



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

"Harish Rao...you should be ready with a resignation letter in your pocket. I am giving a word with Ramappa Shiva, Thousand- Pillar temple and Bhadrakali Ammavaru as witnesses that I will waive Rs.2 lakh loans by August 15. I will not leave Harish Rao. On that day, it is not going to be like saying: 'I can't find a lighter', after pouring petrol."



- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister P4

'Modi & Shah are sellers and Ambani-Adani are buyers'

'NO LONGER CONFINED TO HANDFUL OF FAVOURITES'

Varalaxmi Sarathkumar talks of Sabari, a screenplay-driven THRILLER

DON'T MISS...

Minister Botsa advocates for...

State Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has unleashed a scathing critique on the impudence and backbiting politics of former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, Botsa Satyanarayana expressed his dismay over Chandrababu's rhetoric and highlighted the detrimental effects of impulsive speech in politics. He condemned Chandrababu's derogatory remarks and emphasised the importance of maintaining decorum in political discourse.

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Election a ritual in remote...

Bikramoj Tripura, a 'jhumia' (shifting cultivator) residing at a remote village in Tripura's Dhalai district said politicians come to his hamlet during elections and though their promises remain unfulfilled, he casts vote every time with the hope of getting electricity at his home and mobile phone connectivity in the area. The main problem of Vidya Kumar Roaja Para village, which is located around 62 km away from Ambassa, the district headquarters of Dhalai...

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Microsoft and Amazon...

British competition regulators said Wednesday they'll scrutinise recent artificial intelligence deals by Microsoft and Amazon over concerns that the moves could thwart competition in the AI industry. The Competition and Markets Authority said it's looking into Microsoft's partnership with France's Mistral AI and the company's hiring of key staff from another startup, Inflection AI. The watchdog also separately announced that it's investigating Amazon's...

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Rampant Sunrisers Hyderabad...

Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to unleash their brute batting power on struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru when the two teams face off in their return-leg fixture of the IPL here on Thursday. Having breached the 250-run mark thrice in this IPL edition itself, Sunrisers Hyderabad are pushing the boundaries of T20 batting with their no holds barred approach. While Mumbai Indians were the first victim of SRH's new-found batting strength this season, RCB bore the...

-SPORTS



Bus Tour Jagan Super Hit

Constituencies
86

Kilometers
2,100

Days
22

SEELAM AROZIE
VIJAYAWADA

In a remarkable demonstration of grassroots influence, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra has drawn to a close, leaving an enduring imprint on the political landscape of the State. Spanning 22 days, Chief Minister Jagan traversed the expanse of the State, delivering impactful addresses at 16 major public gatherings.

Initiated by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra has reached its culmination in Srikakulam district.

Coming closely on the heels of the highly successful 'Siddham' meetings at five locations, this campaign has garnered immense public support. Commencing at Idupulapaya with



homage paid to late chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy on March 27, the journey navigated through various corners of the State, witnessing overwhelming responses from the public at every turn. Despite encountering moments of tension, notably a stone attack on

Jagan Mohan Reddy's convoy upon reaching Ajit Singh Nagar in the Vijayawada-Central Assembly constituency, the outpouring of support for Jagan in the aftermath, particularly in the Godavari and north Andhra regions, has been remarkable.

Continued on Page 2

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STONE PELTING CASE

Court grants police custody of Vemula

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The First Judicial Magistrate Court in Vijayawada has granted three-day police custody of Vemula Satish, the accused in the case of stone pelting at YSRCP president and CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy during a road show in Vijayawada on April 13.

Continued on Page 2

'Will not make false promises'

Jagan concludes Memantha Siddham Yatra

PNS ■ TEKKALI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has come down heavily on TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu's 'fraudulent promises' and said that unlike him, he implemented 99 per cent of the manifesto promises in the last 58 months. He was speaking at the final public meeting of Memantha Siddham Yatra in Srikakulam on Wednesday.

