wage payments. Leaders are also bearing the expenses of providing drinking water, buttermilk, and biryani packets, amounting to Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh, as per analysts. Regrettably, Election Commission (EC)-appointed observers have reportedly overlooked these rallies and expenditures, which exceed candidates' expenditure limits on nomination filing days. Analysts urge election expenditure observers to focus on these expenses.

TDP's 'Super-6' schemes will support women: Brahmani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Nara Lokesh's wife of Nara Brahmani has said that TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu will work with extra zeal for the people of Andhra Pradesh and no one can match him in this regard. As part of the election campaign conducted in the Mangalagiri constituency, she visited Yerrabalem, Sandhya Spices Company and spoke to the workers.

Brahmani said that Naidu and Lokesh constantly strive for women's empowerment and economic self-reliance. At present, there are one crore Dwra members and Naidu is the reason for Dwra groups to have reached this level. It was Naidu who allowed Pratibha Bharati to become the first woman Assembly speaker. With the intention that financial difficulties should not be a hindrance to women's education, a programme called 'Kalalaku Rekkalu' was recently announced. Through this,



interest-free loans are available through banks for education. Employment has been provided to the youth through the establishment of large-scale engineering colleges and professional courses during the undivided AP. Super-6 schemes were announced to relieve the poor people from their hardships. To increase the income of women and provide them with financial support, Lokesh is implementing the Stree Shakti Scheme in Mangalagiri.

Brahmini recalled "Anna Canteen used to quench hunger with Rs 5. When Jagan's government came, the canteens were closed. People are facing difficulties due to the lack of public toilets in the village. Roads are in a bad condition. In the last five years, the prices of essentials have increased tremendously. Electricity bills have doubled. In the past, when the capital works were underway, the financial condition working section was better."

Bonda rattled as he is guilty in stone attack case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, the TDP's candidate for the Vijayawada Central Assembly constituency, is facing criticism over recent actions, potentially leading to concerns about his electoral prospects, according



regret over his previous association with Bonda Uma, particularly regarding the recent incident involving stone pelting against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He suggested that Bonda Uma's actions could cost him dearly in the upcoming elections, questioning his secretive filing of nomination papers and describing a recent incident at his office in Ajith Singh Nagar as a 'drama'.

Srinivasa Rao further asserted that Bonda Uma lacks support from the people and is unsuitable for candidacy, citing allegations of attempted harm against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and the reported affiliation with Vemula Satish.

Meanwhile, expressing confidence in the YSRCP's prospects, Srinivasa Rao predicted a significant victory for the party in the upcoming elections, suggesting that Bonda Uma may even lose his deposit. He also announced his intention to file his nomination papers on April 22, urging party leaders and supporters to remain steadfast in their efforts.

ing to remarks made by Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, the former minister and YSRCP candidate for the same constituency.

As part of his election campaign, Srinivasa Rao canvassed in the Ramakrishnapuram area of the 30th division on Saturday, engaging with constituents.

Addressing the media afterwards, Srinivasa Rao expressed

'Vote for those who can develop your constituency'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Voters should vote for candidates who will develop their constituencies, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Telangana, Vikas Raj, said.

He was speaking while inaugurating a photo exhibition on voters' awareness on Saturday organised by the Central Bureau of Communication.

He urged voters to join the 'festival' of democracy and make it a free and fair exercise. "We need to make elections a free and fair exercise. The responsibility for that rests on voters as they have to make elections inducement-free," he said.

He said that the first thing for voters to do is to find their polling booth. There are many ways like the ECI portal and mobile apps which give info about polling booths.

"Go to your polling booth with your EPIC or any of the 12 identification cards recognised by ECI to exercise your franchise," he said.

The CEO urged voters not to make summer heat an excuse to skip voting as the ECI is making arrangements to



counter the heat wave in the State. The ECI has been conducting awareness campaigns about elections for seven to eight months, he said.

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) Vice Chairman and Managing Director, VC Sajjanar, IPS, called upon first-time voters to actively take part in voting as polling day is a holiday. He asked voters not to get influenced by freebies.

Shruti Patil, Additional DG, PIB and the Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Hyderabad, spoke about the I&B Ministry's initiatives launched in collaboration with

the CEO's office like street plays which were staged across the state.

She said that the CBC would organise similar exhibitions in all major towns of the state to counter the apathy of urban voters.

Joint CEO Sarfaraz Ahmed, TSRTC Executive Director A. Purushotham Naik, Regional Manager (Ranga Reddy) D. Raju, PIB Director Balakrishna, Deputy Director Kareena B. Thengamam, Deputy Director Manas Krishnakanth, CBC Assistant Director I. Hari Babu and others were also present.

Gannavaram MLA Vamsi files nomination

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gannavaram sitting MLA and the YSRCP candidate Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan filed a set of nomination papers before the Returning Officer (RO) and Krishna district joint collector Geethanjali Sharma at the Tahsildar Office at Gannavaram on Saturday. As per the 'Muhurtham' Dr Vamsi filed one set of nomination papers along with the party leaders. However, he will be filing another set of nomination papers on April 25.

Interestingly, the YSRCP Political Affairs Committee Member and senior leader Dr Dutta Ramachandra Rao's son-in-law and the YSRCP Doctors' Cell former president Dr Siva Bharath Reddy attend-

ed the filing of the Vamsi's nomination programme. Dr Vamsi, a two-time MLA from the Gannavaram is set to contest the third time in the coming elections.

In the previous elections, Vamsi contested as the TDP candidate from Gannavaram against the YSRCP candidate Yarlagadda Venkata Rao and registered his second win consecutively. However, he switched over to the YSRCP defecting from the TDP and now contesting as the ruling party candidate.

Along with Dr Siva Bharath Reddy, Gannavaram MPP Anagani Ravi and others, Vamsi filed his nomination papers. Also, his wife, Vallabhaneni Pankaja Sree filed another set of nomination papers.



Demand for film industry development in manifestoes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Founder of the 'Movie Association of AP' (MA-AP) and a prominent film director, Dilip Raja, has asserted that political parties neglecting the development of the film industry forfeit any moral claim to the votes of those involved in the film fraternity. He implored the film community in the State to support non-political entities committed to prioritising the advancement of the film industry within the state. These sentiments were echoed during a recent gathering of MA-AP members, convened on Saturday, where attendees lamented the glaring absence of policies supporting film industry growth and welfare in the ongoing 2024 election manifestoes.

Raja rebuked political parties for their apathy towards nurturing the film sector in Andhra Pradesh, insisting that electoral manifestoes must explicitly outline commitments to its development. Highlighting the significant contributions made by the film industry through entertainment taxes.

EC issues 2 notices to TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission issued notices to the Telugu Desam party and its general secretary Varla Ramaiah regarding the morphing of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's photos of the stone attack and further use of abusive language and derogatory remarks by Ramaiah against CM Jagan. On April 14, YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu complained to the Election Commission about falsehoods, lies and malicious propaganda on TDP's official social media, Twitter and TDP's official website with proof and evidence. He stated that the Telugu Desam Party had done bad propaganda by morphing the attack on Chief Minister YS Jagan in Vijayawada as a drama and a self-play act.

YSRCP complains to EC against Naidu, Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP has formally approached the Election Commission urging immediate action against Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for their alleged derogatory remarks targeting Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The complaint was filed with Additional CEO Harindra Prasad at the Velagapudi Secretariat on Saturday.

During the submission, State Planning Board Vice President and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu condemned KR Suryanarayana, the State president of the Government Employees' Union, for repeatedly flouting election regulations. Vishnu lamented the consistent disregard for disciplinary measures by Suryanarayana despite previous suspensions. He emphasized that despite the enforcement of the election code,



there have been instances of provocative employee gatherings across the state. Vishnu urged the EC to take punitive action against Suryanarayana.

Vishnu further criticized the speeches of Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh, alleging that their rhetoric is fueling unrest in the state. He specifically pointed to Lokesh's public addresses, which he claimed incited activists to target members of

the ruling party. Presenting a video clip of Lokesh's speech, Vishnu alleged that such statements directly led to the unfortunate incident of YSRCP leader Venkata Reddy's murder in Mangalagiri. Vishnu also attributed the recent stone attack on Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy in Vijayawada to the provocative language used by TDP members. He asserted that TDP activists are

resorting to violence out of fear of electoral defeat.

The YSRCP delegation included Ravela Kishore Babu,

Ankamreddy Naga Narayanamurthy, and YCP legal cell member Srinivasa Reddy.

Complaint to poll panel against police

Urging the Election Commission of India (ECI) to appoint special observers to oversee the ongoing election arrangements in the State, TDP leader Varla Ramaiah called upon the poll panel on Saturday to solicit independent assessments from them.

In a letter directed to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), with copies to the district Collector serving as the District Election Officer, Ramaiah expressed deep concern over the State police administration, which, he alleged, is currently being influenced by the ruling YSRCP for electoral gain, targeting the National

Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners. The letter, signed by the TDP politburo member, highlighted the utilization of police resources by the Vijayawada Police Commissioner to harass political opponents of the YSRCP.

Ramaiah alleged that the Police Commissioner is employing various tactics to unlawfully detain TDP candidate Bonda Umamaheswara Rao from Vijayawada (Central), implicating him in fabricated cases. Referring to an incident on April 13, he noted that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a roadshow in the congested streets of Vijayawada.

'Will support kin of party activist killed in TDP attack'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, along with other party leaders, paid their respects at the residence of Venkat Reddy, who tragically lost his life in an attack allegedly perpetrated by TDP members. Expressing condolences to the bereaved family, Sajjala assured them of the party's support during this difficult time.

Addressing the media later, Sajjala denounced what he described as the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) attempts to instil fear and intimidation in the electoral process. He asserted that the recent attacks aimed at disrupting peace and security were orchestrated due to the TDP's apprehension over potential electoral losses, particularly evident in Mangalagiri where Lokesh was facing a clear defeat.

Highlighting the seriousness of the situation, Sajjala recalled the unfortunate incident of an alleged assassination attempt on Chief Minister Jagan in Vijayawada. He emphasized that the recent brutal attack on Venkat Reddy during his campaign for the party was a calculated act of violence, not a random occurrence, and stressed that such acts have no place in a democratic society.

Asserting the strength of the YSRCP, Sajjala cautioned against misconstruing the party's composed demeanour as a weakness, stating that they possess the capability to respond firmly to any provocation. He urged the authorities to swiftly register the incident as a case of murder under Section 302 and ensure that the perpetrators face severe consequences.

23 nominations filed in NTR dist, 13 in Krishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 23 nominations were submitted in the NTR district, with an additional 13 candidates filing their papers in the Krishna district on Saturday, marking the third day of the filing period. Within the NTR district, 22 nominations were submitted for various assembly constituencies, while the Krishna district saw 12 nominations for similar positions. One nomination each was filed for the Vijayawada Lok Sabha and Machilipatnam Lok Sabha constituencies, respectively.

In the Vijayawada Parliamentary Constituency, independent candidate Maddineni Anil Kumar submitted his nomination papers



to the Returning Officer and Collector, Dr S Dilli Rao, at the collectorate in Vijayawada. Simultaneously, independent candidate Amballa Raj Kumar filed his nomination to contest from the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha segment before the election officer DK Balaji.

Among the notable submissions, five nominations were filed for the Vijayawada West assembly constituency in the NTR district. These included candidates from various parties such as Parasa Suresh Kumar representing Jai Bheem Rao Bharath Party, Jagadeesh

Ramachandra Rao from Telugu Rajyaadhikari Samiti Party, N Saibabu from Navaranga Congress party, along with independent candidates Bobbili Lakshmi and Shaik Rabbani.

