

Act strictly against hospitals involved in illegal transplant

5

SINGING FOR SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI WAS THE 'PINNACLE OF HONOUR'

10

'Varalaxmi is the driving force IN SABARI

P12

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A three-foot leader who serves soda is speaking against the Komatireddy brothers. That fellow has been criticising Rajgopal saying that he is wooing Revanth for a Minister post. The Komatireddy brothers did not enter politics by serving soda in liquor in dora's shed. They entered politics turning blood into sweat. They came up in politics carrying the tricolour. If anyone is eligible for the post of Chief Minister besides me, it is Komatireddy Venkat Reddy.

- A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister P4

DON'T MISS...

People won't trust Naidu's...

Agriculture Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy has asserted that the people of the State would not trust Chandrababu Naidu's promises which he is making to lure voters and predicted that the TDP would face a debacle in the ensuing elections. Talking to the media here on Sunday, Kakani dared Naidu to explain to people what he had done for the farming sector when he was the Chief Minister. A drama was enacted in the name of rain guns with...

-PAGE: 4

'Extreme events of 2023 in...

Multiple regions across the world simultaneously experiencing heat extremes could become an "emerging feature" of a warmer planet, according to a new study. The new research that reviewed the weather and climate of 2023 also said that many of the extreme events experienced last year are consistent with predictions previously made about a warmer world. Putting the events of the warmest year on record in perspective, researchers said that...

-PAGE: 5

'Cost, speed top priority for...

Cost and speed have now become the top priority of the firms engaged in logistics business for the last-mile delivery of goods and growth of the sector, a report has said. According to the Last-Mile Trends Report 2024, earlier the top priority was cost and satisfaction."In last-mile delivery now top priority is cost and speed," it said. The report was unveiled during "The Last Mile Leaders Event"...

-PAGE: 8

You cannot always rely on...

It's high time India's domestic players step up for Royal Challengers Bengaluru this IPL season and reduce the dependence on Virat Kohli, former India pacer Varun Aaron said on Sunday.Kohli has been the standout performer for RCB this IPL season and is the current Orange Cap holder with 361 runs in 7 innings. His strike rate is 147.34, with the highest score being 113 not out.Speaking to Star Sports, Aaron said, "It's just that RCB are not finding the rhythm, the domestic..."

-SPORTS

Jagan's Vizag roadshow draws enthusiastic crowds

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy led a spirited roadshow in Visakhapatnam under the 'Memantha Siddham' initiative, setting the streets ablaze with excitement on Sunday. The event witnessed a surge of enthusiasm as a multitude of supporters congregated to applaud the government's revolutionary welfare measures implemented over the past four-and-a-half years. Guiding a lively procession from Gopalapatnam to NAD Junction, Kancharapalem Mettu, and Railway New Colony, CM Jagan was accompanied by an enthusiastic chorus of supporters and prominent party members, highlighting the resounding call for another term in office. The air resonated with chants of 'Jai Jagan', echoing the collective sentiment of the crowd.

Continued on Page 2



TAKING A LEAF OUT OF JAGAN'S BOOK

Pawan too chants welfare mantra

Promises Rs 4,000 pension for BCs above 50 years of age

PNS ■ NARASAPURAM

Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief has reiterated the alliance's steadfast commitment to advancing development and safeguarding welfare programmes, assuring that existing initiatives would not face cuts if the electorate bestows them with power. Addressing a significant gathering during an election rally on Sunday, he pledged to the fishing community that GO 217 would be revoked and a comprehensive Rs 10 lakh insurance cover would be provided to them. In his address, Kalyan criticised the YSRCP for what he deemed as an ascent driven by ego and financial influence, juxtaposing it against JSP's decade-long journey, marked by grassroots struggles. He attributed the party's resilience over the past decade to unwavering support from the people.

Continued on Page 2



Sajjala downplays Chiru's support to Oppn alliance

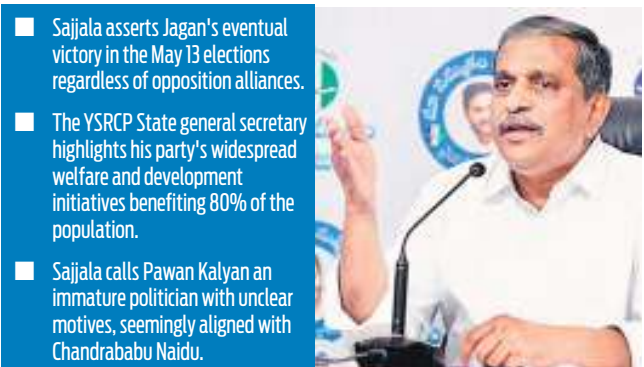
● Terms elections a battle between pro-poor YSRCP & power-hungry Oppn

● Announces that CM Jagan will file his nomination in Pulivendula on April 25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

General secretary of YSRCP, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has brushed aside the Bollywood star Chiranjeevi's endorsement of the TDP-Jana Sena-BJP coalition, saying that regardless of opposition alliances, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will emerge victorious in the upcoming May 13 elections. "Chiranjeevi's backing of the alliance candidates comes as no surprise. However, no matter how many join their ranks, we remain steadfast in our anticipation of victory," stated Sajjala confidently. Speaking at a press conference in Penamaluru on Sunday, Sajjala disclosed that the ruling party leadership is assessing the electoral landscape constituency by constituency. He said that the welfare and developmental initiatives of the YSRCP government have positively impacted 80 per cent of the population. Sajjala said that the TDP had forged alliances with Jana Sena Party and BJP solely to wrest power, devoid of any genuine agenda for the State's progress. He termed the election as a battle between the people-centric YSRCP and power-hungry opposition factions, urging voters to choose between CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's pro-people governance and the alternative presented by Chandrababu and his associates. Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh and party regional coordinator Alla Ayodhya Ramireddy provided a succinct overview of the party's accomplishments in the Penamaluru constituency.

Continued on Page 2



Sajjala asserts Jagan's eventual victory in the May 13 elections regardless of opposition alliances.

The YSRCP State general secretary highlights his party's widespread welfare and development initiatives benefiting 80% of the population.

Sajjala calls Pawan Kalyan an immature politician with unclear motives, seemingly aligned with Chandrababu Naidu.

party regional coordinator Alla Ayodhya Ramireddy provided a succinct overview of the party's accomplishments in the Penamaluru constituency.

Sajjala highlighted that under the YSRCP government, the benefits of welfare and development had reached 80 per cent of the population, prompting Chandrababu's

Filmy dialogues won't fetch votes for PK: Ambati

Irrigation Minister Ambati Rambabu has slammed Jana Sena leader Pawan Kalyan's reliance on cinematic dialogues in political discourse. Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Sunday, the Minister said that the electorate of Andhra Pradesh prioritises good governance, welfare, and development over theatrical rhetoric.

2

Vote transfer hinges on unity among alliance partners: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Failing to justify his actions to the public, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has resorted to theatrical tactics, remarked TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday. Addressing Lok Sabha and Assembly hopefuls after issuing them B-forms at his Undavalli residence, Naidu said that the public's disapproval of CM Jagan is evident as schemes like pension frauds and staged incidents have fallen flat. "We're confronting challenges, but with resolve, we must march forward," Naidu encouraged the party's contenders. Naidu expressed optimism that recipients of the B-forms would triumph in the upcoming polls, stressing the critical 20-day window for campaigning.

Continued on Page 2

Suspect in CM attack case released

-PAGE: 2

Stalwarts pitted against young turks in T-states

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The upcoming elections in the Telugu states will see a fight between political stalwarts and young turks. In the Telangana State the political fight in the coming Lok Sabha elections is 70 verses 54 and in Andhra Pradesh the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are 74 verses 51. The young Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy and the young Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy are fighting with K Chandrasekhar Rao and N Chandrababu Naidu respectively who were known as political Chanakyas in Telugu politics.

The young Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy and the young Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy are fighting with K Chandrasekhar Rao and N Chandrababu Naidu respectively who were known as political Chanakyas in Telugu politics.

Grads can directly pursue PhD now



Students with 4-year bachelor's degrees, 75% marks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Students with four-year undergraduate degrees can now directly appear for NET and pursue PhD, according to University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar. To pursue a PhD with or without a Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), the candidates will require a minimum of 75 per cent marks or equivalent grades in their four-year undergraduate course. So far, a candidate for the National Eligibility Test (NET) needed a master's degree with a

To pursue a PhD with or without a Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), the candidates will require a minimum of 75 per cent marks or equivalent grades in their four-year undergraduate course.

minimum of 55 per cent marks. "The candidates with four-year undergraduate degrees can now

directly pursue PhD and appear for NET. Such candidates are allowed to appear in a subject in which they want to pursue a PhD irrespective of the discipline in which they have obtained the four-year bachelor's degree," Kumar said. "The candidates having passed a four-year or eight-semester bachelor's degree programme should have a minimum of 75 pc marks in aggregate or its equivalent grade on a point scale wherever the grading system is followed," the UGC chairman said.

Continued on Page 2

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The young Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy and the young Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh YS Jagan Mohan Reddy are fighting with K Chandrasekhar Rao and N Chandrababu Naidu respectively who were known as political Chanakyas in Telugu politics.

mer CM KCR sent Revanth Reddy to jail and in Andhra Pradesh former CM Chandrababu's hand was there in sending YS Jagan behind the bars. While both the Chief Ministers of Telugu states are in a strong position the former chief ministers KCR and Chandrababu are in a similar situation. Both are fighting for their political existence with young Chief Ministers.

Continued on Page 2



Monday Mirchi

FINANCE SECRETARY GOES ON LEAVE, RAISES EYEBROWS

Amid a huge pile of debts contracted by the previous government and the half a dozen formidable promises made by the new government in Telangana, Finance Secretary Ramakrishna Rao is undoubtedly on the hot seat of core administration. Yet, he has now proceeded on leave, ostensibly due to health reasons, raising many eyebrows and one obvious question: "Is the state's fiscal position beginning to tell on his health?" His leave comes at a time when the Finance Department is buzzing with hyper-anxious visitors who are after the release of their pending bills and other dues. Bureaucratic circles are discussing in a hush-hush manner whether Ramakrishna Rao's leave is due to covert pressure from politicians or overt pressure from contractors. In any case, the developments in the Finance Department over the next few weeks will be keenly watched, given the committed timeline of implementation of outlay-rich promises made by the Congress government.

MASTER HEALTH CHECKUP FOR BUREAUCRATS?

Very tight financial position, probe after probe, upcoming elections, poll-related EC-induced transfers, heat wave conditions and what not? In Telangana, babus are quite edgy. No wonder, it looks like it is time for a master health checkup for bureaucrats as they simply cannot wish away Bharatiya Janata Party Legislature Party leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy's statement that it was due to the pressure and tension given by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in the Kaleshwaram probe that Vigilance DG Rajiv Ratan suffered stroke and passed away. To avoid giving room for any further discussion on this political masterstroke, the state government is looking at a possible master health check-up camp for bureaucrats. It is a different matter that some bureaucratic circles are questioning the need for one.

POLL THROWS COLD WATER ON VACATION PLANS

"One man's meat is another man's poison", goes a proverb. Similarly, in Telugu, they say: 'Yenki pelli Subbu chavu kochhindi' (meaning, Yenki's marriage resulted in Subbi's death). Some of the bureaucrats in Telangana are facing a like situation. As is their wont,

some of the babus had finalized their family vacation plans, whether abroad or within India, taking advantage of the summer holidays. But the upcoming General Election has thrown cold water on their plans. Polling will be held in Telangana on 13th May. In view of the shortage of staff to help conduct the Lok Sabha elections, the state government has cancelled long-term leaves as well as permissions to go abroad granted previously to some of the bureaucrats. They have been asked to report to the government and be available for election duties. To sugar-coat the bitter pill, the government has attributed its decision to the Election Commission's directives.

CP LIKELY TO BE TRANSFERRED

NTR District Commissioner of Police Kanti Rana Tata is under the lens, with the police nabbing one of the culprits in the stone pelting incident in which Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was recently hurt during his bus yatra in Vijayawada. The police produced the accused before court. Now, the needle of suspicion is pointed towards TDP MLA candidate from Vijayawada central Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao. The Opposition has characterized the incident as 'security breach' and slammed the police for trying to 'frame' UmaMaheswara Rao. A little bird told us that the Election Commission may transfer Rana, following opposition's allegation that the CP had been acting in favour of the ruling party.

SUSPENDED IAS OFFICER GETS POSTING

Suspension can be a brief halt in a bureaucrat's journey; it need not be the end of it. Senior IAS officer Girisha, who had been suspended as Collector of Annamayya District at the behest of the Election Commission following complaints, has got a reprieve. Interestingly, his suspension was revoked after he gave an explanation to the higher authorities concerned. He has now been posted as Managing Director of the AP Housing Corporation Limited in place of K Venkat Rami Reddy, who has proceeded on medical leave for one month. Venkat Rami Reddy has been asked to report to the General Administration Department after his leave ends.

-- Yours truly

Suspect in CM attack case released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vemula Durga Rao, a suspect in the stone attack case on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, was released by Vijayawada police on Saturday night. Rao had been held for over four days before his release, which came after protests by his family and community leaders outside the NTR district police commissioner's office. The release preempted potential legal action, as Rao's family and supporters were prepared to file a habeas corpus petition on Monday. The situation intensified as Rao's family and residents of the Vaddera colony demonstrated, with his wife, Shanti, passionately appealing to see her husband.

Following pressure from the community and mounting public concern, the police released Durga Rao at the Vijayawada North ACP office on Saturday night. Before his release, authorities issued a notice under Section 160 of the CrPC and obtained signatures for possible future inquiries.

Durga Rao recounted his detention experience, revealing that he was initially taken to the Vijayawada CCS station, then transferred to the CI office in Mylavaram, before being returned to the Vijayawada CCS station and ultimately reunited with his family.

Ultimate aim of Left, Cong is to defeat BJP: Narayana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI national secretary Dr K Narayana has said that despite the Left and Congress parties contending in Kerala, they will unite against the BJP. Expressing scepticism regarding the NDA's ability to secure the 400-seat mark in the Lok Sabha elections, Dr Narayana unveiled a song album crafted by the Andhra Pradesh Praja Natya Mandali at the Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Sunday.

During his address to the media, Dr Narayana pointed out the BJP's strategic focus on South India due to anticipated challenges in garnering seats in Northern states during the ongoing general elections. He



predicted a decrease in BJP's seat count even in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and other Northern regions during the Lok Sabha elections.

Dr Narayana criticized the BJP's scheduling of elections in Tamil Nadu's first phase, alleging it was a tactic to limit the

preparation time for the DMK. He expressed hope for the DMK, in alliance with Left parties, to secure more seats in the Lok Sabha elections, commending the collaborative efforts of political parties in previous elections.

Addressing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge to

repatriate Indian idols from abroad, Dr Narayana urged the government to prioritize bringing back individuals like Vijay Malliya and Nirav Modi, accused of fleeing India to evade repayment of substantial bank loans. He stressed the importance of holding such individuals accountable and recovering the embezzled funds, highlighting PM Modi's unfulfilled promise to deposit Rs. 15 lakh into Indian bank accounts before the 2014 elections. Narayana criticised both the TDP and YSRCP, alleging their allegiance to the BJP. He denounced assertions that the YSRCP would benefit from the participation of Congress and Left parties in the state polls.

YSRCP, TDP grapple with internal conflicts in Srikakulam

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

With the countdown to the crucial Assembly elections underway, the political landscape in Srikakulam is fraught with tension as internal conflicts plague both the ruling YSRCP and the Opposition TDP, threatening the stability of both parties.

In constituencies key to the electoral battle, such as Amadalavalasa, Narasannapeta, Tekkali, and Pathapatnam, YSRCP finds itself embroiled in fierce internal battles. Tammineni Sitaram's candidature faces a formidable challenge from Suvvari Gandhi, who has chosen

to contest independently, adding a layer of complexity to the electoral dynamics. The situation worsened as influential leaders, including Chintada Ravi Kumar, Kota Ramana Murthy, and Kota Govinda Rao, withdrew their support, further weakening the party's position.

Meanwhile, YSRCP candidate Dharmana Krishna Das suffered a setback with the defection of key figures like Velama Corporation chairman Panga Bavaji Naidu and former DCCB chairman Dola Jagan Mohan Rao to TDP, undermining Das's electoral prospects.

Stalwarts pitted against young turks in T-states

Continued from page 1

Both KCR and Chandrababu claim that their parties BRS and TDP are national parties, but in the coming elections both parties have confined to their own states. Telangana-based BRS is not contesting in Andhra Pradesh and Andhra-based TDP is not contesting in Telangana.

After the defeat in the recent Telangana Assembly elections, the BRS has become very weak as several senior leaders left the party. In Andhra Pradesh the TDP looked strong in the beginning, but after the alliance with Jana Sena and the BJP, the alliance is facing internal problems in every constituency.

The political future of KCR and Chandrababu and their political parties depends on the outcome of coming elections in their respective states.

In the recent Telangana Assembly elections the then chief minister KCR in the public meetings said if the people defeat the BRS he will take rest in his farm house. After the defeat in the Assembly elections, KCR went to his farm house and is taking rest as he said.

With the crucial Lok Sabha elections, KCR came out from the farm house and is fighting for his and his party's existence. In Andhra Pradesh the former chief minister and TDP suppre-

mo said if his party will not come to power in the Assembly elections he will quit politics. Chandrababu has an alliance with the BJP and maintaining cordial relations with the Congress at the national level. But KCR is maintaining equidistance with the BJP and the Congress and fighting with both parties at State and national level. The latest surveys indicate the victory of young Chief Ministers in their respective states. It appears the decades-long vast political experience of KCR and Chandrababu is not working before aggressive young Chief Ministers in their respective states.

Kesineni Nani, Velampalli, Vasantha to file papers today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Key contenders from both the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP are poised to officially enter the electoral fray by submitting their nomination papers to the Returning Officers (RO) at their respective Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies in the NTR district on April 22, scheduled for Monday. To mark this step, these candidates are gearing up to hold massive rallies.

Among those stepping forward, YSRCP's candidate for the Vijayawada Lok Sabha seat and incumbent MP, Kesineni Srinivas (Nani), along with Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, contesting for the Vijayawada-Central Assembly constituency, and TDP's Vasantha Krishna Prasad, standing for the Mylavaram Assembly constituency, will be formally submitting their nominations on Monday.

Sources within the political circles reveal that Kesineni

Srinivas, alias Nani, will lead a grand procession from the Vinayaka Temple to the district collectorate, situated along the prominent Bandar Road, on April 22. The procession will culminate in Nani filing his nomination papers at 2 pm before the Parliamentary Constituency Election Officer and District Collector, Dr. S. Dilli Rao.

In anticipation of this event, Nani has extended invitations to all MLA candidates contesting within his Parliamentary Constituency, including those from Jaggaiahpet, Nandigama, Mylavaram, Tiruvuru, and the various Vijayawada constituencies, along with party members. Simultaneously, Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, the aspirant for the Vijayawada Central assembly constituency, will kick off his nomination rally from Sivaji Café at Satyanarayanapuram, concluding at the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Office, where he will file his nomination papers before the RO, Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar.