"If you vote for Jagan, all the schemes will continue for the next five years, but Chandrababu will end it if you vote for TDP. We saw a tsunami of people from Rayalaseema to Uttar Andhra during the yatra, and looking at the people gathered here, I am sure YSRCP will win all 25 Lok Sabha and 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh," said Chief Minister Jagan.

Continued on Page 2

NAIDU, PK PROMISE

Mega DSC, cut in power tariff

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Telugu Desam party Chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reiterated the assurance of making the first sign to pass a government order for mega DSC while Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan assured of slashing power tariff, if the alliance is voted to power.

Naidu and Pawan Kalyan addressed a joint election meeting at Nellimarla in Vizianagaram district on Wednesday. Addressing the huge crowd, Naidu promised to create 20 lakh jobs in five years,



if voted to power and enhance the old age pension to Rs 4,000. Every election, Jagan Mohan Reddy enacts a drama and this election he is enacting a 'Gulakarai' drama, Naidu ridiculed.

Continued on Page 2

'Fear of defeat haunting alliance'

Didn't say anything negative about actor Chiranjeevi: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has said that JSP chief Pawan Kalyan has been working exclusively for TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu. Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Sajjala said that everyone in the alliance are Chandrababu's men and has a habit of blaming others. The people of AP are watching these dramas. Sajjala added that YSRCP's election manifesto will be released in a day or two.

Sajjala alleged that Chandrababu has come up with a new plan to cheat the people of the State in 2024. Pawan should introspect and the acting of Chandrababu and Pawan is worth laughing at. The alliance has already



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understood that YSRCP will be victorious. The Opposition is criticising them without evidence. It was the same alliance that cheated the farmers in the name of loan waiver. Pawan is trying to transfer Kapu votes to TDP. The alliance is upset that YSRCP is coming back to power, Sajjala said. "I did not say anything negative about

Continued on Page 2

Key leaders from Oppn bloc join YSRCP

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Key leaders from the Telugu Desam Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Jana Sena Party joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of Chief Minister YS. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Akkivalasa Stay Point in Etcherla constituency, Srikakulam district.

Former BJP minister representing the Bobbili constituency in Vizianagaram district, Jagan Mohan Rao Peddinti, and his son Ramaswami Naidu Peddinti officially joined the YSR Congress Party.

Former member of the AP State Women Commission and senior TDP leader from Parvathipuram constituency, Koyana Srivani, also officially joined YSRCP. Former Congress MLA from



Palasa constituency, Korla Bharti, and her daughter Korla Sirisha officially joined YSRCP.

Former ZPTC of Hiramandalam Lolugu Lakshmana Rao, Ranastalam MPTC Majji Gauri and TDP vice-president Majji Ramesh also joined YSRCP. Former MPP of Ranastalam mandal Gorli Vijayakumar and senior leader Rama Rao are the other leaders who joined YSRCP.

ALL-ROUND OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AP cadre IFS officer bags medal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The convocation of the 2022 batch of the Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers was conducted by the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy in Dehradun on Wednesday.

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Rajnath vows to tackle crime and corruption in AP



MEMANTHA SIDDHAM

Solidarity rally in Scotland

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
As Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led Mementha Siddham bus yatra created ripples in Andhra Pradesh, its impact can be felt in foreign countries too. The Telugu diaspora living in Scotland came together to express their support for the ruling party. The YSRC UK unit held a solidarity event in Edinburgh city, which was organised by Dr Pradeep Chinta and Obulerreddy Patakota. Addressing the gathering, Pradeep Chinta said YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been working hard for the uplift of the

poor and marginalised people in the State. He said it is our responsibility to spend the next month campaigning for YSRC while ensuring the second term for Jagan. He exuded confidence that the ruling party will win 175 out of 175 Assembly seats in the May 13 elections. YSRC UK Committee members Anil Benjamin, Prabhakar Reddy Avutala, Vijay Pendekanti, Srikanth Pasupula, Raghu, Dushyant Reddy, Joel, Ramireddy Puchchakayala, Sai, Karthik Bhoomireddy, Kranthipalem, Trinath, Guru, Srinivas Varigonda, Vasu Vidudala, Karthik and others participated in the event.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has articulated a bold vision for the future of Andhra Pradesh, asserting that only a coalition government comprising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and Jana Sena could effectively combat the scourge of drug and land mafias plaguing the region. Addressing an intellectual gathering here on Wednesday, Singh minced no words in condemning the alleged rampant corruption under the YSRC-led government in Andhra Pradesh. He underscored the urgent need to curb the influence of the drug and land mafias, which he claimed have thrived under the current administration.