Meanwhile, seven applications were received for the Vijayawada Central segment, with notable entries including former MLA and TDP candidate Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, as well as candidates from the Socialist Unity Centre of India, Jai Bharath National Party, and Navarang Congress party. Similarly, three nominations were filed in the Vijayawada East constituency, featuring candidates from the Pyramid Party of India, Jai Bharath National Party, and

Navarang Congress Party.

In the Mylavaram assembly constituency, YSRCP candidate Sarnala Tirupati Rao submitted two sets of nomination papers before the RO Dr. P Sampath Kumar, alongside candidates from Navaranga Congress Party and Telugu Rajyadhikari Samiti Party.

Moving to the Krishna district, notable submissions include BSP candidate Gudivada Bosu Babu in addition to independent candidate S Venkanna Babu filing two sets of nomination papers for the Pedana constituency. For the Machilipatnam assembly constituency, independent candidates Arif Pasha and Lakshmi Kiran Kumar filed their nomination papers.

Stern steps taken for polling in problematic villages: SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Bapatla District's Superintendent of Police, Vakul Jindal, has emphasized the robust steps being taken by law enforcement to ensure the smooth conduct of general elections amidst potentially volatile environments. Over the weekend, he inspected polling centres in Cherukupalli, Nagaram, and Nizampatnam Police Station areas within the Repalle Constituency of Bapatla district. During these visits, he provided comprehensive directives to officials regarding pre-



emptive actions required to avert any disruptions during the polling process.

SP Vakul Jindal meticulously surveyed polling centres in Rambotlapalem and Gullapalli villages under the jurisdiction of Cherukupalli police station, as well as those in Nagaram, Borumadiga Palli, and

Yeletipalem villages under Nagaram police station. Additionally, he visited polling centres in Nizampatnam, A m a d a l a p a l l i, Gokarnamatham, and other villages flagged for potential issues under the Nizampatnam police station. Stressing the importance of a peaceful nomination process for candidates across the district, he assured that all efforts are being made to maintain tranquility.

In anticipation of the upcoming polling day on May 13th, SP Vakul Jindal underscored the meticulous identification of polling centres district-wide.

40 nominations filed for LS seats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 40 nominations were filed for Lok Sabha seats on Saturday. A total of 263 nominations have been filed for assembly constituencies, with around 227 candidates participating in the process.

YS Sharmila Reddy, the chief of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) and daughter of the late chief minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy, submitted her nomination for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat. Before filing her papers, she paid homage at her father's resting place in Idupulapaya. Accompanied by APCC Media Cell Chairman and former MP Dr N Tulasi Reddy, as well as the daughter of the late former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy, Sunitha Reddy, Sharmila Reddy completed the formalities.

Additionally, candidates from various parties participated in the nomination process. Notably, YSRCP's Ongole Lok



For Assembly constituencies, 227 candidates filed 263 sets of nomination papers across the state. Notable submissions included those by Baggu Ramana Murthy and Baggu Sugunamma of TDP for the Narasannapet assembly constituency, as well as Minister Botsa Satyanarayana and Botsa Sandeep of YSRCP for the Cheepurupalli assembly constituency.

Sabha candidate Dr Chieveryddi Bhaskar Reddy and his wife, C Lakshmi

Kanthamma, submitted their nominations, alongside candidates from TDP such as K

Parthasaradhi in Hindupur and Byreddy Shabari in Nandyal.

For assembly constituencies, 227 candidates filed 263 sets of nomination papers across the state. Notable submissions included those by Baggu Ramana Murthy and Baggu Sugunamma of TDP for the Narasannapet assembly constituency, as well as Minister Botsa Satyanarayana and Botsa Sandeep of YSRCP for the Cheepurupalli assembly constituency.

In addition to these, candidates from various parties, including YSRCP, TDP, CPI, and CPM, participated in the nomination process for different assembly segments, showcasing the diverse political landscape in Andhra Pradesh.

Overall, the nomination process saw active participation from candidates representing a spectrum of political ideologies, setting the stage for an intense electoral contest in the upcoming polls.

PM Modi extends birthday greetings to Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday extended birthday greetings to TDP supremo and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Naidu turned 74 on Saturday.

Modi called Naidu an experienced leader who devoted his life to the all-round progress of Andhra Pradesh.

"Birthday wishes to former Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu Garu. An experienced leader, he has always devoted himself towards AP's (Andhra Pradesh) all-round progress," said Modi in a post on X.

The prime minister said he would pray for the blessing of a long and healthy life for Naidu who is in the service of people.

Kadapa people have not forgotten Viveka: Sharmila

PNS ■ KADAPA

Stating that the people of Kadapa have not forgotten their leader YS Vivekananda Reddy, APCC president YS Sharmila said that she had filed a nomination to contest for Lok Sabha from Kadapa and wooed voters to elect her.

Addressing an election meeting here on Saturday, she said that the happenings that took place in the Kadapa district were noted by the people of the state.

"We are commenting on the murder of Vivekananda Reddy based on the facts which were mentioned in the charge sheet by the CBI. We are mentioning only the facts that the CBI mentioned in its charge sheet," she said.

The APCC President recalled that the YSRCP leaders and the Sakshi media mentioned the name of the then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in the Vivekananda Reddy murder case. She also recalled the Sakshi newspaper's banner 'Narasura Raktacharitra' against Chandrababu Naidu and questioned why the court did not restrain them then.

She lamented that even after five years of Vivekananda



Reddy's murder, justice has not been meted out to the victims. She also raised the attack on Jagan Reddy stating that a small stone was hurled at Jagan Reddy and it was described as a 'murder attempt on Jagan Mohan Reddy'.

"The YSRCP described pelting a small stone as a 'murder attempt' but Vivekananda Reddy was 'hacked seven times' with an axe. The brain came out of head," she lamented and asked how it is to be described.

She asked the YSRCP government why it is protecting one of the accused, MP YS Avinash Reddy. When the CBI went to Kurnool to arrest YS Avinash Reddy, the CBI officials were prevented and the government should answer this, she demanded. The

YSRCP leaders indulged in the character assassination of Vivekananda Reddy 500 times, she lamented.

The YSRCP leaders also humiliated her mother, YS Vijaya Lakshmi. The APCC President called upon people to elect the Congress which assured of granting SCS and completion of Polavaram project.

Addressing another election meeting at Kodumuri, YS Sharmila lashed out that the construction of the irrigation project was neglected by successive governments after the death of YS Rajasekhara Reddy. The YSR's dream project 'Gundrevula' was ignored by YS Jagan Reddy. She flayed that the government is selling poor quality liquor with attractive names like Boom Boom, Capital and Special Status.

SP conducts surprise inspections at polling and police stations

PNS ■ NELLORE

Superintendent of Police K Arif Hafeez conducted surprise inspections of a police station, railway station and polling station on Saturday.

The SP inspected Chinnabazar, Nawab Peta, Balaji Nagar Police Stations, Nellore Railway Station and polling stations at RSR School. The SP inquired with the officials about the police station ranges, geographical locations critical polling stations and the latest situation.

Nellore town should be divided into 3 sectors to implement steps to curb crimes efficiently and the illegal activities should be curbed, he told the officials.

Vigilant duties should be performed at the entry and exit points of the nomination centre in the respective area, the SP. He warned that strict legal action should be taken against those who hold rallies without proper permission from the authorities.



Various instructions were given on the performance of SST and FST teams established within each police station, by the SP. The details of the seizure so far and the precautions to be taken there were explained to the SP by the officials.

Later the SP inspected polling centres located on the RSR school campus. He advised the officials on the precautions to be taken and amenities to be provided to the

polling station. Later he inspected the railway station and instructed the RPF personnel to ensure that gold, cash and liquor were not transported in trains illegally. He directed the police officials to conduct flag marches with the Central security forces to instil confidence among people.

A strict vigil should be laid on anti-social elements. The complaints received through the c-VIGIL should be resolved immediately.

AP likely to be hot and humid over next 5 days

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The weather is likely to be hot, humid, and uncomfortable across various areas in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next five days until April 25, as stated by the Meteorological Centre on Saturday.

According to the latest weather report from the Meteorological Department, thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds ranging between 30 to 40 kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next five days, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Rayalaseema within the next 48 hours.

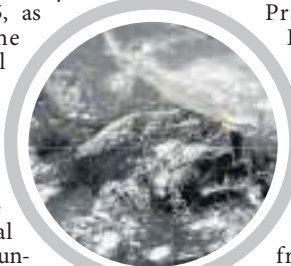
There's a possibility of light to moderate rain or thunder-

showers at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next six days, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Rayalaseema within the next 48 hours.

From April 22 to 26, dry weather is anticipated in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Rayalaseema, and on April 26 in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Currently, the trough or wind discontinuity extends from South Interior Karnataka to North Tamil Nadu at 0.9 km above mean sea level.

Over the last 24 hours, rainfall was recorded at one or two places over Rayalaseema, while dry weather persisted over Coastal Andhra Pradesh. The highest maximum temperature, reaching 44.3 degrees Celsius, was noted at Nandyal in Rayalaseema on Friday, as per the report.



Development is possible only with YSRCP: Buggana



PNS ■ NANDYALA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy reiterated that the development of the state and implementation of welfare schemes are possible only with the YSRCP.

Buggana Rajendranath Reddy participated in an election rally and addressed an election meeting in the Dhone constituency on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, he questioned TDP candidate Kotla Surya Prakash Reddy about what he had done for the Dhone constituency when he was the Union Railway minister. People did not know where you had been for the last 15 years, he criticized.

"When Kotla Surya Prakash Reddy was the Union Railway Minister, even one railway bridge was constructed in Dhone constituency," the

Finance Minister said.

He called upon people to vote for the YSRCP keeping in view the massive development taken up during the last five years and implementation of a large number of welfare schemes.

Taking a dig at Chandrababu Naidu, Buggana said that the TDP in the 2014 election assured of a complete farm loan waiver but failed to fulfil the same. The TDP resorted to vote bank politics in the name of the 'Pasupu Kumkuma' scheme but the people did not trust Naidu.

Meanwhile, 60 families of Dharmavaram a Venkatanayanipalle joined the YSRCP in the presence of Buggana who admitted them into the party by wrapping scarves. State Meat Corporation chairman Sriramulu and MPP Regati Rajasekhara Reddy were among those who were present.

YSRCP warns TDP against derogatory remarks on CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a fervent response to recent comments made by TDP representative Kalava Srinivasulu, YSRCP's women president Potula Sunitha delivered a stern warning, asserting that any disparaging remarks against CM Jagan Mohan Reddy would not be tolerated. Sunitha accused Srinivasulu of attempting to curry favour with Chandrababu Naidu by speaking negatively about CM Jagan during a public meeting in Rayadurgam.

Addressing the media at the Tadepalli party office, Sunitha vehemently objected to Srinivasulu calling CM Jagan a coward. Instead, she turned the spotlight on Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh, labelling them as deceptive figures who have led the state astray. Sunitha alleged that Naidu's mismanagement, particularly concerning the Amaravati capital project, has resulted in widespread disillusionment, as evidenced by the TDP's reduced representation in the 2019 elections.



YSRCP women's wing president Potula Sunitha vehemently objected to TDP leader Kalava Srinivasulu calling CM Jagan a coward. Instead, she turned the spotlight on Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh, labelling them as deceptive figures who have led the state astray

With the 2024 elections looming, Sunitha accused figures like Naidu and Srinivasulu of resorting to baseless propaganda against

CM Jagan in a futile attempt to salvage the TDP's prospects. She challenged Srinivasulu to a public debate on the respective merits of CM Jagan's governance and Naidu's tenure, citing widespread public support for the YSRCP's initiatives, exemplified by the enthusiastic turnout at the ongoing Memmantha Siddham bus yatra.