Botsa, Kimidi battle for dominance in Cheepurupalli

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The political arena in Cheepurupalli has reached a boiling point as two stalwart leaders, Botsa Satyanarayana and Kimidi Kala Venkata Rao, both hailing from the Turpu Kapu community, vie for supremacy in the upcoming elections. With their extensive political pedigrees and deep roots in the region, the contest promises to reshape the landscape of Cheepurupalli's governance. Botcha Satyanarayana, a seasoned politician with a history of leadership roles within the Congress party, has held prestigious positions such as PCC president, Lok Sabha MP, and minister for nearly fifteen years. His influence in the region has been formidable, particularly among the Turpu Kapu demographic, which constitutes over 70% of Cheepurupalli's population. In contrast, Kimidi Kala Venkata Rao, affiliated with



The Cheepurupalli Assembly constituency, comprising several key mandals, faces pressing developmental challenges, including issues related to irrigation, electricity, and industrial stagnation.

the TDP, boasts a similarly illustrious career, having served as the TDP State president, Rajya Sabha MP, TTD Chairman, and minister for almost a decade. Despite the historical dominance of the TDP in Cheepurupalli, Botsa Satyanarayana's previous victories in the 2004 and 2009 elections marked a significant

shift in power dynamics, punctuating the erstwhile stronghold of the yellow party. The recent nomination of Kimidi Kala Venkata Rao by the TDP in a bid to reclaim its lost ground, has stirred controversy within the party ranks, particularly among supporters of Kimidi Nagarajuna, who was initially touted as a potential candidate.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Chaturdashi: Apr 22 01:11 AM to Apr 23 03:26 AM

Purnima: Apr 23 03:26 AM to Apr 24 05:18 AM

Nakshatram: Hasta: Apr 21 05:08 PM to Apr 22 07:59 PM

Chitra: Apr 22 07:59 PM to Apr 23 10:32 PM

Rahukalam: 7:32 AM to 9:06 AM

Yamagandam: 10:40 AM to 12:14 PM

Varjyam: 04:50 AM to 06:36 AM

Gulika: 1:48 PM to 3:22 PM

Amritakalam: 01:17 PM to 03:04 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:49 AM to 12:39 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 42°

Humidity: 49%

Sunrise: 5:48 AM

Sunset: 6:24 PM

Updated: April 21, 2024 5:00 PM

Sajjala downplays Chiru's...

Continued from page 1

Sajjala exuded confidence in the electoral prospects of the party's candidate and Housing Minister, Jogi Ramesh, projecting a substantial victory margin in the Penamaluru seat. He also anticipated sweeping success for the ruling party across all seats within the Machilipatnam parliamentary segments. He announced Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's nomination filing scheduled for April 25, along with the imminent release of the party's manifesto within two days.

Jagan's Vizag roadshow...

Continued from page 1

Notable personalities such as KK Raju for Visakhapatnam North, Vasupalli Ganesh Kumar for South, and MVV Sathyanarayanan for East, along with senior party leaders, exuded confidence and determination, reflecting CM Jagan's resolve.

Amid the bustling crowd, a touching moment unfolded as CM Jagan met twin brothers, G Jeevan Kumar and G Tarun Kumar, who, despite facing disabilities, embarked on a tricycle journey to meet him. Their aspirations for higher education and plea for support deeply moved CM Jagan, who warmly welcomed them and assured full government assistance for their academic pursuits, praising their indomitable spirit.

Despite the scorching sun, men, women, and students

lined the streets with unwavering determination, eager to catch a glimpse of their beloved Chief Minister as his bus yatra wound through the city. Particularly notable was the representation of women, demonstrating their steadfast support for CM Jagan's leadership and the inclusive policies of his administration.

Beyond being a mere political spectacle, the roadshow served as a vibrant platform for dialogue between leaders and the public, reaffirming the government's commitment to inclusive governance and people-centric initiatives. As the convoy left its mark on the bustling streets of Visakhapatnam, it laid the groundwork for an upcoming electoral campaign, reigniting the aspirations of the city's residents and emphasising the strength of the ruling party.

Pawan too chants...

Continued from page 1

Moreover, Pawan Kalyan promised to extend a monthly pension of Rs 4,000 to individuals belonging to the Backward Classes aged above 50. "Our alliance is resolute in its pledge to provide Rs 15,000 to every eligible school student, Rs 20,000 to each qualifying farmer, distribute three gas cylinders to every house-

hold free of charge, allocate Rs 15,000 to each woman, and grant free bus travel to all women," he affirmed.

Referring to the legal entanglements of his political adversary, Kalyan contrasted his record, highlighting his clean slate. "With no legal cases against me, I stand here for your collective future. Upon consultation, the BJP has agreed to join forces with us," he disclosed.

Vote transfer hinges...

Continued from page 1

"Our candidates must rally for victory, ensuring the state's prosperous advancement," he emphasized. Emphasising coordination among the TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP—the alliance partners—Naidu highlighted that effective vote transfer hinges on united leadership and

activism across the board. Reflecting on Praja Garjana's response, Naidu asserted that CM Jagan's decline has commenced, adding that TDP candidates were selected based on public and party preferences. Acknowledging the unique circumstances of these elections, Naidu underscored the people's victory as the ultimate goal.

Filmy dialogues won't fetch votes for PK: Ambati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Irrigation Minister Ambati Rambabu has slammed Jana Sena leader Pawan Kalyan's reliance on cinematic dialogues in political discourse.

Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Sunday, the Minister said that the electorate of Andhra Pradesh prioritises good governance, welfare, and development over theatrical rhetoric. Rambabu asserted that Pawan Kalyan's approach is not in tune with

the requirements of effective political leadership.

Highlighting the ongoing political dynamics, the Minister noted the concerted efforts of opposition parties, including Telugu Desam and Jana Sena, aimed at thwarting his electoral success in Sattenapalli. However, he expressed confidence in securing victory through public support. Rambabu dismissed allegations against him, citing the disproven nature of smear campaigns reminiscent of historical propaganda tactics.

Grads can directly pursue...

Continued from page 1

A relaxation of five per cent marks or its equivalent grade may be allowed for those belonging to SC, ST, OBC

(non-creamy layer), differently-abled, economically weaker sections and other categories of candidates as per the decision of the UGC from time to time, he added.

TDP makes five changes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday distributed B-Forms to all his party candidates in 144 Assembly seats and 17 Lok Sabha seats, contesting the upcoming elections. Interestingly Naidu made changes in the candidates in five assembly constituencies out of 144, names for which were announced last month. They are: Undi, Paderu, Madugula, Venkatagiri and Madakasira.

Expectedly, Naidu dropped Manthena Venkata Rama Raju from the Undi assembly constituency and gave the seat to sitting Narasapuram MP Kanumuri Raghu Ramakrishna Raju and the latter will file the nomination on Monday.

The TDP chief promised a prominent position to Rama Raju after the elections and appointed him as the in-charge of the Narasapuram parliamentary constituency, in place of Thota Sita Mahalakshmi who has been taken into the politburo.

At Paderu, Naidu replaced Venkata Ramesh Naidu with Giddi Eshwari, who had been sulking for quite some time and was getting ready to contest as an independent.

At Madugula, the TDP chief gave the party ticket to former minister Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy, who had been sulking for being denied the berth from Pendurthi, which was allotted to Jana Sena as part of the alliance. Bandaru has replaced the originally selected candidate – an NRI Pyla Prasada Rao.

At Venkatagiri, Naidu dropped the originally selected candidate Kurugundla Lakshmi Priya and replaced her with her father, former minister Kurugundla Ramakrishna.

And at Madakasira, Naidu picked up MS Raju, in place of the originally chosen Sunil Kumar, who is said to be lagging in the survey.

Protests over replacement in Madakasira

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Internal strife rocked the TDP on Sunday following the decision to replace the candidate for the Madakasira Assembly constituency in the Sathya Sai district. The party's selection of MS Raj, the leader of the SC Cell, as the nominee for the Madakasira Assembly seat came as a surprise replacement for Dr Sunil.

This abrupt change ignited protests from Sunil's supporters, who demonstrated their discontent by disrespecting a vinyl-sheet portrait of TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, symbolically striking it with slippers. The demonstrators aired their grievances against Naidu, alleging unfair treatment of dedicated leaders who had significantly contributed to the party's advancement across all fronts.

The Madakasira Assembly constituency was one of four where the party opted to shuffle its candidates. This decision was reached after gathering input from party members and considering various factors.



As expected, Naidu substituted Manthena Venkata Rama Raju with Kanumuri Raghu Ramakrishna Raju in the Undi assembly constituency. In Paderu, Venkata Ramesh Naidu was replaced by Giddi Eshwari, who had been dissatisfied for some time.

In Madugula, the ticket was initially given to NRI Pyla Prasada Rao but was later transferred to

former minister Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy, who had expressed discontent after being denied candidacy in Pendurthi, which was allocated to Jana Sena as part of the alliance.

In Venkatagiri, Naidu replaced the initially chosen candidate Kurugundla Lakshmi Priya with her father, former minister Kurugundla Ramakrishna.

Tight surveillance at inter-state, inter-dist checkpoints in AP, TG

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As polling day is approaching, the NTR district administration has tightened surveillance at checkpoints to prevent illegal transportation of money, liquor, drugs, inducements, freebies, and other valuable goods, said Collector Dr S Dilli Rao.

Dilli Rao inspected the checkpoint at the Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada on Sunday. He interacted with the check-post staff and asked about the facilities at the checkpoint. Also, he reviewed the day-to-day activities at the checkpoints.

He said that the district administration is all set to conduct the polling freely and fairly. Every eligible voter should cast their vote without yielding to any kind of temptations from the political parties, he said.

They have heightened surveillance at the inter-State check-posts at Garikapadu, Jonnalagadda, Mutyala, Gandrayi, and Ganginenipalem, besides the inter-district check-posts. Meanwhile, he made it clear



that if anyone violates the Election Commission's (EC) rules, strict action will be taken. Officials of Police, Excise, Special Enforcement, Revenue and other election-related departments, along with the Central forces, have been deployed at the check-posts. Additionally, flying squads and static surveillance teams are working effectively in the district, he explained.

He said they are implementing the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS) more effectively. So far, money, liquor, precious goods, freebies and other valuable goods worth a total of around Rs.6.53 crore have been seized during

vehicle checking at the check-posts. Money to the tune of Rs.3.25 crore, 5,999 litres of liquor worth Rs.30.67 lakh, 1,38,658 grams of drugs worth Rs.7.35 lakh, and eight kg of precious goods worth Rs.2.32 crore were seized, he elaborated.

The Collector added that as many as 1,609 grievances out of a total of 1,635 have been resolved in the district. The remaining complaints will be resolved soon. However, all 634 complaints which came to C-Vigil have been resolved. Also, voter helpline and WhatsApp complaints were resolved soon after they were received, he added.



Grandeur marks 'Teppotsavam'

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Sri Kodandarama Swamy Teppotsavam was held grandly at Sri Ramachandra Pushkarini on Sunday. Special programmes were organized in the temple on this occasion. As a part of this, in the morning, Sri Sita Utsavalu

conducted Snapanam Tirumanjanam. The Utsava Murthies were taken for rounds on a float in Sri Ramachandra Pushkarini held from 7 pm to 8.30 pm. Temple Deputy EO Nagaratna, AEO Parthasarathy, Superintendent Somasekhara, temple priests and a large number of devotees participated.

Vamsi, Yarlagadda intensify campaign

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The battleground of the Gannavaram Assembly constituency in Krishna district has sprung to life ahead of the upcoming elections. The contest is heating up between incumbent MLA, Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan of YSRCP, and the TDP candidate, Yarlagadda Venkata Rao, former chairman of KDCC Bank.

Although the final list of candidates is yet to be announced, both contenders are gearing up to showcase their support through rallies in the constituency.

Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan and TDP's Yarlagadda Venkata Rao have each filed a set of nomination papers before the Returning Officer (RO) and Krishna district joint collector Geethanjali Sharma. They now seek to file a second set of nominations and have applied for permission to organize rallies on April 25. Interestingly, both candidates initially requested the same time slot. However, RO

Both candidates seek permission for nomination rallies on April 25



Despite receiving messages from the RO office advising them to adjust their rally timings, neither candidate has responded thus far. The Returning Officer, Geethanjali Sharma, suggested alternate dates, such as April 23 or April 24, but received no favourable responses.

Geethanjali Sharma has advised them to adjust their rally timings to prevent potential law and order issues.

Sources reveal that Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan intends to hold a large rally in Gannavaram from 8 am to 1 pm on April 25, followed by the filing of nomination papers at the Tahsildar office. Simultaneously, TDP candidate Yarlagadda Venkata Rao has applied for permission to conduct a rally from Ramavarappadu Ring to Gannavaram between 9 am and 2 pm on the same day.

Given the sensitivity of the Gannavaram Assembly constituency, granting permission for both rallies on April 25 could pose law and order challenges, sources suggest. In response, RO Geethanjali Sharma has urged both candidates to revise their rally dates and timings. She has clarified that scheduling conflicting events for two candidates is not feasible.

It's worth noting that both Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi Mohan and Yarlagadda Venkata Rao have already filed one set of nomination papers. However, they plan to mobilise their party members and supporters to demonstrate their strength through large processions, providing morale boosts to their respective parties.

Despite receiving messages from the RO office advising them to adjust their rally timings, neither candidate has responded thus far. The Returning Officer, Geethanjali Sharma, suggested alternate dates, such as April 23 or April 24, but received no favourable responses.

Both candidates insist on their requested timings, citing precedence in applying for permission. However, in light of this deadlock, RO Geethanjali Sharma has declined to grant permission for rallies on April 25. She has warned that conducting rallies without permission will result in stringent actions.

AP's peak power demand hits new high of 13,319 MW

Average daily consumption in April 2023 was 231.657 MU against 242.655 MU in April 2024

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh power utilities have set a new record in peak power demand with 13,319 MW on April 19, 2024. This has surpassed the previous high peak demand of 13,255 MW recorded on March 7. The AP power utilities have successfully met the demand and ensured smooth supply throughout the State. The average daily consumption in April 2023 was 231.657 MU whereas the same is recorded as 242.655 MU so far in this month, said the authorities in a release on Sunday.

The State recorded an all-time high daily consumption of 263.237 MU on June 16, 2023 and a peak demand of 12,900 MW on June 17 2023. The summer is at its peak and the power demand has been continuously rising amid intense heat wave conditions in the summer months of 2024. The usage of air conditioners throughout the day and even at night has become a need for the thermal comfort of consumers in their daily

lives. Also, as the IPL cricket season has started, the electricity consumption of televisions is on the rise. With these rising loads, it is expected to surpass the previous year's high day demand of 263.237 MU.

AP power utilities are proactive in protecting the interests of the electricity consumers and giving high priority to meeting the objective of providing a 24x7 power supply on a sustainable basis and strengthening the power sector.

The utilities have been providing nine hours' day-time free power supply to the agriculture sector apart from providing power at subsidised rates to aqua consumers in the State.

Further, the AP power utilities are taking steps to improve coal supplies to thermal power plants for power generation given the rising demand. AP DISCOMs are taking stringent measures to avoid interruptions in the power supply and are on alert to resolve any power supply issues.



Ashok flags steps for 'Chandanotsavam' event

Trust Board chairman writes to Executive Officer highlighting issues faced last year



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Pusapati Ashok Gajapathiraju, the hereditary trustee and chairman of the Simhachalam Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam Trust Board, has written a letter to the temple's Executive Officer (EO) expressing serious concerns about the arrangements for the upcoming 'Chandanotsavam', the annual festival of Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Simhachalam.

The letter highlighted issues faced during last year's festival and demands accountability. Gajapathiraju questioned why

Gajapathiraju emphasised the temple's autonomy and questioned the Collector's involvement in managing the Devasthanam. He argued that decisions should not be solely made by external authorities.

those responsible for the shortcomings haven't been identified. He pointed to a report submitted by the Joint Collector to the Endowment Department's Principal Secretary that addressed these issues, but enquiries about the delay in taking

ing action.

Gajapathiraju emphasised the temple's autonomy and questioned the Collector's involvement in managing the Devasthanam. He argued that decisions should not be solely made by external authorities. The letter further criticised a lack of communication and transparency. Gajapathiraju alleged he wasn't informed about meetings and decisions involving higher authorities and police officers. He also expressed concern about a review meeting organised by the EO's office, where resolutions required the Collector's approval. Gajapathiraju stressed the importance of safeguarding the temple's reputation and urged immediate action to address the shortcomings. He emphasised the need for collective responsibility to ensure a smooth Chandanotsavam and prevent future issues that could tarnish the temple's image.

Host of Jana Sena, TDP leaders join YSRCP



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Jana Sena Party (JSP) senior leaders representing Visakha South Constituency joined the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Chinnyapalem stay point. Giridhar Gampala, a senior leader of the Janasena Party who contested in the 2019 assembly elections from Visakha South constituency,

joined the YSR Congress Party alongside G. Sreeja and G. Dhanush. Janasena senior leader N. Srinivas has also joined the YSR Congress Party.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders joined the YSRCP in the presence of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Chinnyapalem stay point.

Executive Trustee of the Shankar Foundation Krishna Kumar, Former TDP District

President and former UDA Director D. Bharti, and TDP Youth Wing leaders Charan, Sandeep, Kiranmayi and Dasu officially joined the YSR Congress Party.

Chairman of 'The Federation of AP&TS FCRA NGO & Educationist Alivara Raju Roy' from Bhemili, a member of the Jana Sena Party, joined YSRCP. He met Chief Minister Y.S Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Chinnyapalem stay point.

Bronze statue of King Anavema Reddy installed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The bronze statue of King Anavema Reddy installed in Kondaveedu Fort/ Nagara Vanam on the Kondaveedu hill is attracting the public, including tourists.

The convener of the Kondaveedu Fort Development Committee, Kalli Siva Reddy, said that a 13-foot bronze statue of Anavema Reddy, one of the



most famous Reddy kings of Kondaveedu kingdom, has been erected by KFDC spending Rs 12 lakh on the Kondaveedu hilltop at the junction of four roads in the fort. Earlier, there was a nine-foot-high statue of Anavema Reddy made of fibre material, but it got cracked and was replaced permanently with this bronze statue. The valiant Anavema who ruled from

1364 to 1386 AD never faced defeat, he added.

The statue is erected on a five-foot stone plinth, seven feet on a block, and a 13-foot statue, which means the statue is 25 feet tall, and will impress visitors. He explained that on the three sides of the block, plaques have been erected in Telugu and English, giving details of Anavema Reddy's rule. On the third side, a stele

was carved and affixed to the block, as described in a copper inscription found in Vanapalli village near Anakapalli in East Godavari district, describing how Anavema Reddy conducted the daily royal affairs in his royal court and how this king became Karpura Vasantha Rayalu and how he became a poet and singer, among other things.

Don't waste your vote on YSRCP, appeals Sharmila

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Continuing her attack against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, APCC President YS Sharmila told the voters that voting for the YSRCP amounts to wasting the vote.

Addressing an election meeting here on Sunday, she denied the allegations of YSRCP leaders that she is reading the scripts drafted by the TDP. Many areas in Kurnool are still yearning for drinking water which is reflecting the inept administration of successive governments, she charged.

"YS Rajasehar Reddy wanted to complete the Gundrevula project. If the project was constructed over two lakh acres would get irrigation water and six lakh people in Kurnool district would get drinking water," she said and questioned Jagan Mohan Reddy why he failed to complete the important project.