Singh asserted that his coalition possessed comprehensive intelligence on the operations of these mafias, particularly in Visakhapatnam. He criticised the staggering debt burden of Rs 13.5 lakh crore borne by the Andhra Pradesh government, attributing it to reckless fiscal policies and mismanagement. Singh spared no criticism for the incumbent government's handling of crucial projects, such as the Polavaram project, citing delays and inefficiencies. He pledged that a BJP-TDP-JSP alliance would prioritise development initiatives and restore law and order in the State. Singh emphasised the significance of the Visakhapatnam Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC), highlighting its potential to bolster the region's industrial landscape with over \$100 billion in future investments. However, he criticised the State government's role, alleging a lack of effective implementation of Centrally-funded infrastructure projects across various sectors. Meanwhile, alliance candidate M Sriharat implored the Central government for the merger of RINL-Visakhapatnam Steel Plant with Steel Authority of India (SAIL), envisioning enhanced profitability and accelerated production targets. Sriharat lamented the erosion of democracy and the lack of employment opportunities for the youth under the current regime, warning of a chilling effect on investment. He expressed optimism that a coalition government would herald a new era of prosperity for Andhra Pradesh.



Amarnath files nomination amid overwhelming support

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM
The bustling town of Gajuwaka witnessed an electrifying spectacle as activists and supporters thronged the streets, dancing and celebrating during Gudivada Amarnath's nomination filing ceremony as the YSR Congress party candidate for the Gajuwaka Assembly constituency. Within a mere two months of his candidacy announcement in the Gajuwaka constituency, the overwhelming show of support for Amarnath has sent ripples of concern through his opponents' ranks. Prior to filing his nomination, Minister Amarnath commenced his day with a visit to Simhachalam, where he offered special prayers to Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy. Seeking blessings from elders, he embarked on a grand rally from his residence in

Mindi, traversing through Zinc Gate, Old Gajuwaka, and China gantayada. Along the route, supporters adorned Amarnath and YV Subbareddy with floral garlands. Accompanied by MLA Tippala Nagireddy, former MLAs Tippala Gurumurthy Reddy, Chintalapudi Venkataramaiah, Rajya Sabha member YV Subbareddy, Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana, City Mayor Golagani Hari Vekanta Kumari, local MLA Tippala Nagireddy, and former Mayor Pulusu Janardhan Rao as well as other dignitaries including Amarnath's mother, Gudivada Nagamani, and party State general secretary Urukuti Apparao, the nomination filing process was completed amidst a wave of support. Expressing gratitude to all attendees, Amarnath urged all to cast their votes in favour of the fan symbol.

Kumar Vishwajeet appointed Intelligence DG

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
In less than a day after affecting transfers to the Intelligence DG and Vijayawada CP, the Election Commission of India (ECI) appointed new IPS officers in their place on Wednesday. Kumar Vishwajeet IPS (RR: 1994) was appointed as Intelligence DG and PHD Ramakrishna IPS (SPS: 2006) was appointed as the Commissioner of Police, Vijayawada. As per the orders, both the officials should take charge immediately and a compliance report should be submitted to the commission by April 25, 11 am.