Sunitha also seized the opportunity to highlight CM Jagan's achievements, emphasising initiatives such as the establishment of health clinics in every village and Rythu Bharosa Kendras, which have bolstered confidence among the populace. Additionally, she credited CM Jagan with spearheading infrastructure development along the state's coastal regions and implementing welfare measures unparalleled in the state's history.

Sunitha reiterated the YSRCP's commitment to prioritising the welfare of the people, contrasting it with what she described as the TDP's track record of broken promises and exploitation.

AP needs NDA in power for progress: Pawan

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Alleging that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has ruined the State in all aspects, Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan underlined the need for the NDA government for the rapid progress of AP.

Addressing an election meeting at Korukonda in EG district along with BJP state president Daggubati Purandeswari on Saturday, Pawan Kalyan said people could not afford the YSRCP regime once again.

He reaffirmed that he entered politics to create a bright future for the youth.

He recalled that Jagan Mohan Reddy was involved in 38 cases and he was in prison for 16 months. "If the alliance is voted to power, Jagan Mohan Reddy will go to prison. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already announced in a meeting in Rajasthan that corrupt leaders will not

be spared," he recalled.

Pawan Kalyan lamented that even famous film personalities including Chiranjeevi, Mahesh Babu and Prabhas were humiliated by Jagan Mohan Reddy by forcing them to walk to his chamber and leaking selected footage of videos. Though over 30,000 women went missing that did not make the Chief Minister worried, he flayed.

"The strength of JSP has been bolstered after the 2019

debacle. Even though, with the intention that the opposition votes would not split, he compromised despite the JSP being in the number one position in many constituencies in EG and WG Godavari districts. We are entering into the election arena with a wise strategy," he made it clear.

Daggubati Purandeswari underlined the need for a triple-engine government to develop Rajanagar constituency. "AP has been made headless by the YSRCP regime. The river's tendering has halted the construction of the Polavaram project. Those who parted with their lands for the construction of the capital city Amaravati were dragged to the streets," the BJP state president lamented.

Pawan Kalyan and Purandeswari called upon voters to elect the candidates of the TDP-BJP-JSP alliance.



CM body-shaming me instead of answering questions: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is body-shaming him and countered the statements the CM made at the Medak meeting.

"Speaking in Medak, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy exposed his stupidity once again. He is becoming impatient as he is not able to answer our questions. While he was in the opposition, he said that development took place only in Gajwel and Medak district, and now he is spreading the lie that there has been no development so far," Harish said.

"If Singur waters reached Medak district it is because of KCR. There should be values in politics. I am not talking about your height and your CM's post. But you will under-

stand if I speak your own language. You are short, but don't you have a brain at least as big as a mustard seed," he said.

It may be mentioned here that Revanth Reddy said that Harish Rao grew tall but didn't have brains.

"While KCR, who is not in good health, is visiting farmers, Revanth is watching cricket. When the government failed to answer my questions he made body-shaming comments about me. People are noticing how he is speaking about the great leader who brought Telangana. The public and Congress ranks think that Revanth is colluding with Modi. That is why he is making the meaningless allegation that Modi and KCR have become one," he said.

People understood

Revanth's frauds in these four and a half months. The people will not believe Revanth no matter how many myths he tells. Revanth is the KD and Jodi of the BJP. If anyone institutes an Oscar for liars it will go to Revanth," Harish said.

"Revanth, who has already given many dates on waiving farm loans, is swearing on gods and playing new dramas. Farmers do not believe that their loans will be waived before August 15. Cheating is not new to Revanth. He broke his word saying that he would take political asceticism if he lost in Kodangal. Deception is his nature," he said.

"The BRS is the party which gave maximum seats to BCs in Assembly and Parliament elections. Revanth has no moral right to talk about BCs.

Congress spreading lies on reservation issue, says Shah

PNS ■ JAIPUR/KOTA

Accusing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of spreading lies on the issue of reservation, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said even if the opposition party wants to do away with quota given to SC, ST and OBCs, the BJP will not allow it to happen.

Addressing rallies in Rajasthan, Shah also claimed that the Congress wanted to remove the ban on the Islamic extremist outfit Popular Front of India (PFI).

He hit back at the opposition's claim that the BJP's slogan of winning 400 seats was aimed at changing the Constitution.

"When Congress got a majority, they used it to impose Emergency... we got the majority in 2014 and 2019, we did not use it to remove reservation but to remove Article 370, to



build Ram temple... bring CAA... give reservation to women ... we used our majority to remove poverty, to secure the country," Shah said.

"Rahul baba, you should not lie. Even if the Congress party wants to remove SC, ST and OBC reservation... we will not allow it to remove reservation. This is Modi's guarantee. These (Congress) people are spreading lies," he said.

He claimed the Congress has harmed the interest of Other Backward Classes (OBC) the most.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi belongs to the OBC community, Shah said, adding that it was Modi who implemented schemes for various communities among the backward classes.

Shah said Modi worked to give constitutional recognition

to the National Commission for Backward Classes. "We worked to give 27 per cent reservation to OBCs in all central institutions in the country. Modi, under whom respect for the country increased globally, also comes from the OBC community," he said.

Shah said that before the Modi government, there was no scheme in the country for communities such as blacksmiths, tailors, carpenters and boat-makers, but Prime Minister Modi "spent Rs 13,000 crore and connected them with skill development and self-employment schemes".

"The Congress government did not implement the Mandal Commission report. During a discussion in Parliament on the reservation, Rahul baba's father Rajiv Gandhi spoke against it for two-and-a-half hours," he claimed.

Shah said that if people had

voted for Congress in the previous Lok Sabha elections, Kota would have become a stronghold of PFI.

"People voted for Modi, he has finished PFI and put them (PFI people) behind bars. Now these people say they will remove the ban on PFI".

"Do you think PFI should be banned or not?" the home minister said.

Urging people to vote for the BJP candidate, Shah said, "Press the button of the lotus symbol on the EVM so hard that electric shocks are felt in Italy."

Shah was addressing an election rally in support of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, the BJP's candidate and sitting MP from the Kota Lok Sabha seat.

He said that on one side is Modi who became a world leader due to his hard work and patriotism, while on the other side is "Rahul Baba" who came from dynasty politics.

BJP-ruled Centre a fascist, racist, oppressive govt: Priyanka

PNS ■ THRISSUR/PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday attacked the BJP-ruled Centre, accusing it of being a "racist, fascist, and oppressive" government that was "haughtily" speaking of changing the Indian Constitution that was "written with the blood of freedom fighters".

The Congress leader also charged the BJP-led administration with working for the benefit of the Prime Minister's "monopolist friends", "protecting" rapists and oppressors of women, "extorting" businesses through the electoral bonds, "silencing" dissenting voices by using government agencies, and "bullying" the judiciary.

Gandhi also attacked Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, alleging that he was "compromised" as he only



"attacks and criticises" the Congress and Rahul Gandhi and not the BJP.

The Congress leader participated in poll rallies in the Chalakudy, Pathanamthitta and Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha constituencies to campaign for the party candidates contesting from those seats.

She also held a massive road show in Thiruvananthapuram along with Congress leader Shashi Tharoor.

Earlier in the day, speaking

at a location in the Chalakudy LS seat, Gandhi attacked the BJP-ruled Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on various issues.

She alleged that elected governments were being bought and sold at the will of the PM and people were being fed "false figures" about the economy when the common citizen was struggling to support his family amidst the rising prices of basic commodities.

"Standing here, ten years into the rule of a racist, fascist, and oppressive government, I have no hesitation in saying to you that we are, at this moment in our nation's history, standing in the eye of such a storm. A storm that is wreaking havoc on the soul of India," she said.

She said it was time for the people to awaken, as in the Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna "taught us to set aside fear, greed, and ego and embrace the ways of love, compassion, and humility."

BJP's show flopped on opening day, claims Akhilesh

PNS ■ MEERUT

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said that the first phase of polling has changed the atmosphere in the state and BJP's film has flopped on the opening day.

"The wind has changed. It's not only that their film has flopped, but also no one wants to listen to their repeated story. No one wants to give them their vote," Yadav said, addressing an election rally seeking support for the SP and INDIA bloc candidate Sunita Verma.

He called Meerut "a land of revolutionaries" and urged the people to help the country get "freedom from the BJP".

The first phase of polling was held in eight Lok Sabha constituencies in the western region of the state on Friday.

Taking a dig at Modi's guarantees, the SP president termed them a new fraud against the public.

"The new guarantees are fraud, and everyone should be wary of them. It is not a guarantee but 'ghanti'. We believe in the big guarantee of the Constitution given by

Ambedkar. We want that guarantee which gives us honour, jobs, reservation," he said.

Yadav said the "guarantees" made by the BJP in its manifesto, including its promise of doubling farmers' income and two crore jobs, were nothing but empty rhetoric.

He said that this election is for saving the Constitution and democracy.

Yadav accused the BJP of being the epicentre of corruption and said that the party doesn't want to talk about electoral bonds, through which, he alleged, it extorted money leveraging the powers of the ED, CBI and Income Tax office.

"We think of the future but BJP does negative politics. I appeal to all to keep a strict eye on the booths and finish its game.

"The people from the BJP have come here after ten years. Must we not hold it to account for all these years? The farmers are dejected. They were forced to go through a lot of problems. They agitated in Delhi. And subsequently the three black laws had to be withdrawn," he said.

Modi's speeches project him as PM of BJP: Sharad Pawar

PNS ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

The prime minister belongs to the country and has the responsibility to lead the nation but Narendra Modi's speeches suggest he is "BJP's PM" and not India, claimed NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Saturday.

PM Modi should tell the people what he and his party will do for the country instead of attacking the oppo-

sition, said the 83-year-old NCP founder at a campaign rally in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

Pawar was here to canvass for opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) candidates Chandrakant Khaire, who is contesting from the Aurangabad Lok Sabha constituency on a Sena (UBT) ticket, and Congress' Kalyan Kale from Jalna.

The central Maharashtra con-

stituencies, located in the state's Marathwada region, will go to polls in the fourth phase on May 13.

Pawar said, "I was listening to Narendra Modi's speech before I came here (Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar). The prime minister belongs to the entire country. If we listen to Modi's speeches, it seems he is the prime minister of BJP and not the country."

The NCP (SP) chief said PM Modi

and BJP should tell the people what they will do for the country. "But sometimes they criticise Nehru (country's first PM Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru), sometimes Rahul Gandhi and also me at times," he said.

Nehru spent over ten years of his life in jail fighting against the British. He encouraged science, said Pawar.

Incidentally, PM Modi on Saturday held rallies in Nanded and Parbhani constituencies in the state and

attacked the opposition, particularly the Congress.

According to a recent report by the International Labour Organisation, 87 of 100 students coming out of college are unemployed in India, claimed Pawar. Speaking about the Marathwada, Pawar said, "There is a severe drought in the region as well as in other parts of the state. But the Centre and state government have no time to address this situation."

Mumbai woman files suit claiming Gorakhpur BJP MP Ravi Kishan is her father

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A 25-year-old woman on Saturday filed a civil suit in a Mumbai court against BJP's Gorakhpur MP Ravi Kishan claiming he is her biological father and sought a DNA test.

Shinova, in the suit, urged the court to declare she is the biological daughter of actor-politician Kishan born out of his relationship with Aparna Soni.

The woman has sought permanent injunction restraining Kishan from, in any manner, refusing to accept her as his biological daughter.

She has also moved a writ petition before Bombay High Court for quashing of an FIR registered against Soni and others in Uttar Pradesh after she made it public that Kishan was her biological father.

The case was registered in UP capital Lucknow under IPC sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 195 (giving or fabricating false evidence)



386 (extortion), 504 (intentional insult) on the complaint of Kishan's wife Priti Shukla three days ago.