Jagan Reddy promised to complete the YSR dream project Gundrevula in six months after coming to power, but he left the project to its fate. He also promised to unveil the job calendar every year but did not do so while his assurance of filling 2.25 lakh vacancies remained unfulfilled, she criticized.



The power tariff, the RTC bus fares and prices of liquor were hiked, she charged. "The government is giving welfare scheme benefits with one hand, and at the same time, snatching the same with the other hand by hiking prices of all commodities," she lashed out. She asked the people whether they wanted the Congress party which has assured of granting Special Category State or Jagan Reddy and Chandrababu Naidu who hoodwinked people with hollow promises.

'The government is giving welfare scheme benefits with one hand and snatching the same with the other by hiking the prices of all commodities'

APCC President YS Sharmila made a startling revelation stating that her Chief

Minister Brother YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has lent her money which she has shown in the election affidavit. She said that every brother should give his sister her share in the property but Jagan Reddy did not do the same.

She took strong exception for indulging in character assassination of slain YS Vivekananda Reddy by the YSRCP leaders. "If the Viveka killers had been punished, YS Sunita would not have come to the streets seeking justice," she made it clear.

DM & HOs asked to be prepared to tackle heat wave

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

J Nivas, Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, has instructed all District Medical and Health Officers (DM&HOs) in the State to maintain control rooms in their offices to monitor heatwaves. He also asked them to arrange one room in all health facilities, especially for heatwave-affected people. They should take special care regarding pregnant women, the elderly and children who are more vulnerable to heatwaves, the Commissioner stressed in a press statement on Sunday. He said that all the DM&HOs have been instructed to take heatwave preventive measures as temperatures are rising in AP day by day. Create awareness on the do's and don'ts through local media and make available ORS and IV fluids in all centres, and ice packs in ambulances, he added. "The Government of India conducted meetings with the Chief Secretaries, Health and Forest Departments, of 18 States recently and gave certain instructions to them. The DM&HOs were asked to visit all government and private hospitals for full preparation of heatwave management and fire accidents. They are to conduct mock drills in all hospitals. Drinking water should be made available and cool rooms should be set up at railway stations and bus stands".

Armed police conduct smoke gun & tear gas firing practice

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In view of the forthcoming elections, following the orders of Superintendent of Police Garud Sumit Sunil 'Mob Operation Drill, Lathi Drill, Smoke Gun Firing Drill, Structure Drill, Tear Gas firing practice and Rope party drill for VIP security were conducted for the armed reserve police personnel at the District Police Parade Ground on Sunday to maintain peace and security in the district.

Through mob operation drills, the armed personnel were informed on how to effectively deal with any untoward incidents, how to disperse the crowd during agitations, to quell the rioters who disturb the law & order and attempt to cause destruction and how to bring the situation under control.

The reserve police were also taught how to use stone guards, helmets, lathi, mike,



tear gas weapons and other equipment effectively, when lathi charge, smoke gun, and tear gas firing experiments should be followed in some situations.

As part of the tear gas firing practice, a tear gas shell was also fired on the ground and personnel were given full awareness and understanding of such drills. Similarly, the rope parties, which play a vital

role in the VIP security duty, were divided into 3 layers and well-demonstrated security drills.

The police officers told armed reserve police to be vigilant in election duties and be proficient in handling the situation during any untoward or emergencies. AR Additional SP Ashok Babu, AR DSP Chandra Shekhar and other officials took part in the drill.

Focus on education for India's global leadership: AICTE official

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Dr Buddha Chandrasekhar, Chief Coordinating Officer of the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), has emphasised the critical role of education in propelling India towards global leadership. Dr. Chandrasekhar delivered his remarks at the Bharat Education Excellence Awards ceremony held at Andhra University's YVS Murthy Auditorium on Sunday. The event, organised by Brain O Vision, recognised and celebrated outstanding contributions in education and research made by professors across the country.

Dr Chandrasekhar underscored the importance of professors in shaping a skilled and valuable workforce, a cornerstone of India's ambition to become a global superpower. He highlighted India's long-standing tradition of honoring educators, reflecting the esteemed position teachers hold in society.

Emphasising the dynamic

demands of today's world, Andhra University Vice-Chancellor Prof. P.V.G.D. Prasada Reddy stressed the vital role of skill development in student success. He advocated for prioritising youth development and fostering their potential. Prof. Reddy further noted that the awards bestowed upon educators come with an increased responsibility to continue their exemplary service.

D Ganesh Nagu, CEO of Brain O Vision, announced that over 320 individuals, including teachers, college administrators, placement officers, and researchers from 12 States, were recognised at the ceremony. He emphasised that the awardees were chosen through a student nomination process. The programme also featured addresses by prominent figures including Bhaskar Gandhavadi (Director, Service Now), S. V. Krishna Prasad (CEO, Cito Healthcare), and D. K. R. K. Ravi Prasad (representative of Dhaneakula Institutions).

Cong chooses Janga Gowtham for Amalapuram LS seat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Working president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), Janga Gowtham, has been nominated to contest from the Amalapuram (SC) Lok Sabha Constituency.

The announcement was made by KC Venugopal, general secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), during a press conference held in New Delhi on Sunday. The newly released list includes candidates for key constituencies such as Vijayawada and Machilipatnam. Among those confirmed are Dr P. Parameswara Rao for Srikakulam, Bobbili Srinu for Vizianagaram, Gollu Krishna for Machilipatnam, Valluru Bhargav for Vijayawada, Eda Sudhakar Reddy for Ongole, Jangiti Lakshminarasimha Yadav for Nandyal, Mallikharjun Vajjala for Anantapur, and BA Samdas Shaheen for Hindupur.

'Komatireddy brothers double engine'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy lavished praise on the Komatireddy brothers on Sunday during the rally held to mark the filing of nomination papers by Congress's Bhongir Lok Sabha candidate Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy.

Revanth Reddy said that Komatireddy Venkat Reddy was fully eligible to become the Chief Minister, adding "he is on par with me".

"Venkat is a real fighter. He fought after revolting against his party for the sake of Telangana. Venkat quit his Minister post for the sake of Telangana. He did not run a fake movement for Telangana like (former CM) K Chandrasekhar Rao. Both the Komatireddy brothers convinced the Congress high command to give Telangana State," the Chief Minister recalled.

The Chief Minister said that both the Komatireddy brothers had come up in politics through sheer hard work. Rajgopal worked in Delhi for the sake of Telangana and spent his own money to develop his constituency.

"The Komatireddy brothers are the double engine of the Congress. Three engines will work for Bhongir if Kiran wins," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister assured people that the Gandamalla, Brahmin Vellemla and the SLBC projects would be completed and that the name 'Yadadri' given to the Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple would be changed to 'Yadagirigutta' again.

He reiterated: "I am saying with Yadagiri Laxminarasimha Swamy as witness that the



CM Revanth Reddy addressing Bhongir rally along with Komatireddy brothers

Congress government will waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh before August 15".

Targeting former Bharat Rashtra Samithi Minister G. Jagdish Reddy, the CM said, "A three-foot leader who serves soda is speaking against the Komatireddy brothers. He has been criticising Rajgopal, saying that he is wooing me for the sake of a Minister post. The Komatireddy brothers did not enter politics by serving soda in liquor in dora's shed. They entered politics turning their blood into sweat. They came up in politics carrying the tricolour. If anyone is eligible for the post of Chief Minister besides me, it is Komatireddy Venkat Reddy."

Earlier, Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy, who is the Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency in-charge, praised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and later the Chief Minister hailed the Komatireddy brothers.

Addressing the gathering, Rajgopal said that the

Komatireddy brothers were like an extra shoulder for Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Nobody can stop the Komatireddy brothers should they decide to join Revanth Reddy, he said.

The Congress government was setting right Telangana, which had become debt-riddled during the BRS rule, Rajgopal said. He said that the Komatireddy brothers would win the Bhongir LS seat for the Chief Minister and that ensuring the victory of the Congress candidate Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy was his responsibility.

"We will take the responsibility of ensuring the victory of Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will take care of development," he said.

Rajgopal said that they had won 11 of the 12 seats in the erstwhile Nalgonda district and had just missed the Suryapet Assembly seat. The Congress would win with a bumper majority in Nalgonda and Bhongir, Rajgopal said.

Finance Minister to file nomination today

PNS ■ NANDYALA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy will file his nomination papers on April 22. He is contesting the Assembly from the Dhone constituency for the third time.

The Finance Minister will go to the Election Officer's office in a huge rally and file his nomination at 11 am in Dhone. Before going to the EO's office Buggana Rajendranath Reddy will perform a special pooja in the Shirdi Saibaba temple at Betamcherla village, a release from the Minister's office said here on Sunday.

The Finance Minister has been elected to the Assembly from Dhone constituency twice in succession and he is trying to hit a hat-trick by winning the election third successive time.

Meanwhile, the Finance Minister has been addressing election meetings and carrying out road shows in the Dhone constituency for the last seven days.



ning the election third successive time.

Two teenage boys drown in canal

PNS ■ NARSARAOPET

Two teenage boys drowned in a canal at Tubadu village in Chilakalurpet mandal on Sunday.

Police said that two boys ventured into the canal for a bath. They slipped and drowned.

The bodies were fished out from the canal.

One of the deceased was identified as Sheik Siddiqi (15). Another deceased is yet to be identified. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH in Chilakaluripet for post-mortem.

WORLD EARTH DAY

Visakhapatnam gears up for plastic-free future

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a call to action for a plastic-free Visakhapatnam, GVMC Commissioner M. Saikanth Verma has urged residents to join the fight against pollution this World Earth Day. With the global theme of 'Planet vs. Plastics', the city is gearing up for a greener future through its "Eco Zero Plastic" programmes. "We, the people of Visakhapatnam, must stand together as Earth witnesses," Verma said in a press release. "On World Earth Day, celebrated on April 22nd, let's join hands and make our city a perfect eco-friendly model."

The Commissioner highlighted the harmful effects of single-use plastics, emphasising their negative impact on human health, nature, and the planet. He declared the city government's commitment to



raising awareness and eliminating plastic use through various initiatives. As part of the Eco Vizag development programmes, Verma emphasised

the ongoing "Eco Zero Plastic" efforts. These programmes aim to completely eradicate plastic use from Visakhapatnam.

COMPENSATION TO FARMERS

Tummala asks officials to get ECI permission

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao directed officials to approach the Election Commission of India (ECI) to get permission to release ex-gratia compensation to farmers who lost their crops in unseasonal rains. In a statement issued on Sunday, Tummala said

that officials are collecting the details of farmers who lost their crops to hail and wind. In addition to the already mentioned 2,200

acres, crops on another 920 acres were damaged in Saturday's rains in Rangareddy, Janagam and Nirmal districts, the Minister said. He said that it is known that the government has already appealed for the State Election Commission's approval to release compensation for crops destroyed by hailstorms in March.

He said that considering the problems faced by farmers regarding this, ministers have asked officials to approach the Election Commission once again and request permission for the release of funds and to assess the damage and submit a report.



He said that the government has already appealed for the State Election Commission's approval to release compensation for crops destroyed by hailstorms in March.

Collector flags off awareness rally



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

District Collector Praveen Kumar flagged off a voters' awareness rally here on Sunday.

The motorcycle rally was

taken out to educate voters and create awareness among them on the importance of exercising their franchise.

Praveen Kumar, along with Municipal Commissioner Aditi Singh, flagged off the

bike rally which began at the Collectorate. The rally went via MR Palli Circle and concluded at Lakshmiapuram Circle. A large number of students took part in the bike rally.

INDIA CORNER

‘Meat’ thrown in UP village temple; 4 booked

Four people here have been booked in connection with an incidence of meat being found inside a temple here, Police said on Sunday. Sikanderpur Police Station SHO Dinesh Pathak said a piece of meat was found in the Hanuman temple in Maldah Chatti area on Saturday afternoon. When templegoers spotted the meat, they became infuriated and blocked the Sikandarpur-Belthra highway in protest. The blockade was ended only after police assured the protesters of action against the culprits. Pathak said on the complaint of Amber Pandey, an office bearer of a Hindu right wing group, an FIR under Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code (desecration of a place of worship) was registered against Ram Dayal, Ram Niwas, Kamaluddin, and Manzoor Hasan. Force has been deployed in the village to prevent any flare ups, police said.



Woman, partner arrested for killing husband

Police have arrested a woman and her partner for allegedly killing her 33-year-old husband and trying to portray the murder as a road accident, an official said on Sunday. Naresh Chander of Bhaderwah in Doda was brought to Jammu's Gandhi Nagar hospital by his wife Shailu Devi in the early hours of April 7. She claimed that Chander was injured in an accident in the Gole Gujral area of Pounchik in the city's outskirts, a police spokesperson said. Acting on the information, a police team arrived at the hospital and recorded Shailu Devi's statement, the official said. Chander's post-mortem was conducted after he died and an FIR registered at Domana police station. During investigations, it came to light that Shailu Devi's statement was "misleading and mismatched with the accident theory". Accordingly, all technical evidences were collected and statements recorded, the spokesperson said.



Thief who posed as judge, bailed out criminals dies at 85

From posing as a judge and granting bail to undertrials to stealing fancy cars for personal commute, Dhani Ram Mittal had several capers to his name in his decades-long career in crime. He died on Thursday aged 85 due to health issues, police said. Named in more than 150 theft cases in Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab and Rajasthan, Mittal, had been put behind bars over 90 times. "His crime list is long, he was directly involved in more than 1,000 cases of theft, cheating, impersonation and forgery in his lifetime," a senior police officer, who did not wish to be named, said. According to police sources, Mittal was first involved in a case of cheating 1964 and did not stop. A senior officer of the Delhi police recalled that Mittal stole cars from the parking lot of Jhajjar court in Haryana for personal use. "When we were reading his criminal profile.



No one can stop CAA in West Bengal: Rajnath

PNS ■ MALDA

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday asserted that the BJP delivers on its promises, and maintained that no one can stop implementation of the CAA in West Bengal. He said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is not meant to take away anyone's citizenship, but is a law for granting Indian citizenship to people displaced from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on religious grounds. "The Congress, Trinamool Congress or the Left parties make promises during elections that are not fulfilled, but the BJP delivers on its promises," he said, addressing a rally here in support of BJP candidate from Malda Uttar constituency, Khagen Murmu.



He asserted that no one can stop the implementation of CAA in West Bengal, along with the rest of India. "Mamata didi says she will not allow CAA in her state. Why is she trying to hoodwink the people of West Bengal," Singh said. The Centre had in March implemented the CAA, notifying the rules four years after the

law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014. Singh said that India is treated with respect under the Narendra Modi-led government, unlike under previous dispensations.

"When we say something in an international forum, it is listened to with respect," he said, adding that Modi's pledge is to turn India into a developed country by 2047. Singh said promises like abolishing Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya have been fulfilled, and that there are indications of the coming into being of a 'Ram Rajya'. The defence minister said the BJP government at the Centre has also delivered on its promise of abolishing 'triple talaq'. "We can not only bring to book terrorists inside our territory, but if anyone tries to attack our unity and pride from outside, we can dare to go beyond our borders to teach them a lesson; this is our strength," Singh said.



BJP targeting me, we are not safe: Mamata

PNS ■ KIMARGANI(WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday alleged that the BJP is targeting her and her nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and they do not feel safe. Her allegation came a day after the Leader of the Opposition in the assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, said that there would be a "big explosion on Monday which will shake the TMC and its top brass". "The BJP is targeting me and Abhishek, we are not safe, but we are also not afraid of the saffron party's conspiracy.

HEALTH MINISTRY TO STATES, UTS

Act strictly against hospitals involved in illegal transplant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union health ministry has asked all states and UTs to investigate any violations and take appropriate action, including suspension of registration, against hospitals performing illegal organ transplants, officials said on Sunday. In a letter to all states and UTs, Dr Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS), Government of India, urged all states and Union Territories to ensure regular collection and sharing of data of all transplant cases, including those of foreigners, with the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) on a monthly basis. The ministry's direction comes over two weeks after an organ trafficking racket, involving Bangladeshi nationals, being run in Haryana and



Rajasthan was busted. Referring to media reports mentioning commercial dealings in organs involving foreign citizens, Dr Goel stated, "It has also been noted from the registry of NOTTO that there has been a surge in the number of organ transplants of foreigners in the country, which calls for monitoring of such transplants by the state or UT government authority concerned." Goel, in the letter issued on April 10, directed that appropriate authority of the state

appointed as per the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, should investigate the transplant cases of foreign nationals in their respective states. He also asked the officials to take appropriate actions whenever a breach of any provision of the Act or any of the rules made thereunder are noted. "Investigate any violation of the THOTA, 1994 and rules thereunder and take appropriate action including suspension of registration for performing Organ Transplant, of the hospitals involved in illegal activities," the letter said. "It should be ensured that a unique NOTTO-ID for both donor and recipient is generated by the hospital from NOTTO website (www.notto.mohfw.gov.in), in all cases of organ transplant, whether from a living donor or deceased donor," the letter said.



Centre wants to curtail people's rights: Priyanka

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday said the BJP-led Union government wants to change the Constitution and curtail the rights of people. Addressing a rally in Chhattisgarh's Balod in support of the Congress' Kanker Lok Sabha candidate Biresh Thakur, she also decried the use of religion in politics and said this was never the tradition of the country. "The Constitution has given you the right to vote, given you reservations, ensured protection of tribal culture and facilitated the development of Dalits. The BJP-led Union government wants to change this Constitution and curtail people's rights," she claimed. She said any change in the

Constitution will impact everyone and people would not be able to lead a respectable life since their rights would be lost, including that of asking questions. The intention of the BJP-led Centre is not right, the senior Congress leader alleged. Asserting that 'show off politics' had gained ground and was the trend in the country, she said, "Today, when a leader performs puja, a camera must be there and it should be seen on television. There has to be showing off." "Indiraji (former prime minister Indira Gandhi) had a puja room to perform rituals but she did it in solitude. It was not to show off. Religion should not be used in politics as it has not been our tradition," the Congress leader further said.

If Congress & allies win, there will be riots, atrocities: Shah

Katihar, April 21 (PTI) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday charged the Congress-led opposition with being soft on terror and indifferent towards the uplift of deprived castes, and alleged that their return to power could cause "riots, atrocities and poverty". Addressing an election rally in the Katihar Lok Sabha constituency of Bihar, the former BJP president also credited his party with having given the nation, in Narendra Modi, its "first OBC prime minister" who has "put an end" to dynasty politics. "Modi wiped out Naxalism



and reined in terrorism. When the Congress was in power, terrorists struck at will and nobody could muster the courage to retaliate. In contrast, the attacks in Uri and Pulwama were followed quickly by surgical strikes

and Balakot airstrikes. Our security personnel went across the border with Pakistan and the terrorists were bumped off in their own hideouts," said Shah. He also slammed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for taking exception to raising the issue of abrogation of Article 370 in poll rallies outside Jammu and Kashmir, saying "it is a matter concerning the whole country". "People from Rajasthan and Bihar have shed their blood fighting the insurgency there. Now Kashmir has been fully integrated with the rest of the country," he said.