'PM Modi will to secure third term'

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI
CM Ramesh, the MP candidate of Anakapalli, has asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is poised to secure a historic third term in office, clinching an impressive mandate of over 400 seats in the upcoming general elections. CM Ramesh, instrumental in consolidating the alliance of BJP, TDP, and Jana Sena, made this announcement during a press briefing following his nomination as the MP candidate. Criticising the incumbent Andhra Pradesh government led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Ramesh alleged a lack of focus on crucial fronts like industri-



al development and youth empowerment, underlining the growing eagerness for a change in leadership among the populace. The anticipation builds as Prime Minister Modi plans his forthcoming visit to Anakapalli, scheduled for May 3 or 4. CM Ramesh emphasised the significance of this visit in addressing the region's pertinent issues and urged the public to seize the opportunity to voice their concerns directly to the Prime Minister.

Police block road to Tahsildar Office to control crowd

TDP candidate Yarlagadda Venkata Rao files his papers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
To handle the huge crowd that accompanies the candidates when they file their nomination papers, the police have arranged iron mesh besides the barricades on the roads. They blocked all major roads leading to Returning Officers' offices with barricades and iron mesh. Both barricades and iron mesh were seen at the Gandhi Bomma Centre adjacent to the national highway at Gannavaram in Krishna district when TDP candidate Yarlagadda arrived to file his papers on Wednesday. According to the Election



Commission of India (ECI), Returning Officers can allow only five persons including the candidate to enter the office at the time of filing nominations. So, the police stopped party leaders, cadres and followers from entering the road leading to the RO office. The rally that accompanied TDP Gannavaram candidate Yarlagadda Venkata Rao started at Ramavarappadu Ringat 9 am, and reached the Gandhi Bomma Centre at 1 pm. Meanwhile, the police closed the road leading to the Tahsildar Office, resulting in severe inconvenience to the public for several hours.

TDP literally leaving no stone unturned to lure voters

Chandrababu seems to be feeling very insecure as it is a do-or-die situation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
With less than a month left for the 2024 general elections in Andhra Pradesh, the ruling YSRC led by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and the Opposition TDP-JSP-BJP alliance led by TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu have intensified the campaigning. Interestingly, Chandrababu has raised curtains for 'cash for vote' to lure the voters in every village through the TDP NRI wing. Chandrababu Naidu seems to be feeling very insecure as it is a do-or-die situation for him. He allied with the Jana Sena Party, and then with BJP. Still he lacks confidence and is resorting to unethical practices. The Opposition is leaving no stone unturned to win the election. One thing that went viral on social media during the past two days was TDP seeking the services of its NRI wing. The TDP NRI wing convened its meeting at the party office to chalk out a strategy to lure the voters with money in the villages. The plan was exposed as the video clip of the closed-door meeting was leaked and circulated on social media. In the viral video clip, TDP NRI wing coordinator Komati Jayaram could be heard urging the party's supporters to buy the voters in rural areas to ensure their victory. Jayaram was seen telling the gathering that the party has no time to make an elaborate election strategy. He said they have got only a month's time and during this time they have to identify and woo at least 1,000 needy pro-YSRC families. He also shared the budget for this assignment and said spending Rs 2-3 lakh to lure 10 families is not a difficult task.

Jagan Super Hit...

Continued from page 1
Earlier on during the yatra, a youth in the crowd hurled a slipper at Jagan during a packed roadshow in Kurnool district. This campaign represents the second phase of Jagan Mohan Reddy's three-phase electoral drive. Witnessing enthusiastic participation from various segments of society, including women's groups, students, workers, municipal employees, and the judiciary, the campaign conducted 22 internal gatherings during its journey. Chief Minister Jagan, cognizant of the public sentiment, strategically timed the yatra to coincide with crucial phases of the electoral calendar. With two phases completed and successful rallies held in the final phase, the campaign has effectively resonated with the masses. Throughout the 22-day bus yatra, Chief Minister Jagan encountered both acclaim and challenges, with expressions of both support and dissent from key opposition figures, district officials, and party members. Notably, overwhelming receptions were observed in Kadapa and Kurnool districts, where farmers greeted Chief Minister Jagan with 1,000 bullock carts. However, amid the fervour, instances of protest and dissent also

arose, such as an altercation in the Singanamala area of Kurnool district, which Chief Minister Jagan promptly addressed. Despite the obstacles, the 'Mementha Siddham' bus yatra stands as a testament to Chief Minister Jagan's dedication to directly engage with the electorate and address their concerns. As the journey draws to a close, the resounding voices of the people reverberate, shaping the narrative of Andhra Pradesh's political trajectory.