Shinova's writ petition filed through advocates Ashok Sarogi and Jay Yadav stated that the FIR has been registered in Lucknow despite nothing happening there and despite the petitioner as well as Shukla and Kishan being residents of Mumbai.

Her civil suit in Dindoshi court in Malad said Soni came across various people belonging to the film fraternity, including Ravi Kishan, in her capacity as a journalist.

As per the plea, Soni and Kishan entered into a relationship and got married in 1991 though they could not reside together for long due to some personal problems.

She was born on October 19, 1998, but by then it came to light that Kishan was already married, the plea claimed.

In view of these facts, it seems Kishan and Soni decided among themselves that their child would call the actor "uncle", the plea said.

At all relevant points of time, the duo took necessary care of her, the woman said in her plea.

Sibal slams Sitharaman's remarks on electoral bonds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Saturday said the BJP is claiming that the electoral bonds scheme was brought for transparency but the Supreme Court had stated the opposite while declaring it "unconstitutional".

Sibal's remarks came after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told a newspaper that the BJP intended to bring back electoral bonds in some form after consultations with all stakeholders if it is elected back to power after the 2024 general elections.

"Nirmala Sitharaman has said in an interview that we will bring back electoral bonds and it was also said in the interview that when electoral bonds were



introduced, they were introduced for the sake of transparency. This is exactly the opposite of what the Supreme Court stated," Sibal said in a press conference here.

The Supreme Court has said that these are not "transparent" and were brought in a "non-

transparent manner", he said. "Now the problem they (BJP) are facing is that they have money for this election but they know that they will need the money when they lose. However, Nirmala ji is saying (they) will win and bring it (electoral bonds

scheme) back," Sibal said.

He also attacked RSS chief Mohan Bhagat over the electoral bonds issue and asked why he is "silent" on the matter.

Sibal also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for defending the electoral bonds, saying it was "wrong" to talk in this manner during polls when the Supreme Court had given its decision.

He also attacked the government for its handling of the economy and alleged that it was importing pulses so that prices do not go up and hamper its poll prospects.

"We are importing so that the prices fall. They are importing pulses so that they do not face loss in the elections," Sibal said.

Indian Navy conducts mega exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy on Saturday said it carried out an extensive exercise along the East Coast as part of efforts to check its preparedness to meet any maritime security challenges.

The exercise 'Poorvi Leher' witnessed participation of ships, submarines, aircraft and special naval forces.

"The Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Lehar on East Coast under the Operational Control of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval

Command," the Navy said.

It said the exercise was aimed at validation of procedures towards assessment of the Indian Navy's preparedness to meet maritime security challenges in the region.

The exercise was conducted in multiple phases, including combat training in a realistic scenario during the tactical phase and successful conduct of various firings during the weapon phase, towards reaffirming the Indian Navy's capability to deliver ordnance on target, it said.

"With operation of aircraft



from diverse locations, a near continuous maritime domain awareness was maintained throughout the Area of operations," the Navy said in a state-

ment.

"In addition to the participation of assets from Eastern Naval Command, the exercise also witnessed participation of assets from IAF, Andaman and Nicobar Command and Coast Guard indicating a very high degree of interoperability amongst the Services," it said. The exercise offered valuable lessons to participating forces operating under realistic conditions, thereby enhancing their readiness to respond effectively to maritime challenges in the region, the Navy added.

EC chalked out seven-phase polls to assist BJP: Mamata

PNS ■ MALDA (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday alleged that the Election Commission of India chalked out seven-phase polls to enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabinet colleagues to carry out extensive campaigning using the nation's resources.

Addressing a public meeting at Gajol in Malda district in support of Maldaha Uttar TMC candidate Prasun Banerjee, a former IPS officer, Mamata Banerjee, the party supremo, said polls have been scheduled from April 19 to June 1 so that Modi and his cabinet colleagues can travel on special planes across the country before every phase to "overwhelm the Opposition".

"On earlier occasions, elections used to be over by May but this year, it has been extended till June 1 to enable Modi to visit various places on military planes, while we are made to arrange for our own transport, including helicopters, which are also being booked by BJP leaders so that we get little space," she alleged.

"People are greatly inconvenienced by the scorching heat but Modi is unperturbed as they (BJP leaders) are campaigning in VVIP comfort

with all facilities at hand," she added.

Banerjee alleged that though the Union council of ministers led by Narendra Modi is a caretaker cabinet after the announcement of elections and the EC is in charge of running the administrative machinery, the poll body is "toeing the line dictated by Modi and his party colleagues".

Attacking the BJP and Congress MPs from West Bengal, Banerjee alleged that despite being elected from the state in 2019, none of them took up the state's cause regarding the release of MGNREGA funds by the Centre or building houses for the poor under PM Awas Yojana.

"On the other hand, our (TMC) MPs were manhandled and arrested when they went to Delhi in November last year to demand the release of MGNREGA funds," she said. "But what have the Congress and BJP MPs done for the poor? What has (Maldaha Uttar) BJP MP Khagen Murmu done for job card holders of the state?" she questioned.

Banerjee accused the CPI (M) and Congress of bolstering the BJP in the state and urged people not to cast votes for any non-TMC candidate.

INDIA CORNER

About 180 prisoners pass Class 10, 12 board exam



About 180 prisoners lodged in various jails in 80 districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Ghaziabad, Agra and Lucknow, passed the Class 10 and Class 12 board exams, results of which were announced on Saturday. The Uttar Pradesh State Board of High School and

Intermediate Education today announced the board exam results, with the pass percentage for Class 10 at 89.55 and that for Class 12 at 82.60. According to the results, 89 of the 91 prisoners, who appeared for the Class 10 board exams, passed while 87 of the 105 inmates, who gave the Class 12 papers, cleared the exams. Twenty-one prisoners from Ghaziabad appeared in the Class 12 board exams, out of which 17 passed, according to an official release. Similarly, 11 inmates from Bulandshahr jail appeared for the examination and 10 passed. All four prisoners who appeared from Hardoi jail cleared the board exams, it said.

Woman, son booked for assaulting doctor



A woman and her son were booked on Saturday for allegedly assaulting a doctor and staff of a hospital in Dombivli in Thane district, a police official said. As per the complaint of the 38-year-old doctor, accused Sashikala Singh and her son Raj Suryaprakash Singh bit him and his colleagues, hit him and

used foul language on Friday night, the official said. "The woman had come complaining of abdomen pain and was given an injection and asked to go home. However, the pain recurred, by which time her son came to the hospital and started yelling at the staff," he said. "Alleging she was not being taken care of, the man picked up a fight, and the mother-son duo assaulted them. They were booked under IPC and the Maharashtra Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage or Loss to Property) Act," he said.

Siblings found dead in house, father 'missing'



A nine-year-old girl and her teenage brother were found dead on Saturday and their mother was found injured in their house in East Delhi while their father is "missing", police said. According to police, they received a call at 2 pm about Shyam (42), a resident of Shashi Garden in Pandav Nagar, who is missing and whose house

had been locked since Friday. A police team immediately reached the spot and found the house locked from the outside. Upon entering, they found the siblings, a 15-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl, dead and their mother was lying unconscious in a room, a police officer said. The victims were rushed to a hospital where the doctors declared the children dead on arrival. While the woman is undergoing treatment, he said. It is suspected that Shyam killed his children, attacked his wife and fled from the spot, another police official said. Police teams have been made to nab Shyam, the officer said.

FOR MANUFACTURING, SERVICES SECTORS

Will make India attractive destination: Sitharaman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the Centre has tailored policies to make India an attractive destination for manufacturing and services, and the aim was to produce not just for the domestic market but for exports as well.

She was responding to a query on American tech billionaire Elon Musk postponing his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Policies have been made to attract investments. We want manufacturers and investors to come and produce not just for India but also for exports. We will try to attract manufacturers and investors through policies," she told reporters.

Tesla CEO Musk on Saturday said his visit to India has been delayed due to the company's heavy obligations.

"When big companies show



"Policies have been made to attract investments. We want manufacturers and investors to come and produce not just for India but also for exports. We will try to attract manufacturers and investors through policies," she told reporters.

interest to come to India, we will do everything to make it attractive for them to come and invest. In that process, if there is anything to discuss, we will certainly discuss. But whatever we have done, we have done

it through policy," Sitharaman added.

Asserting the Union government's approach has helped especially after China plus one started being a concern for many industry experts, she

said policies have been tailored in such a way so as to make India an attractive destination for manufacturing and for services.

Speaking about inflation, she said it never crossed the tolerance band, except for one month, under the Narendra Modi government, whereas before that (pre-2014) the economy was in a bad shape and inflation was in double digits.

At that time (pre 2014) nobody had any expectations from the country. After much hard work, we have emerged as the world's fifth largest economy and are confidently saying we will be third in the next two to two-and-half years," the Union minister said.

On employment, Sitharaman said there was lack of complete data from both the formal and informal sectors, but asserted initiatives of the Centre have ensured jobs to lakhs.

EPFO adds 15.48 lakh net members

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body EPFO on Saturday said it added 15.48 lakh members on a net basis in February 2024.

Around 7.78 lakh members enrolled for the first time with the EPFO in February 2024, a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, a noticeable aspect of Employees' Provident Fund Organization's payroll data is the dominance of the 18-25 age group, constituting a significant 56.36 per cent of the total new members added in February 2024. The data indicates the majority of individuals joining the organized workforce are youth, primarily first-time job seekers, the labour ministry stated.

The payroll data highlights that approximately 11.78 lakh members exited and subsequently rejoined EPFO.

These members switched their jobs and re-joined the

establishments covered under the ambit of EPFO and opted to transfer their accumulations instead of applying for final settlement thus, safeguarding long-term financial well-being and extending their social security protection.

Gender-wise analysis of payroll data unveils that out of 7.78 lakh new members,

around 2.05 lakh are new female members. Also, the net female member addition during the month stood at around 3.08 lakh.

The female member

addition is indicative of a broader shift towards a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

Month-on-month comparison of industry-wise data displays growth in the members working in establishments engaged in manufacturing, marketing servicing & usage of computers, companies/societies/assc/clubs /troupes for performances, road motor transport, automobile servicing, textiles etc.



'Gems, jeweller exports dip to Rs 2.65 lakh cr'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gems and jewellery exports declined by 12.17 per cent to Rs 2,65,187.95 crore (USD 32,022.08 million) during 2023-24, compared to the previous financial year due to high interest rates in the US and slow recovery in China, Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) data showed.

Gems and jewellery exports in FY23 stood at Rs 3,01,925.97 crore (US\$ 37,646.17 million), according to GJEPC data.

"The last financial year was very challenging for all product categories. This was mainly due to slowdown in the US,

India's biggest export market in the segment, due to high interest rates. Also, slow recovery in China post Covid-19," GJEPC chairman Vipul Shah said.

Meanwhile, the overall exports of Cut and Polished diamonds declined by 25.23 per cent during FY24 to Rs 1,32,128.29 crores (US\$ 15,966.47 million) compared to Rs 1,76,716.06 crores (US\$ 22,046.9 million) for the same period of previous year.

Provisional gross export of Polished Lab Grown Diamonds dipped by 13.79 per cent Rs 11,611.25 crores (US\$ 1,402.3 million) in FY24 compared to Rs 13,468.32 crore (US\$ 1,680.22 million) of FY23.



India visit delayed due to Tesla obligations: Musk Says looking forward to coming later this yr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

American tech billionaire Elon Musk on Saturday said his proposed visit to India has been postponed due to "very heavy Tesla obligations".

The electric carmaker Tesla CEO -- who was expected to be in India on April 21 and 22 and scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- wrote on X that he is looking forward to coming to India later this year.