Congress seeks action against CPI(M) mouthpiece

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress in Kerala on Saturday lodged a complaint with the Press Council of India (PCI) against the ruling CPI(M)'s mouthpiece in the state for allegedly publishing fake news about its leaders. The Congress alleged that the CPI(M) mouthpiece carried an article on April 18 accusing it of carrying out an obscene campaign against Left candidates. A caricature, published along with the report, features photos of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee President, Leader of

Opposition in Kerala, UDF Candidate of Vadakara Lok Sabha constituency, and others holding a digital device, indicating that they were spreading "extremely derogatory morphed porn videos", it alleged. The complaint was lodged by Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly V D Satheesan. Alleging that the article was intended to malign and destroy the opposition leaders in Kerala, he further charged that it was "political in nature", with the goal of gaining an unfair edge in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The LoP, in the complaint.

LIQUOR SCAM CASE IN CHHATTISGARH ED arrests retired IAS officer Tuteja

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Days after filing a fresh case, the Enforcement Directorate on Sunday arrested retired Chhattisgarh IAS officer Anil Tuteja in connection with a Rs 2,000 crore alleged liquor-scram linked money laundering case in the state, officials said. The federal agency detained the 2003-batch officer from the Economic Offences Wing (EOW)/Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) office in Raipur on Saturday evening where the bureaucrat and his son Yash Tuteja had gone to record their statements in the same case. They were issued a summons by the ED at the EOW/ACB office to join the investigation and record their statements following which they were taken to the central agency's office here. The retired IAS officer was questioned and was taken into custody in the early hours of

Sunday under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Yash Tuteja was allowed to leave after questioning. Anil Tuteja was produced before a jurisdictional magistrate that sent him to one-day judicial custody, ED counsel Saurabh Pandey said. He added that the agency had sought a 14-day custody of Tuteja from the magistrate. However, as the special PMLA court was not working on Sunday, the magistrate court sent him to judicial custody for a day, the lawyer said. Tuteja will be produced before a special PMLA court on Monday and the ED will seek his remand afresh for custodial interrogation, he said. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer retired from service last year. He was last designated as joint secretary in the industry and commerce department of Chhattisgarh.

‘BJP will win all seven LS seats in Delhi’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP will win all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Piyush Goel said at an event here on Sunday. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami who also attended the "Hindu Nav Varsh Function" at the IGI stadium here, said that before 2014 no government did anything for Lord Ram. "It is the BJP government that brought back Lord Rama to his palatial house in Ayodhya." "Recent elections in Uttarakhand were peaceful and I am sure that the BJP will all five seats in the state by huge margins," he said. About the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, Goel said, "The party is very sure that all the seven Lok Sabha seats of Delhi will be won by the BJP only."

‘Extreme events of 2023 in line with predictions’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Multiple regions across the world simultaneously experiencing heat extremes could become an "emerging feature" of a warmer planet, according to a new study. The new research that reviewed the weather and climate of 2023 also said that many of the extreme events experienced last year are consistent with predictions previously made about a warmer world. Putting the events of the warmest year on record in perspective, researchers said that in a warmer future, more events involving record-breaking hot temperatures occurring earlier in the year, and cyclones exacerbating rainfall extremes are in order. Change in seasonality of extreme events too is another trend the researchers observed. "We are seeing extremes



appearing in seasons in which they are usually less likely. Heatwaves, for example, appeared in spring 2023 in southwestern Europe, Brazil, Morocco and South Africa," Robin Clark of the Met Office in the UK, a co-author of the study published in the journal Advances in Atmospheric Science, said. Further, multiple regions across the world simultaneous-

ly experiencing heat extremes could become an "emerging feature" of a warmer planet, the researchers said. Many regions of North America, southern Europe, northern Africa, and Asia together experienced record-breaking hot extremes in the

month of July last year. The team also found that intense cyclones exacerbated rainfall extremes such as the Libya flooding in September and the North China flooding in July 2023. They said that an increased occurrences of such events too are in line with projections about the future under continued global warming. "Many of 2023's events are consistent with projected future changes in a warmer world, showing the challenges that are to come, while some were a surprise, suggesting there is still more to learn about what's potentially around the corner," Wenxia Zhang from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Chinese Academy of

Sciences, and the lead author of the paper, said. Droughts in California in the US and the Horn of Africa transitioned into floods in 2023, and more of such events are projected to occur in the coming decades, the authors said. The compounding effects of drought-to-flood events can be more severe compared to when floods and droughts occur separately, they said. The researchers also found that wildfires, such as those that occurred in Hawaii and Canada last year, are causing widespread damage, along with threatening emissions targets aimed at limiting global warming. Ecosystems have come under immense pressure due to wildfires, they said. The authors called for improved predictions and early warning systems to be better prepared for climate hazards.

The new research that reviewed the weather and climate of 2023 also said that many of the extreme events experienced last year are consistent with predictions previously made about a warmer world.

Sunita Kejriwal at Ranchi rally

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Sunday accused the BJP-led central government of denying insulin to her husband alleging that it wants to kill him. She asserted that the opposition INDIA bloc will fight against the "dictatorship" of the BJP and win. "They want to kill my husband Arvind Kejriwal. his food is under camera observation; he is denied insulin. My husband is a sugar patient who has been on insulin for 12 years; he needs 50 units of insulin daily," Sunita said at the Ulgulan Nyay Rally in Ranchi. She claimed that her husband was jailed for working for the people "Jan Seva" and no charges could be proved against him. "We will fight against dictatorship and win. The gates of jail will break and Arvind

Kejriwal and Hemant Soren will come out," she said. Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21 in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. He is lodged in Tihar jail. The ED also arrested Soren on the night of January 31 in



a money laundering case linked to an alleged land fraud.

‘Kejriwal ko insulin do’: AAP

Carrying insulin, the workers and leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party protested outside the Tihar jail in west Delhi on Sunday and demanded that insulin be given to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who is suffering from diabetes. Delhi cabinet minister Atishi and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Sanjeev Jha were present at the protest site. Scores of party workers carrying placards saying 'Kejriwal ko insulin do'

sang 'Raghuapati Raghav Raja Ram' outside the jail. "This is not a protest. The people of Delhi are worried about the health of Chief Minister Kejriwal who is diabetic. They have sent insulin for him," she said. Atishi alleged there is a "conspiracy" to harm Kejriwal. "The Tihar administration had said they have specialist doctors but yesterday they wrote to AIIMS for a diabetologist.

New beginnings

The CJI hopes new criminal justice laws will expedite cases lingering on for long years

Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud has lauded the enactment of new criminal justice laws, hailing it as a watershed moment for the nation's judicial organ. The judiciary plays a pivotal role in shaping the legal landscape and the CJI's endorsement of the new laws underscores the profound impact these legislative reforms are poised to have on the Indian society. The recent amendments to criminal justice laws mark a paradigm shift in how the legal system approaches crime, punishment and rehabilitation. With a focus on expediting trials, enhancing victim protection and ensuring fair treatment to all parties involved, these laws signify a departure from archaic colonial practices towards a more equitable and efficient framework. One of the key aspects of the new laws is the emphasis on expeditious trials. Delayed justice has long been a concern in India, with cases hanging in courts for years. At times, individuals awaiting trial may spend more time in jail than they would have if found guilty and sentenced.



This situation can extend for years, if not decades. As of December 2022, 4,34,302 prisoners in Indian jails were under trial, which is 75.8 per cent of the total prison population.

The new criminal laws set out to correct this. By streamlining procedures and introducing stringent timelines for trials, the amendments aim to address this issue and ensure that justice is swift and accessible to all. Moreover, the heightened emphasis on victim protection programmes is a crucial development. Victims of crime often find themselves marginalised within the legal process, facing intimidation, harassment and prolonged trauma. The new laws incorporate provisions

to safeguard their rights, providing them with legal support, counselling services and other forms of assistance to navigate the judicial system with dignity and resilience. Furthermore, the reforms underscore the principle of equality before the law by ensuring fair treatment to all individuals, irrespective of their social status or background. By promoting transparency, accountability and due processes, the amendments seek to instill public confidence in the legal system. The CJI has rightly emphasised the transformative potential of these legislative changes, highlighting their role in fostering a more just and equitable society. However, while the enactment of these laws represents a significant milestone, their success ultimately hinges on their implementation. Effective enforcement, adequate resource allocation and ongoing monitoring are imperative to ensure that the intended objectives are achieved in practice. Nonetheless, a beginning has been made to correct the existing anomalies. Moreover, the journey towards a more equitable criminal justice system is an ongoing process that requires continuous evaluation and refinement. As societal dynamics evolve and new challenges emerge, it is essential to remain adaptive and responsive, constantly seeking ways to enhance the effectiveness and fairness of the legal framework.

PICTALK

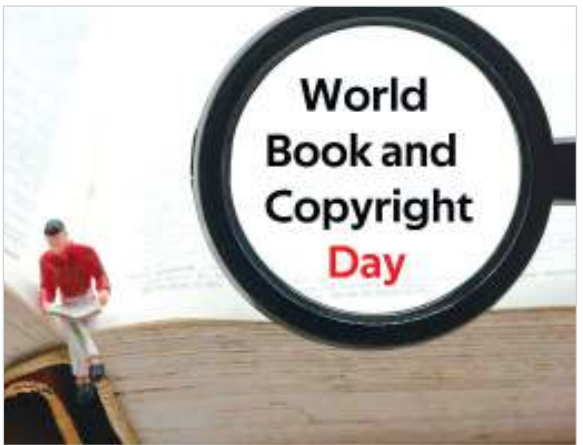


Students celebrate their success after the declaration of Uttar Pradesh Board 10th and 12th class results, in Noida PTI

Celebrating World Book and Copyright Day

From serving as conduits of wisdom and imagination to safeguarding cultural heritage, books play a vital role in shaping our collective consciousness

Books have long served as companions to humanity, bridging the present with the past and future through a rich tapestry of historical narratives and fiction. Each book, a product of its time, reflects the sociocultural nuances prevalent in the society of its era. They serve as invaluable archives, documenting the thoughts, experiences and ideas of past generations, offering us a well-spring of wisdom to draw from and learn. By delving into literature spanning different epochs, we glean insights into the beliefs, values and perspectives of our predecessors, acting as conduits for the transmission of ideas across generations and cultures. Moreover, books kindle the flames of imagination, inspiring us to envision and strive for the seemingly impossible. As repositories of knowledge, wisdom and creativity, books provide solace in solitude and guidance in uncertainty. A singularly remarkable tome possesses the power to transport us to distant realms, broadening our horizons and fueling our imaginations. They serve as windows to diverse societies and cultures,



offering immersive experiences that transcend geographical boundaries. Whether through captivating novels or enlightening travelogues, books possess the remarkable ability to transport us to unexplored territories, fostering empathy and understanding. In the realm of creativity and innovation, books serve as catalysts, igniting the flames of imagination and propelling us towards new frontiers. They enable us to visualise and conceptualise in ways that transcend the limitations of our physical reality. Moreover, in the preservation

of cultural heritage, books play an indispensable role, in safeguarding languages, traditions and values for posterity. By recording historical events, traditions and societal norms, they provide invaluable insights into the tapestry of human civilization, ensuring that our cultural legacy endures through the ages. Yet, as we navigate the digital age, the landscape of literature undergoes profound transformations. The advent of e-books and interactive digital formats ushers in new possibilities, offering enhanced reading experiences enriched with augmented reality, virtu-

al reality and artificial intelligence. However, amidst this digital revolution, the sanctity of copyright laws faces unprecedented challenges. Rampant piracy and unauthorised distribution of digital copies undermine the rights of authors and publishers, necessitating renewed efforts to uphold intellectual property rights. Hence, on April 23rd, World Book and Copyright Day, under the auspices of UNESCO, serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring power of books and the imperative to uphold copyright laws. This year's theme, "Read Your Way," encourages individuals to celebrate the joy of reading while fostering awareness about the importance of respecting intellectual property rights. As we commemorate this day, let us reaffirm our commitment to preserving the legacy of literature and honouring the contributions of literary luminaries past and present.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

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Iran-Israel: On the brink of war or hype

Iran's attack and Israel's retaliation threaten to reshape the established rules of engagement and have the potential to destabilise the region



NISHIKANT OJHA

Iran launched a significant assault on Israel during the night of April 13-14, deploying 300 drones and missiles from its territory towards Israeli territories, including Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the southern Negev. This bold action marks an unprecedented event since Israel's founding in 1948.

The attack on Israel by Iran was a direct response to an airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, on April 1, which Iran accuses Israel of carrying out. This assault resulted in the deaths of sixteen individuals, including two Revolutionary Guards generals. Iran's drone and missile assault on Israel, lasting several hours, has reshaped the established rules of engagement between the two nations and heightened tensions in the West Asia, potentially paving the way for a broader conflict with destabilising effects on the region. The strike on Damascus was viewed as a significant Israeli action against Iranian interests in Syria, surpassing previous incidents. Iran had been issuing warnings of retaliatory actions against Israel following an earlier airstrike that destroyed Iran's consulate in Syria, which was seen as a breach of diplomatic conventions.

Iran justified its actions by citing Article 51 of the UN Charter, following the Israeli attack on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. The drone attack was interpreted as a message from Tehran to Tel Aviv. Despite refraining from officially declaring it as an "Act of War", Tehran's response aimed to prevent being dragged into a larger conflict while signalling a readiness to retaliate more forcefully to maintain regional deterrence. The targeted strikes on Israel aimed to re-establish Iranian deterrence and highlight a shift in Tehran's approach to risk. By setting new red lines in the conflict with Israel, Iran made it clear that it would take action if Israel's actions against Iran and its allies persisted. While some may perceive the attack as a failure due to Israel's successful interception of Iranian drones and missiles, a more severe strike using precision-guided ballistic missiles could have inflicted



greater harm on Israel with less time to react.

In simpler terms, if Iran truly intended to harm Israel, they would have kept their plans secret and employed more powerful weapons to catch Israel off guard. By providing advance notice and employing less effective tactics, it seems like Iran was issuing a warning rather than seeking to inflict serious damage. It's akin to saying, "If you cross the line, there will be serious consequences in the future."

In a similar fashion, Israel also retaliated with quadcopter strikes with little damage to Iran. A warning for warning if you like. Regarding India's stance, which maintains strategic relationships with both Iran and Israel, it finds itself walking a diplomatic tightrope due to its ties with both nations. India has a longstanding partnership with Iran, with Tehran being a major supplier of crude oil despite challenges from Western sanctions. The Chabahar Port serves as a crucial gateway for Indian goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, given Pakistan's restrictions on land transit. India also has robust defence and security ties with Israel, which supported India during the Kargil War and is a leading supplier of military equipment. Trade between India and Israel has grown to approximately \$7.5 billion.



THE GAZA CONFLICT IS IMPACTING BOTH BIDEN'S AND TRUMP'S POLITICAL PROSPECTS. BIDEN FACES CHALLENGES WITH VOTERS SYMPATHETIC TO PALESTINIANS, WHO HAVE EXPRESSED DISCONTENT WITH HIS GAZA POLICY BY VOTING 'UNCOMMITTED' IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

During Italy's presidency of the G7, leaders are expected to jointly urge Israel to show restraint following an unprecedented attack by Iran over the weekend, which involved numerous drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles aimed at the Jewish State.

The United States, Britain and several European Union nations have proposed expanding existing sanctions against Iran due to its involvement in Russia's conflict in Ukraine, with a focus on restricting drone and missile transfers to Iran.

The dividing line isn't merely between Iran and Israel or Ukraine and Russia; rather, it lies within the emerging power dynamics of these two central regions.

The Gaza conflict is impacting both Biden and Trump's political prospects. Biden faces challenges with voters sympathetic to Palestinians, who have expressed discontent with his Gaza policy by voting "uncommitted" in Democratic primaries, potentially leading to decreased voter turnout in the upcoming presidential election. Biden's stance on the conflict puts him in a difficult position, balancing support for Netanyahu to maintain pro-Israeli voter support while avoiding alienating progressive Democrats. If Trump returns to office, it could disrupt Western grand strategy, especially concerning support for

Netanyahu's Gaza approach and relations with European allies. The impact of the recent hostilities on the U.S. president's approach remains uncertain. Israel has shown mixed reactions, reopening a Gaza crossing and participating in ceasefire negotiations while also indicating intentions to invade areas like Rafah. Biden's success in brokering a peace deal would align with his grand strategy, but achieving a temporary ceasefire is just the initial step in a complex process. Prolonged conflict in the West Asia could significantly complicate broader Western geopolitical goals.

Iran is one of the most heavily armed States in the area, boasting a sizable standing army of around 5,80,000 personnel and possessing an estimated stockpile of 3,000 ballistic missiles, as indicated by Western assessments. Despite this military capability, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has emphasized in the past six months during the Gaza conflict that Iran seeks to avoid being drawn into a broader confrontation. So, Iran is not willing to go to war, but it also remains prepared for any kind of conflict if provoked.

(The writer is an eminent expert on counter-terrorism in West Asia and advisor to cyber and aerospace Security; Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLIMATE'S CAPRICIOUS FURY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "India Battles Volatile and Unpredictable Weather", published on April 21, this is my response. The Indian Meteorological Department's promising forecast of above-normal monsoon rainfall offers a glimmer of hope for agriculture and water resources. However, amidst this optimism, lies the harsh reality of erratic weather wreaking havoc across the nation. India's climate resembles a rollercoaster ride, with unpredictable twists affecting lives from Uttar Pradesh to Kerala. The recent contrast of Delhi's moderate cold one day to record-breaking warmth the next epitomises the volatility of regional climates. Rambha Devi, an 80-year-old, reflects on humanity's disregard for nature. She witnesses nature's retaliation through extreme weather: scorching heat waves, torrential rains and unpredictable storms, disrupting lives and livelihoods. Farmers like Ramesh Tiwari and Priya share tales of crop destruction, leaving families struggling. Dr. Mrutyunjay Mohapatra warns of increased heavy rainfall events, exacerbating challenges. As the world faces climate extremes, proactive measures are crucial. Marginalised communities are particularly vulnerable, emphasising the urgent need for climate resilience. Vaibhav Chaturvedi underscores the necessity for immediate action to mitigate the compounded impacts of climate change.

Aarav Patel | Mumbai

EDUCATION EVOLUTION

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Transformative trends in India's higher education", published on April 20, this is my response. India's higher education landscape is experiencing a significant evolution spurred by policy reforms and technological advancements. Initiatives like the New Education Policy and increased FDI signal a shift towards innovation and global competitiveness. The burgeoning market size, coupled with a vast network of institutions, underscores the sector's importance in shaping the country's future.

Political manoeuvrings



Apropos the news article, "Rahul Gandhi holds on to Wayanad despite speculation", published on April 20, this is my response. The dynamics of political alliances and rivalries in Kerala reveal a complex web of strategies and ambitions. Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad underscores the importance of securing a stronghold in the region, amidst shifting

allegiances and ideological battles. The CPI(M)'s resentment towards the Congress, softened by tactical considerations, reflects the pragmatic nature of politics. While public posturing may suggest discord, behind the scenes, strategic alliances are being nurtured to counter a common adversary—the BJP.

A K Antony's nuanced silence on CPI(M) candidacies speaks volumes about the intricate history of alliances and betrayals in Kerala politics. His past affiliations highlight the fluidity of loyalties, where former foes become temporary allies in pursuit of power. As Kerala gears up for future elections, the blurred lines between secularism and opportunism will continue to shape the political landscape, reminding us that in politics, alliances are often forged in the crucible of expediency.

Vikram Singh | Delhi

Digitalisation, accelerated by the pandemic, offers opportunities for wider access and skill development. The changing course preferences reflect a demand for interdisciplinary learning and industry-relevant skills. EdTech's rise democratises education but requires addressing digital disparities. Ensuring quality amidst diversification necessitates robust regulatory frameworks. The push for internationalisation promises to enrich educational practices and boost the economy. As India navigates these changes, smart scaling is imperative, ensuring not just expansion but also excellence and inclusivity. This journey towards a globally competitive education system holds the promise of empowering every student for a brighter tomorrow.

Rajiv Mishra | Lucknow

BURDENS AND LIBERATION

Madam —Apropos the news article, "Mind, the key to Hidden Fortune", published on April 20, this is my response. The story of the woman and her son, burdened by past debts and future anxieties, resonates deeply with the human struggle for liber-

ation. Theirs is a narrative of hidden treasures, not just of material wealth but of profound lessons on the nature of existence. In their quest to protect their riches from creditors, they unwittingly ensnared themselves in a cycle of fear and secrecy, failing to embrace the present moment. The tragedy of their lives underscores a universal truth: true freedom lies in being untethered from the shackles of past regrets and future uncertainties. Through the lens of Buddhist wisdom, the narrative acquires a timeless relevance. The Zen Master's insight into the nature of the mind echoes the imperative of being anchored in the present. Similarly, the young monk's realisation that he is already where he seeks to be symbolises the attainment of true happiness through mindfulness. In essence, the story serves as a poignant reminder that true wealth lies not in external possessions but in the liberation of the mind from the constraints of time.


Rohan Desai | Ahmedabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FOMO

In the age of social media, the Fear Of Missing Out has become rampant



SHAINY SHARMA

Ever found individuals befuddling when they see photos or updates from parties, gatherings, or events they were not invited to or witness their colleagues or peers receiving accolades, promotions or career advancements... Well such situations may evoke FOMO in individuals who feel stagnant or unproductive in comparison. "FOMO," or the Fear of Missing Out, arises from a perceived discrepancy between one's own experiences and the experiences of others. Whether online or offline, the fear of missing out can exert a powerful influence on individuals emotions, behaviours and decision-making processes, thereby highlighting the need for self-awareness and coping mechanisms to navigate the pressures of modern life. Now a days it is a prevalent phenomenon among Generation Z (Gen Z) and other demographics. It can be a double-edged sword, driving ambition while fostering anxiety. There is no denying the fact that Gen Z have grown up in a digital age which is characterized by constant connectivity and instant access to information promoting products, experiences and lifestyles that appear glamorous and desirable. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and Facebook have become integral part of their daily lives, shaping their perceptions, behaviours and social interactions in profound ways. Various studies and research too have consistently shown a strong association between social media usage and FOMO among this generation, the consequences of which extends beyond mere discomfort and impact mental health, self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. Individuals plagued by FOMO due to the constant exposure to curated content and the pressure to maintain a certain online image may experience increased stress, anxiety, depression and feeling of loneliness as they constantly compare their lives to others' highlight reels.



To mitigate the negative effects of FOMO on Gen Z, it becomes utmost important to promote digital literacy, encourage healthy social media habits and foster offline connections and experiences. Now this can include multiple practices such as practicing mindfulness or journaling that promote gratitude and positive thinking. Setting boundaries for screen time and cultivating meaningful relationships and activities that are not dependent on social media validation. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive online community can help alleviate feelings of FOMO by emphasizing authenticity, empathy and acceptance. Not only this but practicing the art of Digital Detox will allow individuals to reconnect with themselves and prioritize meaningful offline interactions and relationships. This will result in emphasizing the importance of quality over quantity when it comes to social connections and encourage face-to-face communication, genuine conversations and shared experiences with their friends and loved ones. Also, encouraging them to engage in activities such as sports, art, music or dance will not only provide opportunities for personal growth and development but also reduces dependence on social media for validation and self-worth. Practicing such activities will encourage the Generation Z to seek support from trusted friends, family members or mental health professionals if they're struggling with feelings of FOMO or its effects on their well-being. Remember, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) raises stress hormones, inflammation and dysregulates an individual's nervous system. One needs to learn to self-love and be protective of their time and energy. In the hyper connected world, it does take courage to be with own thoughts so, try to be one...

(The write is an educator; views are personal)

With power freebies, debt comes calling



UTTAM GUPTA

The core dilemma persists: How to prevent debt while ensuring universal electricity access? This issue entails policy intricacies and power sector reforms



In an interview, Union Power Minister RK Singh revealed he has been telling States that electricity is not free. "If any State wants to give free power to any category of people, they can go ahead and do so, but you have to pay for it". Singh's exhortation to the States assumes significance in the backdrop of a spate of announcements by the latter to give free electricity to certain consumers which affect the viability of power distribution companies or discoms (they buy power from generating companies or gencos and supply to the consumers). He argues "like any other commodity, generation and distribution of electricity involves cost and if a State is to provide it for free to a section of consumers, it also needs to have finances to pay the genco. If the genco isn't paid, electricity will not be produced in the first place". But, there can't be any compromise on the generation of electricity as any shortfall could lead to a stoppage of economic activity. To meet the surge in demand (due to the impending summer), the Union Government has invoked the provisions of the Electricity Act (2003) under Section 11 asking gas-based gencos and thermal plants based on imported coal to increase generation even if it entails extra cost. That is the reaction to meeting incremental demand. How could it tolerate massive cuts in generation inevitable when gencos are not paid? So, States must ensure that they are paid. When pressurized, the concerned States borrow money to pay the gencos resulting in a debt trap. For instance, in the first two years of the AAP Government, Punjab borrowed as much as Rs 47,000 crore adding to the already high debt of the State. How can the States avoid debt trap? The Electricity Act (2003) and the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Power require the discoms to fix the charge (or tariff) on electricity supplied to consumers in a manner such that the average revenue realization (ARR) from its sale is equal to the average cost of supply (it includes the cost of purchase, transmission and distribution), or ACS. The discoms are



CURRENTLY, ALMOST 95 PER CENT OF POWER CONSUMERS IN PUNJAB AVAIL OF SUBSIDIES. A MAJOR PORTION OF WHICH ISN'T EVEN REIMBURSED TO DISCOMS

free to decide the modalities of how this is to be ensured subject to approval by the concerned State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs). Ideally, the discoms should charge from 'all' consumers a tariff equal to the total cost of supply say Rs 'X' crore divided by the number of units. But, they don't follow this principle. They charge less from certain consumers especially households (HHs) and farmers. For instance, in Delhi, the tariff applicable to HHs consuming 200 units a month is Rs 3 per unit which is about half of the ACS. Including a plethora of levies adding to 44.6 per cent, the shortfall comes to Rs 4.3 per unit. For HHs consuming between 201 and 400 units, the tariff is Rs 4.5 per unit implying an under-recovery of Rs 1.5 per unit. Including the levies, this comes to Rs 2.2 per unit. These under-recoveries are cross-subsidized by charging more from industries and business establishments for which the tariff can go up to a high of Rs 16 per unit. The low tariff charged from the target consumers (read: HHs consuming up to 400 units a month) is nothing but a freebie given by political parties. But, it goes unnoticed as the State exchequer doesn't have to pay for these under-recoveries. The industries that are made to foot the bill can't even murmur as discom being the sole supplier of electricity, they have no other option. But, political parties don't want the target HHs to even pay this small tariff. In Delhi, the AAP Government tells discoms not to raise any bill on HHs consuming up to 200 units. Likewise, in Punjab, consumption of up to 300 units a month by an HH is free. This extra under-recovery of Rs 4.3 per unit in Delhi (applicable tariff Rs 3 per unit plus 44.6 per cent levies) has to be reimbursed by the State to the dis-

com. But, most States don't reimburse or do it partially and after considerable delay. This leads to losses of discoms. The availability of free power also drives people to manipulate their reported consumption. For instance, in Punjab, an HH consuming 900 units a month, gets three meters installed to keep consumption of each under 300 units thereby ensuring zero bills. Reportedly, more than 100,000 meters have been bifurcated or trifurcated enabling even high-end consumers to avail of the free bonanza. As for farmers who are eligible for free power in the State, they report even consumption for running multiple ACs in their homes under farming head thereby avoiding any payment. As a consequence, currently, almost over 95 per cent of power consumers in Punjab avail of subsidies, a major portion of which isn't even reimbursed to discoms. Discoms' losses also increase due to AT&C (aggregate technical and commercial) losses - a sophisticated nomenclature for power theft. According to Singh, AT&C's losses used to be high at 27 per cent. In Punjab, reportedly, an overwhelming share of electricity that leaves the generating stations/power dispatch centres remains unaccounted for. The discoms have funded these losses by borrowings from banks and other financial institutions (FIs) apart from keeping bills pending. At the end of FY 2021-22, their total debt was Rs 620,000 crore. In June 2022, they owed about Rs 1,40,000 crore to Gencos and transmission companies (transcos). The Center has taken several measures to force discoms to clear their dues. The late payment surcharge (LPS) Rules, implemented in 2022 made it mandatory for discoms to clear their legacy dues as existing on June 3, 2022, in a time-bound manner in 12 EMIs with the

benefit of non-applicability of the LPS after its implementation date. The rules are also provided for time-bound clearance of current dues failing, which will attract a power supply cut. This has resulted in legacy dues decreasing from Rs 1,40,000 crore in June 2022 to around Rs 70,000 crore in July 2023 and further down to Rs 40,000 crore currently. Under the 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD) launched in July 2021, the Centre has undertaken a massive investment of Rs 300,000 crore to improve the reliability and quality of the power supply and enhance the efficiency of discoms. It has compulsory pre-paid and smart metering components to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 250 million households. As a result, AT&C losses decreased from 22.32 per cent during 2020-21 to 13.5 per cent during 2022-23. However, according to the Minister, today power pilferage is 15 per cent. On this much electricity, discoms get 'nil' revenue. On a much larger percentage of power used by target HHs and farmers, the States promise to pay on their behalf. But, they don't pay in full and whatever payment comes, it is delayed. Even for making payments, the States borrow money. And, the vicious cycle continues. It won't end unless discoms are unshackled from State controls and given the freedom to decide their pricing and distribution policies. If, States want certain HHs and farmers to get power free, let them give the money directly to them. This reform will also pave the way for the deregulation of electricity distribution, more options for consumers to source their needs and a reduction in tariffs.

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

Govt schemes are transforming lives in rural Rajasthan

Loyara village serves as a microcosm of resilience and progress, fuelled by education and community empowerment

We typically receive our ration between the 1st and 3rd of each month. If it's ever delayed, my grandchildren inquire why we haven't received it from the ration dealer. The younger generation in my household is quite aware. They've made sure that all the necessary ration-related documents are in order, ensuring a seamless supply. Also, my pension now arrives punctually. Thanks to various Government schemes, these youngsters are reaping benefits. They educate themselves about these schemes and then proactively apply for them at the Panchayat office," shares 76-year-old Amba Bai, residing in Loyara village within



MOHAN LAL GAMETI

Udaipur district, Rajasthan. Situated just 8 km from Udaipur, this village falls within the Badgaon tehsil. With a population of approximately 2500, the majority belong to the Scheduled Tribe community. Alongside the OBC Dangi community, there are various other castes. The village reflects the influence of its proximity to Udaipur city,

evident in the transition of most houses to concrete structures. However, economically, the village still grapples with challenges. While individuals from OBC and general castes are involved in agriculture, trade, and animal husbandry, the majority of male members from the Scheduled Tribes work as labourers in marble factories surrounding Udaipur city. Some also engage in daily wage labour. Meanwhile, women in these households contribute to the family's income by working as domestic helpers in affluent homes within the city. Economically, Loyara village may face challenges, but socially and educationally, it has seen significant

development. Consequently, awareness about Government schemes has risen among the villagers, leading to increased benefits. The younger generation in the village has embraced education, with even Scheduled Tribe boys and girls pursuing studies up to the 12th grade. This educational advancement has also fostered greater awareness within the community. For instance, the Public Distribution System (PDS), part of the Food Security scheme, has been embraced in the village. Shiv Lal, aged 45, attests to this positive change. Despite working in a marble factory in Bengaluru after completing his 12th grade, he remains well-informed about



Government schemes benefiting his family and the village. He recalls, "In the past, the ration dealer would often deny us ration with flimsy excuses. But now, thanks to education and awareness, such actions are no longer tolerated. Whenever we face ration shortages, we raise our concerns and seek information from the Panchayat office. Even in my absence,

my children handle these matters diligently, ensuring the timely arrival of our ration." Taru Bai, a respected elder at 70, sheds light on the changing face of education and Government support in Loyara village. "Back in my day, girls rarely pursued education," she recalls. "But now, over half of the girls in our community are completing high school, and they're bringing back valuable information about Government programs. Their schooling has even helped smooth out the process for my pension, as they handle all the paperwork." Looking back, Taru Bai remembers, "We used to hear about Government schemes, but getting clear

information was a challenge, even after asking around at the Panchayat. But things are different now; the younger generation knows exactly how to navigate these programs and fill out the necessary forms." However, amidst these educational strides, economic challenges persist. "The majority of the Scheduled Tribe families in the village are economically very weak. Most families do not have enough money to start a business, nor do they have enough land to do farming or vegetable production. Although the new generation has started studying, only a few people from this community are in Government jobs. But I think as the trend of educa-

tion and awareness has increased among children, they will also soon start getting recruited in Government jobs." In the same village, there is also the family of Mangi Lal and Tulsiram, who are deprived of the benefits of the PDS. Last year, the ration status of Mangi Lal's family which consists of seven members, was changed from BPL to APL. As a result, they stopped receiving ration. Similarly, Tulsiram mentions that due to missing documents, their family is unable to access ration benefits. For this, they've been in constant communication with the e-Mitra.

(The author is a social worker from Rajasthan; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Hero MotoCorp inaugurates assembly unit in Nepal

Two-wheeler major Hero Motocorp on Sunday said it has opened an assembly facility in Nepal in partnership with its distributor CG Motors. The facility will have a capacity of 75,000 units per annum and will bring new investments and create job opportunities in the region, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement. Four products -- Xpulse 200 4V, Super Splendor, Splendor+ motorcycles and Xoom 110 scooter -- which have been launched in the country -- will be assembled locally at the new assembly facility located in CG Industrial Park in Nawalparasi, it added. "This is an exciting development for us, CG Motors and for Nepal. The state-of-the-art assembly unit will ensure that our world-class products will now be made in Nepal and available to customers across the country," Hero Motocorp Chief Business Officer - Global Business Unit, Sanjay Bhan said. He further said, "The rapid expansion of the sales and service network will enable us to entrench the market with our world-class products and services."



'Coal-based thermal power project to be operational soon'

State-owned THDC India Ltd aims to make its coal-based power plant operational by September 2024, marking an entry into the domestic thermal energy sector, a top company official said. THDC India Ltd (THDCIL) is setting up a 1,320 megawatt (2X660 MW) Super Thermal Power Project (STPP) at Bulandshahr district in Uttar Pradesh (UP), the official said in reply to a query about the company's plans of setting up coal-based capacities. At present, the Uttarakhand-based entity has an installed power generation capacity of around 1,587 MW, of which 1,424 MW is hydro, 113 MW wind and 50 MW solar. When asked about the timeline of the project, the official said "The work is going on in full swing. We are confident of making the first unit of 660 MW operational by September this year and the second unit operational by March 2025. It is a project of around Rs 12,000 crore."



USFDA pulls up Natco Pharma for manufacturing lapses

Natco Pharma failed to maintain cleanliness, sterilise equipment and utensils at appropriate intervals at its Telangana-based plant, as per the US health regulator. In the warning letter to the company, US Food and Drug Administration said its investigators observed various violations at the finished pharmaceuticals plant located at Kothur Village in Telangana. The USFDA inspected the facility from October 9 to 18, 2023. "Your firm failed to clean, maintain, and, as appropriate for the nature of the drug, sanitize and/or sterilise equipment and utensils at appropriate intervals to prevent malfunctions or contamination that would alter the safety, identity, strength, quality, or purity of the drug product beyond the official or other established requirements," the US health regulator noted. It further said: "Your cleaning procedure for your non-dedicated equipment is inadequate."



Earnings, global trends major triggers for markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Worries related to the Iran-Israel conflict, quarterly earnings and foreign investors' trading activity are the key factors that would dictate stock markets this week, analysts said.

Besides, trends in Brent crude oil and movement of the rupee against the dollar will also be crucial factors.

This week will be crucial for the market amid ongoing worries about the conflict between Iran and Israel, said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

"If tensions escalate significantly, there's a risk of panic selling and increased volatility across global stock markets. Moreover, the market will be keeping a close eye on fluctuations in crude oil prices, as geopolitical events frequently impact them."

Investors will also be watching for important earnings of Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance,



"If tensions escalate significantly, there's a risk of panic selling and increased volatility across global stock markets. Moreover, the market will be keeping a close eye on fluctuations in crude oil prices, as geopolitical events frequently impact them."

Nestle, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies and Maruti," Gour said.

HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 2.11 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to Rs 17,622.38 crore for the March 2024 quarter against Rs

17,257.87 crore in the preceding December quarter.

Among global events, the Bank of Japan will announce its interest rate decision on April 26, 2024, he added.

"Movement in US bond yields and the dollar index will

be important factors influencing market sentiment," Gour said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55% and the Nifty dipped 372.4 points or 1.65%.

This week focus will remain on earnings season along with global cues, said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

"Index heavyweights like Hindustan Unilever, Maruti, and Bajaj Finance will announce their results. Investors would also track economic data points like manufacturing & services PMI data of the US, US Q1 GDP number, and Japan's policy statement," Khemka said.

Markets edged lower amid excessive volatility and lost over one and a half per cent, tracking feeble global cues, said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Direct tax collections exceed estimates; jump to Rs 19.58 L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's net direct tax collections surged by a massive 17.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 19.58 crore in the fiscal year ended March 2024, surpassing even revised estimates by a wide margin, the tax department said on Sunday.

Net collections of income and corporate taxes, which make up for most of the direct taxes, in 2023-24 financial year exceeded the Budget estimates by Rs 1.35 lakh crore (7.40 per cent) and the revised estimates by Rs 13,000 crore.

The government had raised the target for direct tax collection in FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024) to Rs 19.45 lakh crore in the interim Budget presented on February 1.

With this, the gross tax collection target as per the revised estimate stood at Rs 34.37 lakh crore for FY24.

While gross direct tax collections (provisional) for the FY 2023-24 rose 18.48 per cent to Rs 23.37 lakh crore, net proceeds (after accounting for

refunds) surged 17.7 per cent to Rs 19.58 lakh crore, reflecting buoyancy in the economy and rise in income levels of individuals and corporates.

Refunds aggregating to Rs 3.79 lakh crore have been issued in FY 2023-24, the CBDT said in a statement.

"The provisional figures of Direct Tax collections for the financial year (FY) 2023-24



show that net collections are at Rs 19.58 lakh crore, compared to Rs 16.64 lakh crore in the preceding financial year i.e. FY 2022-23," it said, adding the Budget for 2023-24 fiscal had pegged the collections for the year at Rs 18.23 lakh crore, which were revised to Rs 19.45 lakh crore later.