"Unfortunately, very heavy Tesla obligations require that the visit to India be delayed, but I do very much look forward to visiting later this year," Musk wrote on X in response to a post, which stated that his India visit planned for April 21-22 has been postponed as the reason could be that he



needs to attend Tesla's earnings call on April 23.

Earlier this month, he had confirmed his visit to India with a post on X saying, "Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister @NarendraModi in India".

In June last year, Musk met with Modi during the latter's US visit and stated that he

"Unfortunately, very heavy Tesla obligations require that the visit to India be delayed, but I do very much look forward to visiting later this year," Musk wrote on X in response to a post, which stated that his India visit planned for April 21-22 has been postponed as the reason could be that he needs to attend Tesla's earnings call on April 23.

planned to visit India in 2024 while expressing confidence that Tesla would enter the

Indian market soon.

His proposed visit had raised expectations that he would announce plans for electric car maker Tesla to set up shop in the country, along with his satcom venture Starlink.

It was also expected that Musk would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments for the same that could be to the tune of billions of dollars and the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest.

Not just electric cars, he is also eyeing the Indian market for his satellite internet business Starlink, for which regulatory approvals are awaited.

Musk had in the past called for import duty reduction in India for it to be able to sell Tesla cars in the country.

India growing when world is in stress: CII president-designate

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Sanjiv Puri, president-designate of leading industry body CII, said that India is growing when the world is going through a phase of stress.

Speaking at an event here on Friday night, Puri, also the chairman and managing director of ITC Limited, said that the present juncture is an interesting moment.

"CII has a rich legacy built over decades. We will certainly be looking forward to contributing to the growth of the economy and industry", Puri said.



He said "This is also an interesting moment because this is India's moment. There has been numerous policy interventions made internally, and the global factors which give us the tailwinds. The country is growing at a time when the world is at stress."

Puri said that there are lots of opportunities in India which has a huge talent pool. "The world is looking at us so far as supply chain and digital transformation are concerned. India also has the advantage of the demographic dividend", he added. He said big opportunities lay both in services and manufacturing. "The country needs to harness these opportunities. Reforms agenda to accelerate and enterprises need to play competitiveness", Puri said.

Puri stressed the need for an inclusive and sustainable growth which is important to create livelihoods.

TRAVEL BETWEEN SOUTHEAST ASIA & MIDDLE EAST

'India becoming a convenient hub'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

India is slowly becoming a convenient hub for travel between Southeast Asia and the Middle East as airlines prefer to transfer people by connecting through Indian cities, a top industry official said.

There is huge growth in India and many domestic routes are used by airlines for connectivity. V Sumantran, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd (IndiGo Airlines) said here on Saturday.

Delivering his address at the 65th Institute Day of the Indian Institute of Technology,



Madras, he said that IndiGo Airlines started off as a low-cost airline in 2006 and has made the largest single order in the aviation industry by ordering 500 aircrafts in France.

"India needed an airline that will provide affordable

travel for many of us and the net result we can see. Even now we see India really moving forward with a lot more speed on infrastructure development. We have about 140 operating airports now and that would become 220 by 2030. We are seeing a huge increase in regional travel," Sumantran, an IIT-Madras alumni, said.

IndiGo is a very young airline by global airline standards. But the entire platform of IndiGo has been affordable fares, courteous service, on-time performance, and a "very well networked" route system which India needed, he said.

MONEY MATTERS

Premier Energies files IPO papers with Sebi



Solar cell company Premier Energies Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The Hyderabad-based company's IPO is a combination of a fresh

issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 2.82 crore shares by a promoter and investors, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) made public on Saturday. Under the OFS component, South Asia Growth Fund II Holdings LLC will divest 2.38 crore equity shares, South Asia EBT Trust will divest 1.53 lakh equity shares, and promoter Chiranjeev Singh Saluja will sell 42 lakh equity shares. The company may consider a pre-IPO placement aggregating up to Rs 300 crore. If such placement is undertaken, the fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh issue of Rs 1,168 crore will be used for investing in subsidiary Premier Energies Global Environment Private Ltd, to partially finance the establishment of a 4GW solar PV TOPCon (tunnel oxide passivated contact) cell and 4GW solar PV TOPCon module manufacturing facility in Hyderabad, and the remainder will be allocated towards general corporate purposes.

BFW launches new manufacturing facility in TN



Manufacturer of machine tools and special machines Bharat Fritz Werner (BFW) Ltd has inaugurated its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu set up at an outlay of Rs 200 crore, the company said on Saturday.

Bharat Fritz Werner Ltd, a flagship company of Kothari Group, would be able to produce 10,000 units of CNC machines annually at the factory located at Devaganapalli, Hosur. "We aim to establish a facility of global standards for scale and efficiency. I am confident that this facility will aid us in furthering our aspiration of participating in the growth of manufacturing," BFW Chairman Arun Kothari said in a company statement. The facility has two assembly halls spanning 20,000 square meters each at the facility. The overall footprint of 54 acres of the land allows for setting up the Vendor ecosystem in the future. Several environmentally friendly measures have been taken up at the unit to reduce carbon footprint, it said. BFW Managing Director Ravi Raghavan said, "Challenges, disruptions, and innovation have marked BFW's journey over the past 63 years. To fulfill its purpose of enabling progress of manufacturing, BFW has embraced the LEAP initiative -- Leadership through Ethical Practices, Agile Processes, and Partnerships."

Zomato gets Rs 11.82 cr tax demand notice



Online food delivery platform Zomato has received a tax demand and penalty order of Rs 11.82 crore related to GST on export services provided to its subsidiaries located outside India from July 2017 to March 2021. The order was passed by the Additional Commissioner, Central

Goods and Services Tax, Gurugram, raising the GST demand of Rs 5,90,94,889, with applicable interest (not quantified) and penalty of Rs 5,90,94,889. "We believe that we have a strong case on merits, and the company will be filing an appeal against the order before the appropriate authority," Zomato stated in a regulatory filing late evening on Friday. It informed that the demand order has been received, "confirming demand of GST on export services provided by the company to its subsidiaries located outside India during the period July 2017 to March 2021 by upholding that such services do not fulfil the conditions for the supply to qualify as export of service under GST". The company, in its response to the show cause notice, had clarified on the allegations, along with supporting documents and judicial precedents, which appears not to have been appreciated by the authorities while passing the order," it added.

ANOTHER BAILOUT BID

Cash-strapped Pak makes formal request to IMF

PNS ■ WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has made a formal request to IMF for seeking the next bailout package in the range of US\$ 6 to US\$ 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing, a media report said on Saturday.

Cash-strapped Pakistan also requested to dispatch the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review mission next month to firm up details of the next bailout package for three years under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

However, the exact size and timeframe of the new package will only be determined after evolving consensus on the major contours of the next programme in May 2024, Geo News reported from Washington.

A high-level Pakistani delegation led by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is currently visiting Washington to attend the annual spring meetings of the IMF/World Bank. Although Pakistani authorities are pitching a rosy picture



ture of the economy, the IMF in its latest Regional Economic Outlook (REO) released by Middle East and Central Asia (ME and CA) said the cash-strapped country's external buffers deteriorated, mostly reflecting

ongoing debt service, including Eurobond repayments.

"Where inflationary pressures persist, monetary policy should remain tight and follow a data-dependent approach (Egypt, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uzbekistan), while closely monitoring risks of a reversal of inflation developments," it added.

After contracting in 2023, growth in Pakistan is projected to rebound to 2 per cent in 2024, supported by continuing positive base effects in the agriculture and textile sectors.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Aurangzeb told the World Bank in Washington that with the reform agenda fully implemented in key areas, Pakistan's economy has the potential to grow to US\$ 3 trillion by 2047.

LIC's total premium grows most among listed peers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) reported a 26.41 per cent increase in the total premium collected in March 2024 to Rs 36,300.62 crore compared to Rs 28,716.23 crore in the same month a year ago.

LIC was followed by SBI Life Insurance Company in premium collection growth at 24.76 per cent. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company reported a 12.58 per cent growth.

Another major insurer HDFC Life Insurance Company, however, reported a decline in premium collection at 20.05 per cent.

As of March 2024, LIC commands a market share of 58.87 per cent based on premium collections, the state-owned insurer said quoting figures released by Life Insurance Council.



Private insurers also experienced a surge in premium collection in March due to a last-minute rush by customers to avail of tax exemptions before the April 1 deadline for non-linked policies, it said.

In March 2024, LIC's Group Yearly Renewable Premium surged by 200.62 per cent, and Group Premium by 47.17 per cent.

For 2023-24, Group Yearly Renewable Premium grew by 140.51 per cent to Rs 2,029.88 crore from Rs 843.99

crore.

According to a report published in February by AUM Capital, LIC still retains the prime choice amongst the general population in new policy generation.

With a range of new Non-Par policies in its pipeline, it seems confident of increasing its market share in the times to come.

HDFC Bank posts Rs 17,257 cr profit

Sets aside Rs 10,900 cr floating provisions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a Rs 17,257.87 crore net profit for January-March on a consolidated basis, over 2 per cent higher than that in the preceding quarter.

Its consolidated net profit for FY24 came at 64,060 crore. On a standalone basis, the country's largest private sector lender reported a net profit of Rs 16,511.85 crore in the January-March quarter against Rs 16,372.54 crore in the October-December quarter.

In July 2023, the bank merged its home loan-focused parent HDFC into itself.

The city-headquartered bank set aside over Rs 10,900 crore in floating provisions towards any setbacks in the future, courtesy Rs 7,340 crore gain on the sale of education loans focused Credila to private equity majors.

HDFC Bank chief financial officer Srinivasan Vaidyanathan told reporters that floating provisions are created during benign times



like the current phase, and stressed that it is not done in anticipation of any event.

The bank, which is among the first lenders to announce the numbers for the quarter, reported that the core net interest income grew to Rs 29,080 crore for the reporting quarter, while the other income grew to Rs 18,170 crore.

On the net interest margin (NIM), wherein it had to face investors' concerns earlier, it reported a 0.04 per cent improvement to 3.44 per cent for the reporting quarter.

Vaidyanathan declined to share any outlook on it but said that the number is influenced

by the composition of the loan book and the cost it pays for the deposits, and it used to be 4-4.4 per cent in the past for the bank.

The bank, which reported an 18.4 per cent deposit growth on a normalized basis for FY24, will not depend on rates as an incentive to draw liabilities, Vaidyanathan said, adding that attracting retail money is the priority for it.

It reported a loan growth of over 17 per cent during the fiscal year gone by on a normalised basis, accounting for the loans which came in after the merger with HDFC Ltd, Vaidyanathan said, declining to give any outlook.

RUPALI DEAN absorbs an enticing feast at Burma Burma on the occasion of a festival that cultivates the spirit of togetherness and connection

CELEBRATE BURMA'S THINGYAN FESTIVAL OF HARVEST

At the core of the Thingyan Festival celebrations at Burma Burma resides the "Village Set", a harmonious dining experience for two that unites individuals through a delightful assortment of authentic Burmese delicacies presented artfully on a flat, woven tray, cultivating a spirit of togetherness and connection amongst guests. For aficionados of Burmese cuisine, an enticing dining celebration awaits from April 11 to May 19, with a curated menu celebrating Thingyan — the harvest festival; a cultural jubilation steeped in tradition, epitomizing renewal and transformation through symbolic water splashing. Extending well beyond Burma's realms, this festivity harmonizes with New Year and harvest revelries across Asia. The native Burmese *Padauk* flower, blossoming during this auspicious occasion, adorns the landscape, mirroring



the festival's infectious spirit. Experience a culinary voyage in Yangon this season, where diners are enveloped in a celebration of flavours through a specially-crafted menu that highlights the diverse and rich tapestry of Burmese cuisine. Groups of loved ones come together to enjoy an array of small plates bursting with authentic tastes, complemented by sweet indulgences that leave a lingering desire for another visit. Immerse yourself in an array of traditional Burmese home-style dishes and invigorating beverages exclusive to this limited-time offering at Burma Burma, available not only in Delhi NCR but also in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad. My dining experience was truly remarkable. Each sip of Twilight, a vibrant blend of mango puree, coconut, Yakult, and fizz, was a delightful prelude to the Plum Sour, a refreshing mix of plum puree, lime, ginger ale, and black grass jelly that tingled my taste buds. El Dragon, with its exotic mix of dragon fruit, coconut water, litchi water, and elderflower syrup, was a light and refreshing choice. Exploring Yangon's culinary scene, the Sweet Lime & Shallot Salad intrigued with its tangy mix. Each bite evoked market flavours, setting the tone for the



FAST FACTS

Enjoy festive menus across multiple locations in Delhi NCR (DLF Cyber Hub-Gurgaon, DLF Mall of India Noida and Select City Walk, from April 11 to May 19 2024).