"The provisional Direct Tax collections (net of the refunds)

have exceeded the Budget Estimate by 7.40 per cent and Revised Estimates by 0.67 per cent," it said.

The gross collection (provisional) of Direct Taxes (before adjusting for refunds) for the FY 2023-24 stood at Rs 23.37 lakh crore, showing a growth of 18.48 per cent over the gross collection of Rs 19.72 lakh crore in FY 2022-23.

The gross corporate tax collection (provisional) in FY 2023-24 was up 13.06 per cent to Rs 11.32 lakh crore as compared to the gross corporate tax collection of Rs 10 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Net Corporate Tax collection (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 9.11 lakh crore showed a growth of 10.26 per cent over the net corporate tax collection of Rs 8.26 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Gross Personal Income Tax collection including Securities Transaction Tax (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 12.01 lakh crore was up 24.26 per cent over previous year's collection of Rs 9.67 L cr.



'Apple may employ 5 lakh people in India in 3 years'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

iPhone maker Apple through its vendors is expected to employ over 5 lakh people in India over the next three years, according to government sources.

At present Apple's vendors and suppliers employ 1.5 lakh people in India. Tata Electronics, which runs two plants for Apple, is the biggest job generator.

"Apple is accelerating hiring in India. At a conservative estimate, it is going to employ five lakh people in the next three years through its vendors and components suppliers," a senior government officer said.

When contacted, Apple declined to comment on the projection.

Apple has plans to scale up production in India by over five-fold to around USD 40 billion (about 3.32 lakh crore) in the next 4-5 years.

According to market research firm Counterpoint Research, Apple led the India market with the highest revenue in 2023 for the first time, while Samsung topped the chart in terms of volume sales.

The firm in its recent report said Apple surpassed the 10-million-unit mark in shipments and captured the top position in revenue in a calendar year for the first time.

Six of top 10 valued firms take Rs 1.40 lakh cr hit in mcap

TCS, Infosys biggest laggards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of six of the top 10 valued firms eroded by Rs 1,40,478.38 crore in a holiday-shortened week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the maximum hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 1,156.57 points or 1.55 per cent. Stock markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Ram Navami.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) were the gainers from the top-10 pack, TCS, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, ITC and Hindustan Unilever suffered erosion in their valuation.

The market valuation of TCS tanked by Rs 62,538.64 crore to Rs 13,84,804.91 crore, the most among the top 10 firms.

Infosys faced an erosion of Rs 30,488.12 crore from its val-

uation which stood at Rs 5,85,936.45 crore.

Shares of Infosys on Friday ended nearly 1 per cent lower after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank diminished by Rs 26,423.74 crore to Rs 7,49,023.89 crore and that of State Bank of India declined by Rs 14,234.76 crore to Rs 6,70,059.86 crore.

Hybrid mutual funds stage comeback

See Rs 1.45 lakh crore inflows

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hybrid mutual fund schemes have seen a resurgence in 2023-24, garnering Rs 1.45 lakh crore in investments, driven by substantial inflows into the arbitrage category, following withdrawals in the previous fiscal year.

The surge in assets was complemented by an increase in the number of investors, with the number of folios reaching 1.35 crore in March 2024 from 1.21 crore a year earlier, adding an investor base of 14 lakh. This shows investors' inclination for hybrid funds.

Hybrid funds are mutual



fund schemes that typically invest in a combination of equity and debt securities and sometimes in other asset categories such as gold.

The category has been attracting regular inflows since the beginning of financial year

2023-24 in April after a change in taxation for debt funds that kicked off in the same month. Before that, the segment saw a net withdrawal of Rs 12,372 crore in March.

Overall, the hybrid category saw net inflows of Rs 1.45

lakh crore in FY24, compared to an outflow of Rs 18,813 crore in FY23, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

"Anticipating a reversal in the interest rate hike cycle in FY24, market participants strategically allocated funds to capitalize on higher rates, while continuing a favourable stance towards equities, real estate, and gold."

However, the rate cuts never materialized and bond yields continue to be higher, retaining the interest of investors," Gopal Kavalireddi, Vice President - Research at FYERS, said.

'Expect rural sales contribution at record levels'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India expects sales contribution from rural areas to remain at record levels in the current fiscal as well on account of various factors including anticipation of a favourable monsoon, according to a senior company executive.

The country's second-largest automaker, which sells models like Creta and Venue, reported 11 per cent growth in rural areas last fiscal as compared to 4 per cent in urban centres.

"We are confident that the contribution from rural markets to our total sales will grow further to around 20 per cent this financial year," Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg told PTI.

The automaker plans to further expand its presence in smaller towns as it firmly believes that for the nation to prosper, both rural and urban regions must progress in tandem, he added.

Garg noted that rural sales accounted for an all-time high of 19 per cent of the company's total sales in FY23.



UltraTech Cement acquires grinding unit from India Cements; announces expansion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla group company UltraTech Cement has announced the acquisition of a grinding unit from India Cements for Rs 315 crore and said it will invest an additional Rs 504 crore to expand the capacity of two units.

In a stock exchange filing, UltraTech said its board has approved acquisition "of a grinding unit having installed capacity of 1.1 million tonnes per annum in addition to a captive railway siding at Parli, Maharashtra from The India Cements Limited... for a con-

sideration of Rs 315 crores".

The company said it has entered into an Asset Purchase Agreement with the seller.

"This purchase will help the Company to strengthen its presence in the rapidly growing Maharashtra markets,"

Making a similar regulatory filing, The India Cements said out of the total consideration of Rs 315 crore (exclusive of taxes and levies), "Rs 307 crore will be received by the company short-

ly and the balance Rs 8 crore within nine months from the date of the agreement."

The unit being sold had a turnover of Rs 250.66 crore in the fiscal year ended March 31 2023 and net asset value of Rs 75.10 crore.

In a separate filing, UltraTech said its board has also approved brownfield capacity expansion -- 1.2 million tonnes per annum at Parli at a cost of Rs 166.4 crore post acquisition of the grinding



TWEAKS IN TAX TREATY WITH MAURITIUS

FPIs withdraw over Rs 5,200 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors dumped domestic equities worth over Rs 5,200 crore in April so far on concerns over tweaks in India's tax treaty with Mauritius, which would now impose higher scrutiny on investments made here via the island nation.

This came following a staggering net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February, data with the depositories showed.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign

Portfolio Investors (FPIs) made a net outflow of Rs 5,254 crore in Indian equities this month (till April 19).

The major trigger for FPI selling was the tweak in India's tax

treaty with Mauritius, which would now impose higher scrutiny on investments made in India via the island nation, Himanshu

Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

The two nations have reached a consensus on a protocol amending a double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA).



'Cost, speed top priority for logistics sector'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cost and speed have now become the top priority of the firms engaged in logistics business for the last-mile delivery of goods and growth of the sector, a report has said.

According to the Last-Mile Trends Report 2024, earlier the top priority was cost and satisfaction.

"In last-mile delivery now top priority is cost and speed. The needle has shifted from cost and satisfaction to cost and speed," it said.

The report was unveiled during 'The Last Mile Leaders



Event" organised by technology platform FarEye in collaboration with Microsoft this week.

Kushal Nahata, Co-founder and CEO of FarEye, said that within the next five years, autonomous drones will han-

dle 30 per cent of urban deliveries, reducing delivery times and costs dramatically.

The report was based on insights gathered from over 300 leaders across five continents, representing companies with a

combined revenue exceeding USD 100 billion.

Out of 300 participants, over 50 per cent stated that they deliver the goods same day/next day.

The report also said that 80 per cent of supply chain leaders believe measuring the cost of delivery is a top priority.

FarEye has also launched an initiative, 'last-mile innovation nexus', to help startups raise funds and receive mentoring from global experts in the logistics sector.

Gautam Kumar, COO & Co-founder, FarEye, said: "The initiative is a launch pad for

startups to secure transformative partnerships. It is exciting to see the surge in the adoption of AI, robotics, and embedded data analytics, all geared toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of logistics operations."

Over 40 supply chain experts from more than 20 countries, representing diverse industries including retail, logistics, postal, consumer packaged goods (CPG), and pharmaceuticals, came together at the event to explore the transformative potential of technology in driving cost reduction in the logistics sector.

IRDAI abolishes age restriction on health insurance product

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With a view to widen the market and foster adequate protection from healthcare expenses, insurance regulator IRDAI has removed the age limit of 65 years for individuals buying health insurance policies.

This marks a significant departure from the conventional constraints that limited individuals in securing comprehensive coverage.



By abolishing the maximum age restriction on purchasing health insurance plans, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of

India (IRDAI) aims to foster a more inclusive and accessible healthcare ecosystem, ensuring adequate protection against unforeseen medical expenses.

As per the earlier guidelines, individuals were allowed to purchase a new insurance policy only till the age of 65. However, with the recent amendment, which has been effective from April 1, anyone, regardless of age, is eligible to buy a new health insurance policy.

what's brewing?



AAYUSH SHARMA ON LEAVING SALMAN KHAN FILMS:

'It was crucial for me to grow'

Aayush Sharma gave an explanation for his decision to leave Salman Khan Films (SKF). The actor had made his film debut in *Loveyatri*, supported by SKF, and then in *Antim: The Final Truth*, another production of SKF. His upcoming film is *Ruslaan*. Salman Khan's brother-in-law, Aayush Sharma, was approached to star in *Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan*, but he ultimately declined to do so. In response to reports that he and Salman Khan were at odds, the actor opened up, saying, "That is not how it is; this is my home. An actor never works for a single production company. To be honest, I find it hilarious, but my decisions have come up in a lot of conversations. Numerous actors have pursued careers in their comfort zones, worked for a specific production company, left, and then returned to it. My goal is to venture outside; I wanted to do so. I can't continue working solely for my family in a closed environment since that would also impede my own growth. Moving out of the family for a while to work outside the home was a deliberate decision. It was crucial for me to develop, discover who I am, and become deserving of being called back."

Salman Khan co-starred with Aayush Sharma in the major role of *Antim*. Admittedly, he's been fortunate. "You don't get to have such a big part in a Salman-starring movie in your second movie. He had a significant role in the movie; it wasn't just a five- to seven-minute cameo. The plot centers on my character at some point in the movie. You don't (usually) get this chance, but I did. I have to acknowledge my gratitude and realise that this is the most support I will ever receive. I have to take this journey now," he declared. His upcoming film is *Ruslaan*. The cast, which is led by producer KK Radhamohan, also stars Telugu actors Jagapathi Babu and Sushri Mishra. It is slated to hit cinemas on April 26.

Matty Healy 'unaffected' by Taylor's *The Tortured Poets Department*

The *Tortured Poets Department*, Taylor Swift's most recent album, was released on Friday and has been the talk of the internet ever since. While fans speculate about which songs are about whom, the aunt of Matty Healy, Taylor's purported ex, has responded and provided an update on Healy's personal situation.

Following their six-year relationship breakup, Taylor and Joe Alwyn parted ways last year. Her brief relationship with Matty Healy, the frontman of *The 1975*, ended abruptly. Swift moved on from him and fell in love with Travis Kelce, an athlete.

With their PDAs and romantic evenings, the couple is enticing the internet. In the meantime, Taylor revealed the album at the 66th Annual Grammy Awards in February of this year after taking home the Best Pop Vocal trophy.

The story claims that Debbie Dedes, Matty Healy's aunt, provided some insight into Matty's possible emotions following the publication of Taylor Swift's eleventh studio album, *The Tortured Poets Department*. "Nothing surprises him anymore," his aunt said.

Debbie Dedes, Matty Healy's aunt, continued, "He's very happy in his new relationship." A former friend of Taylor Swift's, Matty Healy, came on stage with her to support Phoebe Bridgers as part of her Eras Tour. Speculation has suggested that Taylor discussed a "temporary" romance in the song *Fortnite*. "And I love you; it's ruining my life. I touched you for only a fortnight," the song's lyrics read. It's also said that the song *The Smallest Man* disparages Healy.

'Diljith Paaji changed how Sardars were portrayed in hindi cinema'



Jashn Kohli is enjoying the limelight from Imtiaz Ali's *Amar Singh Chamkila*, which stars Diljit Dosanjh. In the musical biography based on the life of the renowned Punjabi singer, the actor portrays Papu, Amarjot Kaur's brother.

In a recent interview, Jashn said that growing up, he watched Shah Rukh Khan and dreamed of being an actor. He did, however, note that his desire to alter the story was sparked by the clichéd images of Sardars, which is what inspired him to pursue acting.

"I was hurt and wanted to change the way we are perceived and portrayed in Bollywood," the actor said, adding, "Either the soldier or the buddy of the hero was assigned to us. I would talk to writers who acknowledged the flaw but lacked the tools to fix it."

"Diljit Paaji (brother) recently spoke about how people thought Sardars were only portrayed in a certain way, and he changed it. His statements reflected the voices of a great number of people in the neighbourhood. Even I am working to change the perception of Sardars that the public has had for so long," he continued.



Zendaya 'enjoyed' shooting intimate scenes in *Challengers*

Zendaya felt more comfortable in the bedroom than on the tennis court during filming action scenes for her upcoming smash song. In the movie *Challengers*, the *Dune* actor, performed by Josh O'Connor and Mike Faist, respectively, plays Tashi, a former tennis prodigy entangled in a romantic triangle with her husband Art and his rival Patrick.

The 27-year-old, who is in a relationship with her co-star in *Spider-Man*, Tom Holland, added, "Tashi is incredibly driven. She is really ruthless. The private moments were excellent; I really enjoyed them. Being associated with those guys seemed like a huge blessing."

She went on to add, "And no matter what was going on, I always felt like I had their back, and they had mine. We were extremely fortunate to have Luca Guadagnino as our director, who genuinely inspired us all to work together and contribute our own ideas. It was a really thrilling process to be creative."

Zendaya admitted that she hates working out, so while the love scenes were simple for her, her character's tennis skills were harder to come by. "How did I meet the physical challenges of the role?" she inquired.

"Quite challenging. I am not among those who enjoy working out. But there was no avoiding the fact that Tashi is supposedly an elite athlete," Zendaya further added.

The *Euphoria* actress elaborated on the support she received for the role prep by saying, "Thank goodness, I had a fantastic support system and learned a lot, especially about air tennis and how to project confidence in my abilities. We trained for about six weeks, and it was quite demanding." *The Spider-Man: Far From Home* star quipped, "We're hoping that we did a decent job and that nobody will be too angry. But I'm definitely not going to quit my day job! The hardest aspect of creating *Challengers* was undoubtedly playing tennis."

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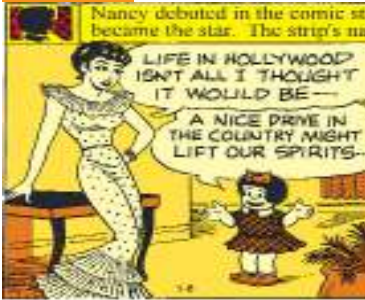
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



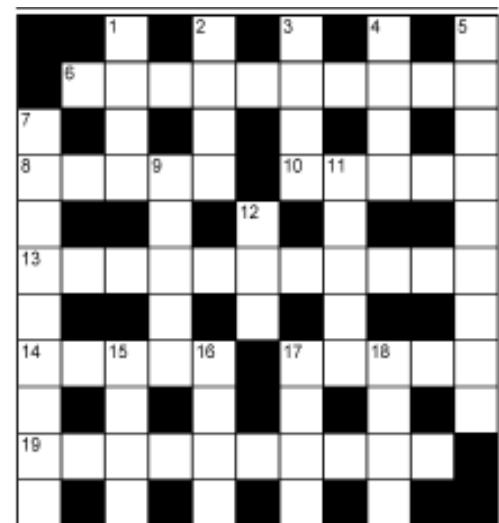
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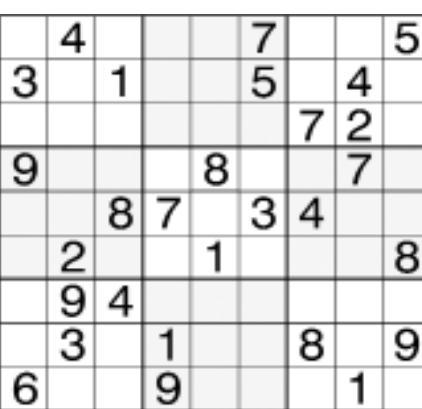
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
7	5	2	8	4	9	1	6	3
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4	1	7	2	9	6	3	5	8
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8	2	5	1	7	3	4	9	6

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Broken down; not working properly (3,2,5)
- A word for a taxi driver
- A sung musical drama
- Saying you are sorry
- Light soft modelling wood
- Part of a poem or song
- Follows seventeenth

DOWN

- A round underground part of some plants
- A small type of horse
- A toy that spins around a held string (2-2)
- The part along the side or end
- Three-sided figures
- A way of cooking eggs

SOLUTION 722

S	T	A	R	T	S	I	D	I
C	A	G	E	S	H	O	U	T
K	U	N	A	M	E			
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‘Low profile means I am not interested in limelight, but instead just my work’

TEJAL SINHA

A young boy from Belwa in the West Champaran district of Bihar, with a lot of aspirations to become an actor someday, relocated himself to Delhi at the tender age of seventeen and wanted to take admission in the National Ssschool of Drama, only to get rejected not once or twice, but three times. But the zeal to become an actor never went off, and he continued doing theater. And here he is today, one of the most accomplished actors we have in the industry, who has also been awarded India's fourth-highest civilian honour, the Padma Shri, for his contributions to art!

Well, if you are still unaware, we are talking of Manoj Bajpayee, who also holds three national awards in his name. There has, of course, been something appealing about the actor and his work that one can never stop adoring, irrespective of his low profile.

Other things apart, the *Gangs of Wasseypur* actor is currently enjoying the responses and love he has been receiving for giving the voice to the documentary, *The Secrets of the Buddha Relics*, streaming on Discovery Plus! "A docu-series doing so well and becoming one of the top shows—something that's not a fictional show—isn't that amazing," gleefully begins the star on a brighter note. The documentary by Friday Filmworks follows on the heels of the previous successful series, *Secrets of Sinauli* and *Secrets of Kohinoor*.

A ecstatic Manoj Bajpayee further continues his excitement: "It also shows that if a documentary is told in an interesting manner and with all the proper research, there is an audience ready for it to consume it. Having said that, there is a bright future for this segment and format, and the filmmakers of the documentary should really be excited about it. I was completely surprised. I must not lie. I never thought a docu-series

would do so well like any other fictional series, a film, or an OTT platform and get so many eyeballs and so many views, and the responses are very encouraging."

As we went on to discuss much in detail about *Buddha Relics*, he also discussed his take on Buddhism, saying, "I am not an expert on it; all I would say is that Buddhism is all about finding yourself, not attaching yourself to all the materialistic success and failures of life, and keeping moving and practicing spiritual exercises."

Being a part of factual entertainment does come with more responsibility, like in *Buddha Relics*. And our guest for the day couldn't agree much as he says, "It's only filled with responsibility and nothing else." Basically, "You are making it because you are interested in this form. But when you're doing your research or the production work, all of it as a filmmaker or as a research team, everyone's intention is to do it the right way and not make it half-baked. You bring all the information available for the audience, and it is they who decide which is the truth that they feel very close to."

Lending a voice to a documentary series on historical events, and with seeing a lot of period dramas being produced in the industry, as a history student himself, there are many historical characters that the *Family Man* star would want to play. And so, "I would definitely wait upon one of those offers that has been much researched and worked upon in great detail. There's no point in making period films just because they are being made. It becomes difficult for me to attach to it."

He believes that being stubborn and patient is why he feels he has the roles he has played to date. With patience as the key, he shares, "There can be disappointment and failures, but doing your job day in and day out. I'm not focusing on the material side of it, the material gaze in this profession, but rather be involved with the craft and be in love with the craft."

Having played different genres and char-

acters, we wondered how he handles up with the toll that the characters could bring up on him, and he explains, "With age and experience, you learn to detach yourself. My biggest solution to it is to start working on your next one and not wait for the success or failure of the one just released. You have to keep moving on. You need to start focusing on your next one. And the next one somehow takes you away from it. All the dark experiences of the last character."

He is a firm believer in: "What is the point of being an actor if you don't look for complex characters and want to do linear characters?" That also means that I have endeavoured to take up work, which has been far more challenging than the usual ones. They help me grow as an actor. They help me immerse myself completely in the character. And get the truth of the character through the audience; without really immersing yourself or being fully involved, you can just not be with the complexities of those characters." In this exclusive chat, he also reveals that he didn't have any such 'dream role' but always wanted to play Hamlet and Devdas, but things didn't fall well for him. But that didn't affect him in any way, and he moved on further.

He is someone who likes to read a script like a reader, and if he finds it of great quality and something that he hasn't done before, "When I say character, I mean it may be a policeman, which I have done in the past. But I am talking about the character of the police. If the character has a new sense, that attracts me. And the script



Actor Manoj Bajpayee, who is currently enjoying the love he has received for his recent projects, *Secrets of Buddha Relics* and *Silence 2*, is very excited about the release of *Bhaiyyaji*. The actor gets candid with *The Pioneer* for an exclusive chat, sharing his overwhelming feelings for documentary, his craft, and deets about his next release.

is really of top quality. And if my instinct is to say, Go ahead, then it's perfect."

Again, as we went ahead in this chit-chat, we also spoke about him maintaining his low profile. "My low profile," he laughs out really loud and says, "Low profile also means that I am not interested in the limelight. I am more interested in my work. And after that, I don't want to be seen anywhere. Right now, I'm very excited about the promotion. Going to start in almost 2 weeks. For *Bhaiyyaji*! Releasing on May 24th."

Now, on the work front, after immense appreciation for the docu-series and his recent *Silence 2*, he is all excited to begin the promotions of *Bhaiyyaji*, which is going to start in a few days. With the film releasing on May 24th, he goes on to share some exclusive details on the concluding note: "*Bhaiyyaji* is an action entertainer. This is the first action film for me. In my entire career. It's a hard-core mainstream film. The story is rooted in our culture. You will see me in a character that you have not seen before. You will see a part of a film like this that has never been made before. In fact, this being my first action film, I was also injured because of all the actions. I always jokingly said, 'Yaar yeh sab action jab mein apne 20s mein tha, 30s mein tha tab kisine nahi karaya, ab saare haddi todh rahe hai meri' (Man, no one offered me these action roles when I was in my 20s and 30s; now everyone wants to break my bone.) So, I am very excited to present the trailer and also the anthem of the film. So that is keeping me quite busy. And *Silence*, too, is released. Focus would be on the promotion of *Bhaiyyaji*."

SINGER-COMPOSER SHARMISTHA CHATTERJEE, WHO HAS RECENTLY LENT HER VOICE TO HEERAMANDI'S TILASMI BAHEIN, SPEAKS TO THE PIONEER ABOUT BEING A PART OF THE COMPOSITION, WORKING WITH SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI, AND MORE.

Singing for Sanjay Leela Bhansali was the ‘pinnacle of honour’

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Sharmistha Chatterjee's journey is as mesmerising as her voice. Breaking barriers and making history as the first Indian lead singer at *Coke Studio Pakistan* with the Mekaal Hasan Band in 2015 showcased her exceptional talent and ability to transcend borders with her music. Her enchanting performance in *Tilasmi Bahein* for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Netflix series *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar* has already captivated audiences once again, showcasing her ability to weave emotions into each note with her melodies. Her contribution to the music world is truly remarkable!

Heeramandi differs from her other ventures in the industry, as she shares, "Singing for Sanjay Leela Bhansali in the film industry was the pinnacle of honour and excitement for me. It fulfilled every artist's dream I had ever imagined. Providing my voice for the song was an extraordinary opportunity, especially considering

Bhansali's reputation as a magician when crafting popular Bollywood film songs. The experience was overwhelming, and I am deeply grateful for this unique opportunity bestowed upon me. Collaborating with such a renowned filmmaker added an extra layer of significance to my artistic journey too. It's a moment I will forever cherish, knowing that my voice will be immortalised in his cinematic creation."

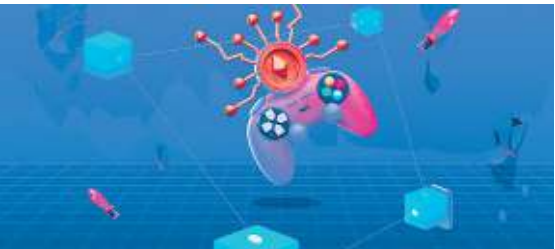
Songs certainly bring out the character's emotions, and the same goes with Sonakshi Sinha's character in *Heeramandi* and this song for her. She explains, "When I entered the recording studio, I was briefed on the essence of the song and the emotions it demanded. The instructions emphasised the delicate balance of femininity and the subtle power that needed to be infused into the performance! Although the storyline remained undisclosed, I was given a vivid portrayal of the character and the specific emotions to convey through my voice. It was a collaborative effort to envision how each note should resonate with the intended feelings. The guidance provided a framework for me to imagine the essence of the song and embody it in my performance. Despite the mystery surrounding the storyline, the clarity of the character's emotions allowed me to channel the required attitude and depth into the rendition. It was a process of artistic interpretation and expression, guided by the vision and direction provided."

"The song itself was a breathtaking composition," shares the talented singer, adding, "and working with Sanjay sir, known for his meticulous attention to detail, was both exhilarating and daunting. His perfectionist approach ensured that every aspect, from the lyrics to the vocals to the composition, was meticulously crafted. Throughout my journey as a vocalist, exploring various styles and genres proved invaluable for this particular song. Its fusion of jazz and world music elements added an intriguing dimension that captivated me from the start. Each word of the song carried an enchanting quality, making the listening experience not only pleasing but also deeply compelling. Being entrusted with the vocals of such a meticulously crafted piece was both an honour and a thrilling challenge, pushing me to deliver my best performance yet." The song she shared had a profound focus on bringing out the inner power of femininity within the character. The lyrics resonated with themes of self-discovery and embracing the hidden aspects within oneself. It transcended conventional boundaries, allowing listeners to connect deeply with the emotions of femininity on a profound level. Collaborating on such a transformative piece was an experience that stretched her artistic boundaries and left a lasting impact

on my understanding of feminine empowerment. Hindustani classical and voice intertwine to create harmony, and as an artist, she goes beyond her limit and explores various genres. "Viewing my voice as an instrument stems from my foundation in Hindustani classical music, where I was immersed in a fusion of diverse light classical forms such as Ghazals and Dadra, complemented by instruments like the Sitar, Sundari, and Bansuri. This rich musical heritage also draws influences from Arab and Persian traditions. Embracing my voice as an instrument allows me to explore a vast array of genres, blending my classical training with contemporary styles. Each genre becomes a unique celebration of joy, reflecting the specialised expertise inherent in its approach. As an artist, I perceive learning as an ongoing journey, forever a student, constantly evolving and refining my craft to embrace the endless possibilities of musical expression."

She doesn't dwell much on meeting others' expectations; instead, "I focus intently on staying true to my own style. Fortunately, I've had the privilege of collaborating with individuals who appreciate the uniqueness of my vocals, even in challenging genres. Each opportunity, including those that demand raising my voice, contributes to the evolution of my distinct style, influenced by a mosaic of experiences across various genres and recordings. When I step into the studio, I surrender completely to the vision of the music director, a process that often results in remarkable transformations, particularly evident in the *Heeramandi* series. As for authenticity, it's not something challenged by these collaborations; rather, they enhance it. Anything that resonates with people must stem from the heart, embodying sincerity and honesty."

She further adds, "When modulating my voice for a song, I strive to remain true to myself, ensuring that my authentic self shines through. Fortunately, maintaining authenticity hasn't posed challenges, as directors have embraced my unique style, fostering fruitful collaborations based on mutual respect and appreciation. Being the first Indian at *Coke Studio Pakistan* stands out as a heartfelt moment of joy in my career." Sharmistha Chatterjee is all set for her upcoming ventures into exciting collaborations and independent music projects. Alongside this, she is also nurturing a dedicated fan base through her independent music endeavours. "With a band by my side, we're striving to infuse our performances with a unique fusion of traditional and modern sounds, captivating audiences with our distinctive style." She signs off on a brighter note!



ALL THINGS PERTAINING TO GAMING INDUSTRY'S USE OF BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY!

Were you aware that the amount of gaming activity on blockchain increased by 2000% over 2023? Despite facing difficult macro and microeconomic conditions, blockchain technology in gaming is a reliable asset that has attracted more than \$2.5 billion in funding from venture capitalists and other international investors. Additionally, the metaverse environment has given games additional chances to shine in the blockchain cosmos, and development efforts for gaming dApps are still expanding. A number of financial firms have also calculated that the quickly developing decentralised metaverse has the potential to lead the \$8 trillion industry. The key element propelling this kind of industry expansion is the incorporation of blockchain technology into gaming applications. After having achieved a gross merchandise value (GMV) exceeding US\$15 million organically, with 4.5 million users, India's OneTo11 is setting its sights on global expansion, targeting Latin America (LATAM), Southeast Asia, and Africa, with a larger focus on attracting users and ensuring a smooth local experience. Launched in 2021, it has made tremendous strides in tapping global markets, scaling the company from zero to a staggering US\$10 million, with millions of users hailing from enormous markets such as the US, Europe, and the Middle East. Its diverse user base, spanning 168 countries and ranging from 18 to 65 years old, witnesses a staggering 81,000 daily active users during peak events, with over 7.3 lakh monthly active users, further reinforcing the platform's global appeal. Through a multidimensional approach, it also aims to expand its gaming library with six more games over the next year while also developing ed-tech products through gamified games to attract the academic spectrum, further broadening the learning horizons for schoolchildren.

"The success has been a result of our team's commitment to reimagine offerings in the online gaming space, with a focus on leveraging technology as a key differentiator, including our blockchain-based architecture, and leveraging support blockchain networks like HEDERA, Polygon, and BNB Greenfield, etc., which greatly optimises the platform and significantly enhances the user experience," said Mr. Ravindra Kumar, co-founder and CEO of OneTo11.

Adding to the platform's success, he further notes, "While we had already been hosting gamers from more than 145 countries across the world, with this expansion, we feel proud to be showcasing the prowess of Indian online-gaming and the technological ecosystem at an international scale in a more focused manner." As it continues to scale its operations and expand its user base, the company remains focused on delivering cutting-edge gaming experiences and pushing the boundaries of what is possible with blockchain technology.

The aforementioned research, "DappRadar x BGA Games Report—Q1," states that over 1.22 million unique active wallets (UAW) were drawn to blockchain games, accounting for 52% of all activity within the ecosystem. The concept of storing significant in-game assets on the blockchain is captivating people. These assets can be exchanged for cash after they are obtained by players, and game app development companies can establish long-lasting frameworks that can be expanded upon by other developers. Though this industry is still in its infancy and presents unique challenges, these concepts do look very fascinating.





Mi eye revenge against RR in reverse fixture

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Resurgent Mumbai Indians will need to address their bowling woes as they look to exact revenge on table-toppers Rajasthan Royals in their reverse fixture of the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

With three wins in last four games, MI have hit the recovery road to reach sixth spot in the points table after a poor start this season, while RR are on a rampaging run as they occupy the top spot with 12 points.

The five-time champions survived a late onslaught from Ashutosh Sharma to eke out a nine-run win over Punjab Kings in the last game.

It was once again Jasprit Bumrah, who was left to do the heavy lifting as he stood out with his three wickets. The star India pacer shone with the new ball and then returned to produce a breakthrough, and he did all

this without conceding much. With 13 scalps, Bumrah tops the list of the most wickets this IPL. He also has the second-best economy of just under six runs but while he has been on the mark, his bowling colleagues have struggled.

Gerald Coetzee, too, has made an impact with 12 wickets but has gone for runs. But Akash Madhwal and skipper Hardik Pandya have been inconsistent.

While Shreyas Gopal has taken a wicket each in the three games he has played so far, MI also need to use the experience of veteran Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammed Nabi as a bowler. In batting, former skipper Rohit Sharma's scintillating century, albeit in a losing cause, has been the highlight, while Ishan Kishan has been inconsistent. Hardik, too, hasn't made much of an impact so far, while Tilak Verma has done moderately well.



A huge positive for MI is Suryakumar Yadav's return to form. His 53-ball 78 against PBKS was the cornerstone of MI innings and on his day he can destroy any attack.

The last time MI faced the RR bowling unit, they looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights, as Trent Boult removed three of their top-order batters for naught and

the veteran left-arm pacer will again be a massive threat. Avesh Khan has been entrusted with the responsibility of bowling at the death and he has done

well. Kuldeep Sen, too, showed his skills but he needs to work on his economy. With 12 wickets, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has been

RR's most valuable player in the bowling department, though off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has struggled.

For RR, Riyan Parag has been the batter of the season. The young Assam batter has reinvented himself and his 318 runs is one of the reasons why RR find themselves at the top of the pecking order.

While the batting has revolved around him, skipper Sanju Samson too has produced some fine knocks for the team, aggregating 276 runs so far.

England's Jos Buttler single-handedly chased down a 200-plus total to win RR their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders but the form of fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal has been a matter of concern as he has failed to capitalise on his starts.

Shimron Hetmyer has also hit top gear when needed, rescuing the team against PBKS the other day.

TEAMS

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

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwen Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.

You cannot always rely on Kohli: Varun to RCB

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It's high time India's domestic players step up for Royal Challengers Bengaluru this IPL season and reduce the dependence on Virat Kohli, former India pacer Varun Aaron said on Sunday.

Kohli has been the standout performer for RCB this IPL season and is the current Orange Cap holder with 361 runs in 7 innings. His strike rate is 147.34, with the highest score being 113 not out.

Speaking to Star Sports, Aaron said, "It's just that RCB are not finding the rhythm, the domestic players are just not stepping up."

The 34-year-old Aaron, who announced his retirement from first-class cricket earlier this year, added, "If you have to be anywhere at the top of the table or the middle of the table at this point of the table, you have to have domestic players who are firing and you cannot always rely on Virat Kohli."

"The other guys have to step up and also all their money, is sitting in the dug-out. You can't spend that much cash on players and not have them play."

In 2014, Aaron was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 2 crore, and was retained by the franchise ahead of the 2016 auction. Australia's former skipper in



the limited overs formats, Aaron Finch feels RCB needs an explosive middle-order batter who can complement Kohli.

"He's (Kohli) scored a lot of runs everywhere. He's a modern day great. And I think the fact that he's getting runs and RCB are still not making it is a positive sign in one degree."

"It's that when Virat is playing well, that genuinely carries the rest of the players with him."

"They just need to find a partnership with him, they need to find an explosive middle order player who is in form, Lomror has been in and out, so it's got all the makings of an epic game," Finch said.

RCB are playing Kolkata

Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Sunday.

Speaking of Travis Head's blazing 89-run knock for Sunrisers Hyderabad against Delhi Capitals in Delhi on Saturday, Finch said the left-handed opener has taken the "fear of failure out of his mind."

"It's always been in him, the ability to play like this. I guess the freedom to express himself and be able to deal with the ups and downs of playing such an aggressive and high-risk brand of cricket, I think has just released him to a new level."

"And I think if you look back at the World Cup final, he kept playing his shots even when there were wickets falling around him, the ball was moving. Because he's

taken the fear of failure out of his mind.

"If he misses out five or six times in a row, it doesn't bother him because he knows he's one shot away. He's the type of player that needs one ball in the middle. And that's all it will take for him to get going again," Finch said.

In a match that saw over 460 runs being scored, seamer T Natrajan finished with excellent figures of 4/19, and Finch believed the bowler getting all his wickets in the death when the game was as good as over, prevented him from getting the Man-of-the-Match Award.

"When 460 runs are scored in a game and a guy gets 4 for 19, that's a special performance. I think the thing that didn't give him the man of the match is the 4 wickets were right at the death when the game was done and dusted."

Set an imposing target of 267, DC were stopped at 199. "I think the ability of Delhi to get that run rate under 12 an over was extraordinary and at that stage of the innings, they were in the box seat to win it."

"The wicket slowed up a bit just like Pat Cummins talked about it and the ball got a little softer and made it easier for the slower bowlers to grip. It was just one of those things where they couldn't sustain it," Finch said.

Watched a lot of Kuldeep videos, did simulation: Abhishek

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Thoroughly dissecting Kuldeep Yadav's bowling videos and doing match simulation by facing left-arm wrist spinners in the nets went a long way in helping Abhishek Sharma annihilate the India international during Sunrisers Hyderabad's 67-run victory over Delhi Capitals in an IPL game here.

Abhishek smashed 46 off just 12 balls with half a dozen of sixes and four of them came off Kuldeep's deliveries.

Kuldeep has been DC's most consistent bowler with his guile and variations troubling the batters, but Abhishek

went back and forth to disturb his length and forced him to go flatter.

So what was his preparation like for Kuldeep?

"Personally, I always try to plan really well for the spinners and the main bowlers of the other team and this year... This match also, I was very careful with Kuldeep because I know he is their main bowler and I've been watching his videos," the Punjab state team skipper said after the match.

"I try to play similar bowlers a day before, net bowlers and local bowlers, and that helps me a lot. I try to just make sure that they are pretty much



similar to the bowlers that I'm going to face. So that helps me a lot," Abhishek explained.

Not bowling because of Impact Player Rule

While he is primarily a batter, Abhishek also bowls handy left-arm spin but hasn't been summoned a lot to bowl in

this edition, thanks to the Impact Player rule.

Does he think it can affect his selection or chances of showcasing his other facet of the game?

"No, I think everybody knows that I can bowl, but obviously, there's because of this impact player, there's always an extra bowler or a better, so probably with every all-rounders, this is going to happen. Even this happened last year."

"For me, especially, I believe that I should be ready whenever I'm called. Just get the chance because I know somehow I will get the chance and I should be ready for that."

We are not getting too far ahead of ourselves: Head

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on explosive starts, Sunrisers Hyderabad may have won four games on the bounce this IPL season, but their swashbuckling opener Travis Head says "we are not getting too far ahead of ourselves."

SRH crushed Delhi Capitals by 67 runs in their most recent match here on Saturday, following sensational knocks from their in-form openers Travis Head (89) and Abhishek Sharma (46).

SRH have made a habit of posting big totals this season, going past 260 for the third time on Saturday.



"It is very enjoyable. It is nice to be here and play well, and it is hard not to smile and enjoy yourself with the batting order that we have got, and the order is working well through the first seven, so it is very enjoyable," Head told JioCinema.