(The author, an acclaimed lifestyle and travel writer, has been awarded the Best Food Writer in the country by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism)



showcasing the rich flavours of Burmese produce. The Roselle & Mushroom Stir Fry, a Chin tribe specialty, featured sour roselle leaves and mushrooms stir-fried with garlic, bird's eye chili, and turmeric, offering a tangy twist typical of Burmese cuisine. Wrapping up my meal was the Banana Sanwin Makin, a traditional semolina cake with banana, strawberry, coconut cream, and poppy seeds — a sweet conclusion. To top it off, the Lemon Poppy Seed Ice Cream, with zesty lemon and black poppy seeds, and the complimentary *Mont Lone Yay Paw*, a festive treat of glutinous rice flour dumplings filled with palm jaggery and coconut, added a perfect finishing touch to my culinary journey. And Musk, a fragrant blend of muskmelon, honey, lavender white tea cold brew, and poppy seeds, was a perfect finale to my meal. The culinary journey beautifully intertwined Burmese traditions with the diversity of Asian flavours, making the Thingyan celebration a memorable experience filled with joy, camaraderie, and delectable dishes.

PF CHANG'S NOW IN GURUGRAM

You may have indulged in chicken lettuce wraps at various Asian eateries, yet the pioneering credit belongs to P.F. Chang's. Established by Paul Flemming and Philip Chiang, the inaugural establishment debuted in 1993 in Scottsdale, Arizona, and has since grown exponentially - boasting over 300 locations worldwide. Now, the Asian dining spot taps the Delhi NCR market with Chang's first outlet opening at DLF Cyberhub in Gurugram

BY **RUPALI DEAN**

What can guests look forward to? 'A joyful experience centered on life, family, and delicious food,' as described by Ramit Mittal, Executive Chairman & Director of Gourmet Investments Pvt Ltd, who brought this renowned Asian dining destination to the country first in Mumbai this year, complete with all its distinctive features, be it in the ambience or the cuisine. As you enter P.F. Chang's, you're greeted by the iconic statue of a horse, symbolizing strength and loyalty. Once inside, you'll be surrounded by the classic red and gold décor, featuring a dragon, katana, and a cherry blossom tree. The open kitchen allows you to witness the chefs skillfully working at the woks, while the lively bar area offers an array of colourful and inviting beverages to explore. Indulge in the culinary delights with their iconic OG Chang's Lettuce Wraps and a tantalizing array of signature dishes like Dynamite Prawns, Chang's Spicy Chicken and Kung Pao Chicken, all paying homage to Cecelia Chiang's culinary legacy. Setting a new standard for Indian diners, P.F. Chang's in India stands out by offering a range of vegetarian and Jain options besides an entire new range of sushi delights, steamed dumplings and entrees. I was particularly impressed by the exquisite flavours of the Asparagus and Peas Dumplings, the boldness of the Singaporean street-style noodles, and the unique twist of the Samba Roll. Noteworthy is the brand's dedication to healthy dining by abstaining from MSG in their dishes. Complete your gastronomic journey with



demonstrated through signature dishes such as the Spicy Kimchi Fried Rice, and Mongolian Tenderloin.

Describing the process akin to a graceful dance rather than mere cooking, the precision and skill involved make it a culinary poetry in motion. Teetotallers should go for the interesting carafes like the Zen Garden Passion Fruit Mojito. However, for those seeking a lift in spirits, the restaurant will be offering an enticing cocktail menu. Featuring a range of classics like Margaritas, and innovative mixes of gin and whiskey, there's a libation to delight every taste bud and complement the Asian cuisine perfectly. Standout options include the likes of Midnight in Shanghai and Japanese Old Fashioned. Mittal highlights that the experience transcends typical Asian dining; it's a hub for memorable celebrations. Whether it's a milestone like a 50th birthday or a simple gathering to honour a friend's career move, the restaurant elevates every occasion with a touch of elegance. Expect golden table mats, specialized chopsticks, and unique candle holders that add a luxurious flair to your dining

FACT BOX

P.F. Chang's, Gurgaon Where? P.F. Chang's, Unit No. 6, Ground Floor, DLF Cyber City, DLF Phase 2, Sector 24, Gurugram
Timings: 12 pm to 1 am
Reservations: +918655894667 or +918655894668



Capo Pizza Opens Cloud Kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram



Capo Pizza, renowned for its commitment to crafting authentic gourmet pizzas with a modern twist, is proud to announce the launch of its cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram. As the demand for high-quality and convenient dining experiences continues to grow, Capo Pizza is poised to deliver the true taste of Italy directly to the doorsteps of pizza enthusiasts across the region. The new cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram mark an exciting milestone for Capo Pizza, further expanding its reach and accessibility to urban professionals, families, and food enthusiasts who appreciate the finest in Italian cuisine. With a focus on premium ingredients, expert craftsmanship, and exceptional customer service, Capo Pizza aims to redefine the pizza delivery experience in the region.

eco-friendly packaging and practices to minimize its environmental footprint and contribute to a healthier planet. "At Capo Pizza, we are passionate about sharing the authentic flavors of Italy with our customers," said [Spokesperson's Name], [Position] at Capo Pizza. "With the launch of our cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram, we are excited to bring our handcrafted pizzas, made with the freshest ingredients and traditional techniques, to even more pizza lovers in the area." Capo Pizza's menu features a diverse selection of pizzas, ranging from classic Margherita to gourmet options like Pesto margherita pizza. Each pizza is carefully crafted by skilled chefs who are dedicated to delivering a gastronomic experience that delights the senses and leaves a lasting impression. In addition to its commitment to quality and authenticity, Capo Pizza is also focused on sustainability, employing

ABOUT CAPO PIZZA Capo Pizza is all about crafting authentic gourmet pizzas with a modern twist. Their cloud kitchens are situated in Delhi and Gurugram, bringing the true taste of Italy directly to pizza enthusiasts' doorsteps. Their menu features a diverse selection of pizzas, from classic Margherita to gourmet options like Pesto Margherita, all carefully crafted by skilled chefs. With a commitment to quality, authenticity, and sustainability, Capo Pizza aims to redefine the pizza delivery experience in Delhi and Gurugram. **Location-** Delhi, Gurugram



Deep, Delicious Dive into Old Delhi Delights

By **PAWAN SONI**



Old Delhi is a foodie paradise, especially in areas like Chandni Chowk and Jama Masjid, where hidden gems await. I have been exploring food walks in the area long before it became popular. During Navratras, my friend Rajesh Tara led us to some vegetarian places, and I blindly followed. When you frequent a place, you tend to stick to your favourites. Each bylane in Old Delhi offers something new; you just need to be open-minded.



Here are some places we tried: **Omi Kachodi Waala:** An old shop claiming almost 70 years of history. Open only on Sundays, the crispy kachodi with delicious *aloo sabji* is a must-try. Priced at ₹15 per kachodi, they offer Aloo and Dal varieties as well.

Lotan ke Choley Kulche: Long queues for its spicy choley served with soft kulcha. Adjust spice levels wisely, as it can be intense. They offer *choley ka paani* at an additional cost of ₹10 per glass, or with butter at ₹20, which adds the required flavour.

Standard Sweets: A proper restaurant serving small *bhatura-sized pooris* with *aloo-choley sabji* mix. Unique for adding a kofta in the sabji, priced at ₹130, it is as delicious a treat, albeit a bit expensive compared to the others.

Ram Swaroop Halwai: Known for *bedmi poori* and *nagori-halwa*, this shop may be popular for pricing but less for taste. Priced at ₹20 for 2 *pooris* or ₹15 for 2 pieces of *nagori-halwa*, the *pooris* might taste a bit off with the burnt oil and the quality is not as good as Shyam Sweets.

Jain Sandwich: Closed on Sundays, this shop serves fruit sandwiches, perfect for the summer with sliced bread loaded with butter, mango chunks, and dry fruits. There are many more shops like *Kuremal ki Kulfi*, *Ashok ki Chaat*, and *Bade Miyan ki Kheer*, among others. These are just the vegetarian options. Email me your favorite places, and I'll include them in the next article, along with some non-vegetarian outlets in the area.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

"Sunshine is delicious,
rain is refreshing, wind
braces us up, snow is
exhilarating; there is really
no such thing as bad
weather, only different
kinds of good weather"
— John Ruskin



Abrupt shifts in weather, as exemplified last week in Delhi swaying from moderate cold conditions one day followed by record-breaking warmth the next, underscore the unpredictability and volatility of regional climates, says ARCHANA JYOTI

INDIA BATTLES VOLATILE AND UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER

The recent forecast by the Indian Meteorological Department predicting above-normal monsoon rainfall brings a glimmer of hope,

particularly for agriculture and water resources. However, beneath this layer of optimism lies a stark reality: erratic weather patterns are wreaking havoc across the nation, presenting formidable challenges.

India's climate has become akin to a rollercoaster ride, with unpredictable twists and turns affecting lives from Uttar Pradesh to Gujarat and Kerala to West Bengal. The abrupt shifts in weather, as exemplified by last week's Delhi's experience of moderate cold conditions one day followed by record-breaking warmth the next, underscore the unpredictability and volatility of regional climates.

Reflecting on her eight decades of life, 80-year-old Rambha Devi confronts a bitter truth: humanity's reckless treatment of Mother Nature is returning to haunt us. "For too long," she laments, "we've exploited the Earth without considering the consequences of our actions. We've depleted natural resources, polluted the air and waterways, and recklessly disrupted delicate ecosystems around the globe."

Now, as Devi observes, nature is fighting back. The once predictable and reliable weather now seems to operate on capricious whims. Extreme heat waves scorch the land one day, only to be followed by torrential rains and floods the next.

Unpredictable storms lash coastlines, leaving devastation in their wake. The rhythm of seasons blurs, leaving farmers like Devi's family uncertain about sowing and reaping times.

Throughout her lifetime, Devi has witnessed the consequences of humanity's disregard for the natural world. Once-vibrant forests were reduced to barren wastelands, rivers choked with pollution, and species pushed to the brink of extinction. Now, as the impacts of climate change intensify, she fears for future generations.

As she gazes upon the world she's known for eight decades, Devi knows the road ahead will be arduous.

These fluctuations not only threaten agricultural patterns but also have profound implications for public health and well-being.

Ramesh Tiwari, a farmer from Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, shares how sudden rain and hail storms destroyed his crops, leaving him struggling to support his family. "I've toiled day and night," he says, "only to see it all washed away in minutes." The state saw as many as 7,020 farmers from 50 districts seeking compensation for the damage till March 2. Similar tales emerge from across the nation.

In Maharashtra, Priya, a resident of a drought-prone Vidarbha village, recounts how scorching heatwaves and heavy rainfall disrupt water access and damage local crops, exacerbating food insecurity.