Batting first, Hyderabad

scored their fourth 200+ innings this edition by scoring 266 runs, while Delhi were bowled out for 199 runs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. This was SRH's fifth win of the season.

Head also spoke on SRH's momentum and positive energy around the team.

"We will take it easy for a minute. I think it was Murali's (Muttiah Muralitharan) birthday a couple of days ago, so we have a party for him tomorrow night, so that will be enjoyable."

"I think it's a nice group, we are not getting too far ahead of ourselves. Obviously, we are excited. We have got four wins on the bounce now, we

are playing well, and the energy is always better when you are winning."

"The environment is really good. That's what Dan (Daniel Vettori) and Pat Cummins are going to bring. If there is a loss here or there, a couple of poor performances, that's okay. We are showing how good we can be."

"As long as we can keep instilling that confidence around how well we are playing, I guess the ceiling is as high as it wants to be," Head said.

Former India pacer Zaheer Khan praised Jake Fraser-McGurk (65 runs) and T Natarajan (4/19).

OTHER SPORTS

HI names 28 members core probable group for men camp ahead of Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Sunday announced a 28-member core probable group for the men's national coaching camp to iron out the flaws ahead of the Paris Olympics.

The camp commenced on Sunday and will last till May 13 at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru.

The team returns to camp after suffering a 0-5 loss in a five-match Test series in Australia.

After this camp, the team will travel to Belgium and London for their next two legs of the FIH Pro League, where they will be up against Argentina, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain.

"We are looking to train an important block of training in this camp, and we need to make sure that we are in the best shape possible ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympics. We have an exciting group of experienced players along with some young players," chief coach Craig Fulton said in a HI release.

"The tour to Australia has helped us in realising where we need to work on and I always believe that we can work on our shortcomings and look to set things straight well before



the final leg of the Pro League and the Paris 2024 Olympics."

The core group of the national coaching camp includes goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak, PR Sreejesh, Suraj Karkera and defenders Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Sagar Prasad, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem, Shamsher Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Rajkumar Pal, Vishnukant Singh.

While the list of forwards comprises Akashdeep Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Abhishek, Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Mohammed Raheel Mousen, Bobby Singh Dhama, and Aarajjeet Singh Hundal.

El Gouna squash Ramit stuns world number 11 Crouin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Ramit Tandon notched up a stunning 3-1 win over French world No 11 Victor Crouin in the second round of the El Gouna International Open, a USD 198,000 prize money PSA Platinum squash event, in El Gouna, Egypt.

The world No 40 Tandon, who has a direct entry to the World Championships to be played in Egypt next month, won 11-9, 12-10, 8-11, 11-5 in 52 minutes for his second victory in five meetings over the Frenchman. Tandon will meet Peruvian World No 3 Diego Elias in the third round.

Elias has won both his previous meetings against the Indian. Tandon had beaten Egyptian world No 62 Aly Hussein 11-6, 11-9, 11-5 in the first round of the 48-player draw.

Messi scores twice, Inter Miami beats Nashville SC 3-1

Fort Lauderdale (US), Apr 21 (AP) Lionel Messi scored twice to increase his Major League Soccer-leading total to seven and also had an assist to lead Inter Miami over Nashville SC 3-1.

Messi had his second two-goal game in MLS after scoring two against Orlando on March 2. He has a goal or assist in each of the six league matches he's played, missing four because of



injury.

Sergio Busquets scored his first goal with Miami since joining former Barcelona teammate Messi last summer. Luis Suárez, another ex-Barcelona teammate, assisted on Messi's first goal. "Very happy that the goal helped the team win the match," Busquets said in Spanish.

"What matters is the team and the victory. Today, I managed to score but the ultimate accomplishments are the positive results for our team."

Miami (5-2-3, 21 points) is unbeaten in five matches against Nashville since Messi's arrival. Miami also remained in first place in the Eastern Conference.

"We became very familiar with

their style of play and that helped us today," Miami defender Tomás Avilés said.

For the second consecutive week, Miami allowed a goal in the opening minutes when an own goal by Miami defender Franco Neri put Nashville ahead. Neri deflected Daniel Lovitz's corner kick into the Miami net in the second minute. That was the only goal for Nashville (1-6-1, 4).

Miami erased the early deficit with goals from Messi and Busquets in the 11th and 39th minutes.

Nashville goalkeeper Elliot Panico deflected Messi's 12-yard shot to an open Suárez, who immediately tapped it to Messi. With Panico out of position, Messi converted a

sliding shot inside the 6-yard box for the equalizer.

"We didn't play good football during the first 10 minutes but that changed after Leo's goal," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said.

"We started finding our space and created opportunities."

Busquets scored the tiebreaker as he headed Messi's corner kick to the near post past Panico. It was Busquets' first goal since 2022, when he was with Barcelona.

Goalkeeper Drake Callender kept Miami ahead when he made a diving deflection of Hany Mukhtar's 35-yard blast in the 55th minute.

Messi gave Miami a two-goal cushion, converting on a penalty kick in the 81st minute.

Nashville's Josh Bauer fouled Leo Alfonso on the edge of the penalty area then Messi beat reserve goalkeeper Joe Willis inside the right post.

Messi's former Barcelona teammate Jordi Alba didn't play because of a hamstring injury. Diego Gomez also exited after he sustained an ankle injury late in the first half. Martino said Gomez will undergo additional tests to determine the severity of the injury.

Miami will visit New England next Saturday, while Nashville hosts San Jose.

Garbiñe retires from tennis

AP ■ MADRID

Two-time major champion Garbiñe Muguruza announced she's retiring from professional tennis at age 30



after an extended time away from the court.

"I feel that it is time to retire and open up a new chapter in my life," the former world No. 1 told a news conference in Madrid on Saturday.

Muguruza beat Serena Williams in the 2016 French Open final and Venus Williams in the 2017 Wimbledon final, making her the only player to defeat each Williams sister in a Grand Slam title match.

The Spanish player earned 10 career titles and was also the runner-up at 2015 Wimbledon and the 2020 Australian Open. She earned nearly \$25 million in prize money - 13th on the all-time list - and finished with a win-loss record of 449-238.

Her last important victory was the 2021 ATP Finals.

"The word retirement' sounds very harsh to be because I am only 30 years old, but I have achieved so much since I

started playing 25 years ago," she said. "I am proud of what I have achieved, for having stuck to reaching my goals even through the tough times."

Muguruza has not played since January 2023. In April that year, she announced she was extending her hiatus from playing and said, "Spending time with my family and friends (has) really been healthy and amazing."

Born in Caracas to a Spanish father and Venezuelan mother, Muguruza moved to Barcelona when she was a child to continue her tennis training. She became the first Spanish woman to lift a Grand Slam trophy since Arantxa Sánchez Vicario at the 1998 French Open.



THIRUVEER ENTERS WEDLOCK!

Tollywood actor Thiruveer, who is known for films like *Masooda*, and *Pareshan*, among the rest, enters the wedlock. In a surprising update, the actor shared the exciting news on Sunday evening. The actor tied the knot with entrepreneur Kalpana Rao. In the post, he mentioned, "A new beginning". As the actor shared the pictures from his intimate wedding, the post was bombarded with warm wishes and blessings for the couple. Meanwhile, on the work front, the versatile actor, who has gained fame with phenomenal performances and selecting diverse concepts, has revealed his next project. RES Entertainment and Star Pictures' *Production No. 7* was announced on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami.

EXPLORING PRATHINIDHI 2: A CINEMATIC JOURNEY WITH DIRECTOR MURTHY DEVAGUPTA

Prathinidhi 2 is all set to hit theaters on April 25. Ahead of the film's release, director Murthy Devagupta shares some insights on the film's underlying agenda, the creative process, and more.

PNS | HYDERABAD

As Nara Rohit gears up for his cinematic comeback with *Prathinidhi 2*, director Murthy Devagupta sheds light on the film's underlying agenda and the creative process behind this highly anticipated project. Produced by Kumar Raja Battula, Anjaneyu Sri Thota, and Surendranath Bolline, under Vanara Entertainments and Rana Arts banners, *Prathinidhi 2* is poised to captivate audiences with its thrilling narrative and thought-provoking themes. Murthy Devagupta sets the stage by emphasising that *Prathinidhi 2* questions the prevailing agenda system without targeting specific political entities. Drawing parallels with impactful films like *Tagore*, *Lucifer*, *Bhartiyadudu*, and *Leader*, Murthy underscores that the movie aims to prompt critical reflection among movie enthusiasts.

He explains, "*Prathinidhi 2*, much like its predecessors, delves into the system without singling out any party. It's a pure commercial thriller that resonates with movie lovers. "In *Prathinidhi 2*, every journalist assumes a heroic role, reflecting a deep sense of societal responsibility. Murthy underscores the film's tribute to journalists who courageously uphold journalistic integrity, often at great personal risk. He

remarks, "The hero of *Prathinidhi 2* embodies the spirit of responsible journalism, dedicated to the truth. This character is a homage to heroes and warriors who pursue truth relentlessly." Reflecting on the inception of *Prathinidhi 2*, Murthy reveals that the story was not initially intended for the franchise. His passion for storytelling, cultivated through writing under a pseudonym and his foray into filmmaking, fueled the transformation of the narrative into a cinematic venture.

Murthy recalls, "I first shared the story with Nara Rohit, envisioning him as the perfect fit for this compelling narrative. Rohit's nuanced portrayal enriches the story, making it resonate with audiences." Murthy delves into the film's thematic depth, highlighting the hero's trajectory from questioning the system to initiating transformative change. He emphasises that *Prathinidhi 2* transcends partisan narratives, offering a politically charged yet unbiased exploration of societal issues. Murthy affirms, "This is not a propaganda film. *Prathinidhi 2* navigates critical issues within a thrilling narrative, devoid of partisan agendas." Before venturing into filmmaking, Murthy conducted extensive research, leveraging modern tools like AI to enhance his directorial acumen. He acknowledges the invaluable support of the production team, emphasising their collective effort in realising his creative vision. Murthy remarks, "We embarked on this filmmaking journey fully prepared, collaborating with talented professionals to bring our vision to life within budgetary constraints." Murthy underscores the film's broader message, urging audiences to reflect on civic engagement and political ideologies. He calls attention to the voting apathy prevalent in society,

emphasising the film's role in stimulating critical discourse. Murthy states, "Through *Prathinidhi 2*, we invite viewers to contemplate their societal roles and political engagement. The film's content sparks introspection on contemporary politics and societal ideologies." Murthy commends Nara Rohit's meticulous preparation for the film, underscoring Rohit's dedication to mastering the journalist's persona. He applauds Rohit's return to the screen after a hiatus, highlighting the actor's nuanced portrayal. Murthy states, "Rohit's diligent preparation and commitment to the role elevate the film's authenticity, capturing the essence of the protagonist." Looking ahead, Murthy reveals plans for future projects, expressing his passion for cinema. With multiple stories in his repertoire, Murthy aims to collaborate on diverse cinematic ventures, driven by a steadfast commitment to his artistic vision.

He shares, "I am excited to explore new narratives and continue my cinematic journey. With the support of my colleagues, I look forward to translating my passion for storytelling into compelling cinematic experiences."



'VARALAXMI IS THE DRIVING FORCE IN SABARI'

PNS | HYDERABAD

As anticipation builds for the release of the female-driven film *Sabari* on May 3, all eyes are on Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, who takes center stage as the leading lady. Behind the scenes, producer Mahendra Nath Kondla reflects on the journey that led to this compelling project and sheds light on Varalaxmi's pivotal role in its realisation. Hailing from Guntur and with a background in consultancy and business ventures in the USA, Mahendra Nath Kondla's foray into filmmaking marks a deeply cherished ambition come to life. Speaking about the genesis of *Sabari*, he shares, "The main reason we embarked on this film was Varalaxmi Sarathkumar. After hearing the script from the director, we immediately approached her, and her enthusiasm and belief in the project have been instrumental from the outset. "Varalaxmi's professionalism left an indelible impression on Mahendra, who describes her as not just a talented artist but also a consummate professional. "She has been the backbone of our film right from the start," he emphasised, adding, "Varalaxmi ensured that the production remained efficient and within budget, a testament to her dedication and support for safeguarding the producer's interests." *Sabari* delves into powerful themes of mother-daughter relationships, anchored by a poignant emotional core. For Mahendra, this resonant narrative was irresistible, embodying vast potential

waiting to be realised. He shared, "The emotional depth of the story compelled us. We endeavored to enhance every aspect of the film, ensuring that its impact on the audience is profound and enduring."

Navigating the production journey of *Sabari* involved calculated risks and unwavering determination. But the producer's bold approach underscores his belief in pushing boundaries and delivering excellence. "I've always embraced a risk-taking attitude. Our intention was to create a film that resonates authentically with audiences, and we spared no effort in bringing this vision to fruition," he affirmed. Looking ahead, Mahendra reveals ambitious plans, including upcoming projects with actors Varun Sandesh and *Bigg Boss* contestant Amardeep. These ventures promise to further showcase the producer's penchant for engaging storytelling and dynamic filmmaking. As for his own screen presence, he remains focused on producing, with a steadfast commitment to his newfound role. "While I may consider



Making waves after the release of its trailer, the Varalakshmi Sarathkumar-starrer *Sabari* has built immense anticipation. Producer Mahendra Nath Kondla sits down with the media here, reflecting on the journey leading to the project, the leading lady's role, and more.

brief appearances if requested by the director, my primary focus is on producing," he asserts, underscoring his dedication to nurturing compelling narratives and shaping memorable cinematic experiences.

Malayalam supremo Siddique joins Vikram's Veera Dheera Sooran

Talented Malayalam actor Siddique has joined the cast of Chiyaan Vikram's highly anticipated action thriller, *Veera Dheera Sooran*. Directed by SU Arun Kumar, this film has been generating a significant buzz among fans of intense cinema. The announcement of Siddique's involvement adds an exciting dimension to the project, accompanied by a revealing first look that showcases his compelling presence. Siddique, known for his remarkable performances in Telugu cinema with roles like Raju in *Anthima Theerpu*, Srinivas in *Naa Bangaru Thalli*, and Balaram Varma in *Agninakshatram*, brings a wealth of talent and experience to *Veera Dheera Sooran*. His addition further enhances the film's allure alongside a captivating teaser that was

unveiled on Vikram's birthday, captivating audiences with glimpses of his character, Kaali. Produced under the HR Pictures banner, *Veera Dheera Sooran* boasts an impressive creative team, with GV Prakash Kumar composing the music and Theni Eshwar handling the cinematography. Alongside Vikram, the film also stars SJ Suryah and Dushara Vijayan, whose involvement adds depth and excitement to this upcoming cinematic spectacle. Dushara Vijayan, in particular, has drawn attention for her realistic and charismatic performances, making her role as the female lead in *Veera Dheera Sooran* a focal point of anticipation among movie enthusiasts. As filming progresses and more details emerge, expectations continue to soar for this action-packed venture helmed by SU Arun Kumar.

Confirmed! Maruthi's next production is Beauty



Reddy and Zee Studios. The film is slated to officially launch on April 22 in Hyderabad, with further details to be disclosed by the makers during the launch event. Featuring a cast of new faces, *Beauty* promises to be a youthful film infused with family-centric emotions. Vijay Bulganin, renowned for his work on the successful film *Baby*, will compose the music and background score for this project. Maruthi was also involved in the production of *Baby*, which achieved widespread acclaim and success. In addition to *Beauty*, Maruthi is currently occupied with the filming of *Raja Saab*, starring Prabhas. Produced by People Media Factory, *Raja Saab* is being shot in Hyderabad and is scheduled for release during Sankranti 2025. Maruthi's ambitious projects reflect his dedication to delivering engaging and diverse content to audiences.

Renowned writer and director Maruthi, known for his work on various small and medium-budget films, is returning with an exciting new project titled *Beauty*. After encountering setbacks in his career, Maruthi has refocused his efforts on directing, aiming to deliver a fresh and intriguing concept through this upcoming venture. *Beauty*, set to be directed by RV Subramanyam, will mark Maruthi's collaboration with producers A Vijaypal



Ajay Ghosh's Music Shop Murthy teaser adds a touch of humour

In a refreshing departure from star-studded productions, *Music Shop Murthy* promises to captivate audiences with its compelling content and engaging narrative. Directed by Siva Paladugu and produced by Harsha Garapati and Ranga Rao Garapati under Fly High Cinemas, this emotional drama features Ajay Ghosh in the titular role alongside Chandini Chowdary, Amani, Amit Sharma, Bhanu Chandar, and Dayanandh Reddy in pivotal roles. The film's teaser unveils the story of *Music Shop Murthy*, a dreamer with a passion for music, portrayed by Ajay Ghosh. Despite his advancing age, Murthy's ambition to become a music artist remains unwavering. His aspirations find renewed hope through Chandini Chowdary's character as a DJ, but he faces opposition from his own family. Determined to

pursue his dreams, Murthy embarks on a journey from his village to Hyderabad, defying familial expectations. Siva Paladugu's storytelling prowess shines through, crafting a narrative that resonates with genuine emotions and a touch of humor. Sreenivas Bejagam's cinematography beautifully captures the essence of the tale, complemented by Pavan's evocative background score. The teaser has garnered an enthusiastic response, heightening anticipation for the film's theatrical release. Stay tuned as the makers will announce the official release date soon.

Jeevan Reddy announces film inspired by true events

Singareni Jungsiren, a forthcoming film penned by director Jeevan Reddy of *George Reddy* fame, is poised to bring a true story to life on the silver screen. The movie, produced by debutant Vivek Inugurti under the banner of Dhumra Varahi, is inspired by real events that unfolded in Singareni back in 1999. With the tagline "The Underground Lives", the film promises to delve into compelling narratives. Pre-production for this gripping survival drama has been finalised, paving the way for filming to commence shortly. The official cast and further details will be disclosed on May Day, coinciding with International Labor Day. Against the backdrop of Telangana's burgeoning cinema scene, *Singareni Jungsiren* seeks to authentically capture the essence of the region's indigenous culture. As anticipation mounts for this intriguing project, audiences eagerly await the unveiling of its cinematic ensemble and narrative scope. Stay tuned for more updates as *Singareni Jungsiren* gears up to make its mark in the realm of true-to-life storytelling.



Big B's 'experience like no other' in Kalki 2898 AD

Kalki 2898 AD is one of the most anticipated and biggest films of Indian cinema, as it stars some of the finest actors of Indian cinema, including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani, among others. While Prabhas and Deepika will play lead roles, all other characters in this movie directed by Nag Ashwin will have important stories to convey, adding more depth to the film's story. The movie has been in the making for a long time, and fans have been eagerly waiting for its release or at least some updates about the film. Ever since it was announced on Saturday that Megastar Amitabh Bachchan's first look from the film would be revealed on Star Sports on Sunday, netizens have gone frenzy over the update. Here we bring to you the look of legendary Amitabh Bachchan from the film! Clad in all-white attire, Amitabh Bachchan can be seen sitting inside a temple, looking mysteriously towards a bright ray of light. Building anticipation for a big announcement soon, the poster reads, "*Samay Aa Gaya Hai*," leaving audiences all the more excited for the magnum opus. Bankrolled lavishly by Vyjayanthi Movies, *Kalki 2898 AD*, a mythology-inspired sci-fi spectacle set in the future, will be released in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam languages worldwide soon.