Similarly, Raju Vashaya, a farmer in Rajasthan, describes the challenges of coping with unpredictable weather, making it difficult to predict crop yields and threatening his family's livelihood.

Further, whether it is Assam in the Northeast or down South Kerala, locals face displacement from floods triggered by heavy rainfall and landslides.

Their stories reflect the widespread devastation and loss in these regions. Meanwhile, along Gujarat's coastline, Sanjay Joshi, a fisherman, expresses concern about the increasing frequency of cyclones and floods, threatening his livelihood and community safety.

Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general of the IMD, explains about the visible trends in extreme weather events.

"Globally, temperatures have risen by about 1.2 degrees Celsius compared to 100 years ago. Over India, the rise has been about 0.6 degrees Celsius. The rise has been more in the northern, central, and eastern parts, and less over peninsular India.

"This temperature rise has an impact on extreme weather events. It's getting hotter not just on the surface, but also in the troposphere, increasing its water-holding capacity. Studies show that with a rise of 1 degree Celsius, moisture-holding capacity increases by about 7 per cent. If the atmosphere can hold more moisture, it will have the capacity to cause more rainfall."



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So, the probability of the occurrence of heavy rainfall has increased. Studies also show an increase in the frequency of heavy rainfall events. These are events when 24-hour cumulative rainfall on a particular day is more than 15 cm. Such events are increasing over the tropical belt as a whole, including in India. This trend is more evident in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, and West Bengal, he says.

The rise in the average global temperature has hit various countries of the world too. Like the United States of America, all European countries, including China, Japan, Indonesia, Canada, and others are reporting now and then extreme heat waves, droughts, wildfires, record rains, and floods. A recent example has been Dubai in UAE which was caught off guard, as heavy rainfall deluged it.

The sixth IPCC report released in August 2021, revealed in detail that in the coming decades, winters will get shorter and summers will get longer. Some places will

experience an increase in the incidents of drought as a result of heat waves and some places will face floods due to heavy rains. India has already felt the impact, with rising temperatures affecting 75% of its districts, with heat wave records breaking every year. "We were expecting these changes possibly after 2025, leading on to 2030. But they are happening now, and are likely to get intense and possibly more frequent in coming years," warns Dr K J Ramesh, former Director General of Meteorology at IMD.

In agricultural regions, these see-sawing weather patterns have started impacting crop cycles, leading to reduced yields, crop failures, and economic losses for farmers. Erratic weather, including unseasonal frosts or heat waves, can disrupt planting and harvesting schedules, affecting food production and livelihoods, says who was at the IMD helm when the country reported several extreme weather events, including Cyclone Fani, the most intense storm over the Bay of Bengal to make landfall on India's east coast since 1999.

To address erratic and extreme weather challenges, proactive measures are needed at both the local and national levels. This includes investing in climate-resilient agriculture practices, improving weather forecasting and early warning systems, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and implementing measures to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events on public health, he suggests. Marginalized communities too are all set to face health and income strains amid climate challenges.

Vaibhav Chaturvedi, a fellow at Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), summarises the looming challenges ahead, stating, "Globally, India is the fifth-most vulnerable country. While the frequency and intensity of extreme events are increasing, we are left with less than a decade to adhere to the Sendai Framework; course correction needs to have a razor-sharp focus on curtailment of the compounded impacts of climate extremes. There is no denying that the climate is changing and it is changing fast."

AN ITALIAN HOLIDAY

Brescia offers a perfect blend of history, natural beauty, and culinary delights, its ancient ruins, the relaxing Lake Garda, or the vineyards of Ca'del Bosco, this little known part of Italy is sure to enchant you, says

PAWAN SONI

We have long known Milan as the fashion capital of the world. The city's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, a luxury shopping complex, is home to many big designer brands. However, Northern Italy offers much more than just Milan's Duomo. Boasting a history dating back to 753 BC and inhabited for over 850,000 years, Italy is a destination known for its museums, cathedrals, churches, and more. On this trip, I ventured to the Brescia province near Milan, an ancestral town less touristy than Milan. In fact, most Italians I spoke with had yet to explore Brescia, which is also part of the Lombardy region. To reach Brescia, I boarded a local train from Milan Centrale railway station. This station is a sight to behold, with its beautiful and elegant architecture rivaling many tourist attractions worldwide. The 70-minute train ride cost just €7.5 and offered a glimpse into local life. Amidst reading, chatting, and enjoying the ride, I hardly noticed any tourists. The view outside was breathtaking, overlooking farms, factories, canals, and the elegant Alps mountains. Nestled in Lombardy, Brescia is the region's second-largest city, often overshadowed by its more famous neighbours. However, this hidden gem has much to offer, including a rich history and picturesque surroundings. It has been a major industrial hub since pre-Roman times. History enthusiasts will be thrilled by Brescia's well-preserved Roman ruins, such as the Capitolium and the Teatro Romano. The Capitolium, a temple dedicated to the Capitoline Triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, stands as a testament to the city's ancient past. The Teatro Romano, an ancient Roman theatre, provides a glimpse into Brescia's theatrical traditions. Capriano del Colle, a small commune known for its wineries, houses the municipal department in Palazzo Bocca, a



building with rich heritage dating back to the late 17th century. I had the pleasure of enjoying a meal, courtesy of the Italian Trade Agency, in this beautiful landmark building. A highlight of visiting Brescia is a trip to Lake Garda, a short drive away. Italy's largest lake, Lake Garda, is renowned for its crystal-clear waters and picturesque towns. Sirmione, with its medieval castle and natural hot springs, is a popular destination for those seeking relaxation. For wine lovers, a visit to Ca'del Bosco is a must. This renowned winery produces Franciacorta sparkling wines using the traditional Champagne method. Visitors can tour the vineyards and cellars and enjoy a tasting of the winery's exquisite wines. The vineyard's beauty rivals that of any tourist destination, with the bottling plant and cellar areas artistically designed. This destination deserves at least half a day of your time and is one of the most beautiful vineyards I have visited. No visit to Brescia is complete without exploring



the iconic Vittoria Alata, or Winged Victory, a stunning marble statue dating back to the Roman era. This masterpiece, depicting the goddess Nike, is a symbol of Brescia's rich history and is housed in the city's Santa Giulia Museum, located in a former monastery with roots tracing back to the 8th century. Just a short distance from Brescia lies the serene beauty of the Iseo Lake area, surrounded by picturesque towns like Iseo and Sarnico. This area offers a peaceful retreat from city life, with leisurely walks along the lake, exploration of charming villages, and savouring of delicious local cuisine. Monte Isola, Italy's largest lake island, is a must-visit, offering stunning views and a tranquil atmosphere. Brescia offers a perfect blend of history, natural beauty, and culinary delights. Whether exploring ancient ruins, relaxing by Lake Garda, or sipping fine wine at Ca'del Bosco, Brescia is sure to enchant you.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

JOYFUL GOAN NOSTALGIA IN A BOUTIQUE SETTING

Once a humble 125-room budget haven, now transformed into a sophisticated 135-room Joie de Vivre by Hyatt, Ronil Goa marks a significant milestone as the first of its kind in India and Southwest Asia, says **RUPALI DEAN**

During a weekend journey to Goa, there is lots to revel in, like vibrant takeovers at popular bars while navigating traffic warnings amidst local insights. Grateful for tranquillity amid burgeoning tourism, the allure of undiscovered venues fuels a persistent fear of missing out. Today's Goa contrasts starkly with the nostalgic reminiscences of the 1990s and early 2000s, as stories of a quieter, untouched era blend with the vibrant, bustling present. Ronil Goa, a Joie de Vivre by Hyatt in Calangute, intriguingly connects these divergent facets of Goa's evolving narrative. At Ronil a cherished gem with a legacy spanning over 35 years, I discovered a captivating fusion of past and present. Tucked away along the Calangute-Baga Road, the resort's unassuming facade belies the vibrant haven that unfolds beyond its doors — two distinct blocks flanking serene pools and an inviting on-site restaurant. My journey began with a warm welcome in true Goan style — a delightful coffee-rum shot that set the stage for the energetic vibe of the resort. Straying from convention, the check-in process eschewed the traditional reception in favour of the lively ambience at Patrão's, the round-the-



clock lobby bar where tantalizing cocktails and local bites awaited. The unique touch came as DJ Maria greeted me with an iPad in hand, ready to customize the property's musical offerings based on my preferences, ensuring a personalized soundtrack for my entire stay.

JOIE DE VIVRE

JdV, short for joie de vivre, epitomizes the essence of simple joy in living. At this property, 'the hub' reigns as the focal point, boasting a vibrant pool, complete with a swim-up bar, cosy cabanas, sunken beds perfect for unwinding with cocktails, and a wood-fired oven for delectable pizzas and poolside barbecues. Ideal for those seeking a dynamic holiday experience, the rooms in this block exude a high-energy ambience. With the pool remaining open until 2 am, spontaneous midnight swims are just a PJ change away, accompanied by a soundtrack that shifts gears



post-10 pm. For a more serene retreat, opt for accommodations in the second block to escape into tranquillity and silence. Here, a peaceful pool awaits, providing a relaxing atmosphere for a leisurely dip until 10 pm. Whether craving lively vibes

or seeking calm repose, JdV offers a tailored experience to suit your holiday preferences. In my Deluxe room, overlooking the tranquility pool, thoughtful design elevates the stay experience to a new level of sophistication. Unveiling smart design touches that exude practical

luxury, a sliding mirror serves as an elegant door to the wardrobe, while textures adorn the walls in lieu of conventional artwork typically found in hotel rooms. A generously sized bathroom mirror accented with a border LED light offer both functionality and style.

FACT BOX

WHERE?

Calangute - Baga Rd, Saunta Vaddo, Goa, Baga, Goa: 403516
TEL: 08326941234

(The author, an acclaimed lifestyle and travel writer, has been awarded the Best Food Writer in the country by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism)



For tea enthusiasts, a selection of Tea Trunk blends awaits, sourced from the locally renowned Goa-based brand that boasts a tea room in Fontainhas. Additionally, a French Press stands ready, showcasing the exclusive Ronil special sunrise and sunset coffee blends. Opening the balcony doors during the day allowed the melodies from outside to mingle with my sanctuary — though as night fell, the desire for tranquillity surfaced, and the music lingering until 1 am required a gradual adjustment.

CHILL ZONE

Indulging in a culinary adventure at the Ronil Bistro led by head chef Karan Kohli quickly became a delightful ritual during my stay. For lunch, the fish curry, rice, kismoor, and tindli pickle effortlessly stole the show, showcasing Chef Kohli's culinary prowess. Come dinnertime, the poolside ambience paired perfectly

with the fresh, pillowy sourdough pizzas and the BBQ a true highlight of the evening. While the house made churros come highly recommended by the team for dessert, I found the ice cream equally captivating. Sourced from Goa's renowned Cream Choc, the pistachio gelato stood out as a refreshing conclusion to lunch and a comforting midnight snack in the quiet of my room. Night owls are in for a treat with the complimentary lager tucked away in the minibar, a perfect companion for those late-night moments of relaxation. The property's bespoke experiences, from bonfires to barbecues, floating breakfasts, and poolside picnics, are meticulously curated to foster unforgettable moments to relish. While the property gleams with modernity, it intertwines a subtle thread of yesteryears, evoking tales of Goa's bygone charm that now linger in whispers. Amidst the staff's offerings for lively bar crawls and exploratory visits to Chapora Fort lies a unique opportunity to embrace the cocoon of nostalgia within Ronil Goa's embrace — a place where cherished memories are reincarnated, fostering an ambience that transcends mere tourist trappings.



PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Israel demonstrated its military dominance over adversary Iran in its apparent precision strikes that hit near military and nuclear targets deep in the heart of the country, meeting little significant challenge from Iran's defences and pro-

viding the world with new insights into both militaries' capabilities. The international community, Israel and Iran all signalled hopes that Friday's airstrikes would end what has been a dangerous 19-day run of strikes and counterstrikes, a highly public test between two deep rivals that had previously stopped short of most direct confronta-

equation," said Charles Lister, a senior fellow and longtime regional researcher at the Washington-based Middle East Institute. Aside from those Iranian proxy forces, "the Israelis have every single advantage on every single military level," Lister said. In Friday's attack, Iranian state television said the country's air defence batteries fired in several provinces following reports of drones. Iranian army commander Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi said crews targeted several flying objects. Lister said it appeared to have been a single mission by a small number of Israeli aircraft. After crossing Syrian airspace, it appears they fired only two or three Blue Sparrow air-to-surface missiles into Iran, most likely from a stand-off position in the airspace of Iran's neighbour Iraq, he said. Iran said its air defences fired at a major air base near Isfahan. Isfahan also is home to sites associated with Iran's nuclear program, including its underground Natanz enrichment site, which has been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks. Israel has not taken responsibility for either the April 1 or Friday strikes.

Restoring coastal habitat boosts wildlife numbers



rally support from powerful regional and international countries, both Arab and Western, to defend against Iran. The US led in helping Israel knock down Iran's missile and drone attack on April 13. Jordan and Gulf countries are believed to have lent varying degrees of assistance, including in sharing information



Animals can respond well to restoration We collated over 5,000 data points from 160 studies of coastal restoration projects around the world. Excitingly, animal populations and communities were remarkably similar to those in comparable undisturbed natural sites.



curlew sandpipers, which are in sharp decline.

Healthy coastal habitats are the gift that keeps on giving. We need them back, so there's a lot of enthusiasm for restoring these habitats. For example, we can plant mangroves, build new shellfish reefs and reduce pollution to help seagrass grow back. But we want to recover more than just the habitats. We want the animals they support too. We need to know if restoration is helping animals.

We analysed restoration projects around the world to assess how animals are benefitting. Compared to degraded sites, restored habitats have much larger and more diverse animal populations. Overall, animal numbers and the types of animals in restored habitats are similar to those in natural habitats. So restoration works. But outcomes for animals vary from project

to project. Not all projects deliver the goods. As a result, resources are wasted and humanity misses out on the huge benefits of healthy coastal habitats.

Animals can respond well to restoration. We collated over 5,000 data points from 160 studies of coastal restoration projects around the world.

Excitingly, animal populations and communities were remarkably similar to those in comparable undisturbed natural sites. For example, restoring seagrass off Adelaide's coast brought back invertebrates, which are food for many fish species. Australian snappers, invertebrate numbers here were comparable to nearby natural seagrass meadows.

Overall, our review found animal populations in restored coastal habitats were 61% larger and 35% more diverse than in unrestored, degraded sites. So restoration produces serious benefits.

Iran said its air defences fired at a major air base near Isfahan. Isfahan also is home to sites associated with Iran's nuclear program, including its underground Natanz enrichment site, which has been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage attacks. Israel has not taken responsibility for either the April 1 or Friday strikes.

tion. The move into open fighting began April 1 with the suspected Israeli killing of Iranian generals at an Iranian diplomatic compound in Syria. That prompted Iran's retaliatory barrage last weekend of more than 300 missiles and drones that the US, Israel and regional and international partners helped bat down without significant damage in Israel. And then came Friday's apparent Israeli strike.

As all sides took stock, regional security experts predicted that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government and the country's allies would emerge encouraged by the Israeli military's superior performance. In response to international appeals, however, both Israel and Iran had appeared to be holding back their full military force throughout the more than two weeks of hostilities, aiming to send messages rather than escalate to a full-scale war. Crucially, experts also cautioned that Iran had not brought into the main battle its greatest military advantage over Israel — Hezbollah and other Iran-allied armed groups in the region. Hezbollah in particular is capable of straining Israel's ability to defend itself, especially in any multifront conflict.

Overall, "the big-picture lesson to take away is that unless Iran does absolutely everything at its disposal all at once, it is just the David, and not the Goliath, in this

The Jewish Institute for National Security of America, a Washington-based centre that promotes Israeli-US security ties, quickly pointed out that Friday's small strike underscored that Israel could do much more damage "should it decide to launch a larger strike against Iran's nuclear facilities."

Iran's barrage last weekend, by contrast, appears to have used up most of its 150 long-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel, more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometres) away, said retired Gen. Frank McKenzie, former commander of the US military's Central Command.

Especially given the distance involved and how easy it is for the US and others to track missile deployments by overhead space sensors and regional radar, "it is hard for Iran to generate a bolt from the blue against Israel," McKenzie said. Israelis, for their part, have "shown that Israel can now hit Iran from its soil with missiles, maybe even drones," said Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran program at the Middle East Institute.

Iran's performance Friday, meanwhile, may have raised doubts about its ability to defend against such an attack, Vatanka said. Iran is about 80 times the size of Israel and thus has much more territory to defend, he noted. Plus, Israel demonstrated that it can

about incoming strikes.

The two weeks of hostilities also provided the biggest showcase yet of the growing ability of Israel to work with Arab nations, its previous enemies, under the framework of US Central Command, which oversees US forces in the Middle East.

The US under the Trump administration moved responsibility for its military coordination with Israel into Central Command, which already hosted US military coordination with Arab countries. The Biden administration has worked to deepen the relationship. But while the exchange of Israeli-Iran strikes revealed more about Iran's military abilities, Lebanon-based Hezbollah and other Iranian-allied armed groups in Iraq and Syria largely appeared to stay on the sidelines.

destroyed swathes of mangrove forests, saltmarshes, seagrass meadows, macroalgae (seaweed) forests and coral and shellfish reefs. We've lost a staggering 85 per cent of shellfish reefs around the world and coral is bleaching globally.

When healthy, these coastal habitats help feed the world by supporting fisheries. They are home to more than 100 species of charismatic marine megafauna, ranging from sharks to dugongs. They sequester carbon, thus helping to slow climate change. The list goes on.

Restored wetlands provide vital habitat for waders like red-necked stilts and

PTI ■ SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

Humans love the coast. But we love it to death, so much so we've destroyed valuable coastal habitat — in the case of some types of habitat, most of it has gone. Pollution, coastal development, climate change and many other human impacts have degraded or

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fossils recovered from Kutch in Gujarat may have belonged to the spine of one of the largest snakes to have ever lived, according to new research from the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee.

From the Panandhro Lignite Mine, researchers discovered 27 "mostly well-preserved" bones forming the snake's spinal column, or vertebrae, with some connections still intact. They said the vertebrae appeared to be from a fully-grown animal.

The snake is estimated to be between roughly 11 and 15 metres long, comparable in size only to the extinct Titanoboa, known to be the longest snake to have ever lived, the researchers said. Owing to its size, it may have been a "slow-moving ambush predator," similar to an anaconda, they said. The findings are published in the journal Scientific Reports.

The researchers have named this newly discovered snake species 'Vasuki Indicus' (V. Indicus) after

the mythical snake round the neck of the Hindu deity Shiva and in reference to its country of discovery, India. V. Indicus is part of the now extinct madtsoidae family, known to have lived across a broad geography, including Africa, Europe and India, they added.

The authors said the snake represented a "distinct lineage" originating in India which then spread via southern Europe to Africa during the Eocene, about 56 to 34 million years ago. The first ancestors and close relatives of the modern mammal species are said to have appeared in the Eocene period.

The authors dated the fossils to the Middle Eocene period, roughly 47 million years ago.

The vertebrae, measuring between 38 and 62 millimetres in length, and between 62 and 111 millimetres in width, suggested V. Indicus to possibly have had a broad, cylindrical body, the researchers said.

They extrapolated the measurements of V. Indicus to be between 10.9 and 15.2 metres in



length. Despite uncertainties in estimates, the researchers said the snake was comparable in size to Titanoboa, the fossils of which were first discovered in the 2000s from present day Colombia.

DUE TO LAND SINKING

'A third of China's urban population at risk'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

About a third of China's urban population is estimated to be at risk due to land subsidence, shows a new finding which researchers said is indicative of a global phenomenon.

China's urban area below the sea level could triple by 2120, potentially affecting 55 to 128 million residents, it found.

Using satellite data, the research team studied 82 cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, with a collective population of nearly 700 million people.

The team, including researchers from the University of East Anglia, UK, found that 45 per cent of the urban land area analysed was sinking, with 16 per cent sink-



ing at the rate of 10 millimetres a year. Hotspots included Beijing and the coastal city of Tianjin, they said.

The study estimated that 270 million urban residents could be affected, with nearly 70 million experiencing rapid subsidence of 10 millimetres a

year or more. The findings are published in the journal 'Science'.

Caused mainly by human activities in cities, land sinking can also reinforce climate change and sea-level rise, thereby specially affecting coastal cities including Tianjin, the findings showed.

Subsidence is considered to be primarily driven by groundwater withdrawal, which lowers the water table, along with geology and weight of buildings.

Upon combining subsidence with sea-level rise in their analysis, the researchers found that China's urban area below the sea level could triple by 2120, potentially affecting 55 to 128 million residents. This could be catastrophic without a strong societal response, they said.

Shanghai, China's biggest city, was found to have subsided up to 3 metres over the past century.

The researchers said that while consistently measuring the sinking of land is important, models predicting subsidence should consider all factors,

including including human activities and climate change.

Using satellite data, the research team studied 82 cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, with a collective population of nearly 700 million people.

Not accounting for land sinking in adaptation and resilience plans now could potentially risk destruction of lives and infrastructure in the coming decades, they pointed out.

Thousands evacuated as volcano spews clouds of ash

PNS ■ MANADO (INDONESIA)

More than 2,100 people living near an erupting volcano on Indonesia's Sulawesi Island were evacuated Friday due to the dangers of spreading ash, falling rocks, hot volcanic clouds and the possibility of a tsunami.

Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation recorded at least three eruptions since Friday afternoon, with the maximum height of the eruption column reaching 1,200 meters (3,900 feet).

An international airport in Manado city, less than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the erupting Mount Ruang, is still temporarily closed as volcanic ash was spewed into the air.

An international airport in Manado city, less than 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the erupting Mount Ruang, is still temporarily closed as volcanic ash was spewed into the air. Satellite imagery from the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency shows the ash has spread to the west, northwest, northeast and southeast, covering Manado and North Minahasa, according to a statement from Indonesia's Transportation Ministry. "We are still monitoring

developments in the eruption of Mount Ruang and coordinating with relevant stakeholders ... to anticipate the necessary actions to ensure flight safety, security and comfort," said Ambar Suryoko, head of the regional airport authority.

More than 11,000 people were told to leave their homes that were located in the affected area. A joint team from the local authorities combed the villages surrounding the volcano and evacuated residents to safer areas by boat.

Officials worry that part of the volcano could collapse into the sea and cause a tsunami, as happened in an eruption there in 1871. Houses, roads and other buildings were covered by gray volcanic ash, and many roofs were broken by debris spewed from the eruption.

Mount Ruang saw at least five large eruptions Wednesday, causing the Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation to issue its highest level of alert. People were ordered to stay at least 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from the 725-meter (2,378-foot) mountain.

The observation from the agency on Friday said white smoke was rising from the main crater with medium to thick intensity. East of the volcano, Tagulandang Island could be at risk if a collapse occurred. Its residents were among those being told to evacuate. Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency said residents would be relocated to Manado, a journey of 6 hours by boat. Indonesia, an archipelago of 270 million people, has 120 active volcanoes. It is prone to volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire," a horseshoe-shaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.