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TODAY ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Purnima: Apr 23 03:26 AM to Apr 24 05:18 AM
Krishna Paksha Padyami: Apr 24 05:18 AM to Apr 25 06:46 AM
Nakshatram: Chitra: Apr 22 07:59 PM to Apr 23 10:32 PM
Swati: Apr 23 10:32 PM to Apr 25 12:41 AM
Rahukalam: 3:22 PM to 4:56 PM
Yamagandam: 9:06 AM to 10:40 AM
Varjyam: 04:50 AM to 06:36 AM
Gulika: 12:14 PM to 1:48 PM
Amritakalam: 03:26 PM to 05:13 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:49 AM to 12:39 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 32%
Sunrise: 5:55 AM
Sunset: 6:34 PM
Updated: April 23, 2024 5:00 PM

Will not give fraudulent...

Continued from page 1
Jagan noted that the history of door delivery of welfare schemes belongs to the YSRC government. "We have brought changes in the education, medical, and health sectors in the last 58 months. Further, we have introduced revolutionary schemes regarding Gram Swaraj. Meanwhile, we have seen the culture of Chandrababu, who threw the manifesto once the elections were over." The Chief Minister highlighted that the YSRC government is providing the same kind of education to the poor and the rich. "Since Chandrababu does not have anything to claim as his achievements, his job is only to criticise me. But unlike Chandrababu, I will not give fraudulent promises. Do you want a cheat like Chandrababu or an honest person like Jagan?" quipped the YSRC chief. "Not a single good deed comes to mind if you talk about Chandrababu," said CM Jagan while explaining the scams by the Opposition coalition in 2014. "From loan waivers to farmers and women self-help groups to BC sub plan with Rs 10,000 crore,

a job to every household or unemployment benefit, three cents of land to the people, develop the State on par with Singapore, a hi-tech city in every district, Rs 25,000 soon after a birth of a girl child in the family, nothing has been implemented by the TDP and its alliance partners," said Jagan. The Chief Minister noted that the Opposition alliance is coming up with a new colourful manifesto in the name of Super 6. "Are you all ready to save the State from these crooks," asked Jagan. Taking a dig at Chandrababu Naidu, he said, "People identify the characters in movies based on their deeds, whether they are a hero or villain. And now, who is the hero and villain in Andhra Pradesh politics?" Jagan has travelled 2100 km spreading over 86 Assembly constituencies in 22 days as part of his Mementha Siddham Yatra. After starting his yatra at Idupulapaya, he attended 16 public meetings (including Wednesday's meeting) and six special interactions like meeting with old-age pensioners, weaver communities, Vahana Mitra beneficiaries, and social media workers among others. He also participated in huge road shows at nine places.

Court grants...

Continued from page 1
The court directed that Satish could be questioned between 10 am and 5 pm for three days in the presence of his lawyer to elicit information from him regarding the conspiracy behind the attack on CM Jagan. Currently, Satish is in Vijayawada Central Jail, and he would be brought to the police station for questioning every day from Thursday to Saturday. Satish's lawyer Abdus Saleem argued that the petition filed by the police seeking custody of Satish under section 167(3) of CrPc is not maintainable as per the law. He contended that the case filed against him under Section 307 IPC (Attempt to Murder) itself is not maintainable, and the petitioner himself is challenging the same before the higher court immediately after obtaining the certified copy of the remand order.

Mega DSC, cut in ...

Continued from page 1
The hills around Nelimarla were plundered by YSRC corrupt leaders, he flayed. "As soon as we are voted to power, the area will be developed as an industrial hub," Naidu announced. Naidu described Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy as a 'betrayal of North Andhra Pradesh'. The former Chief Minister decried that 160 temples were vandalized during the YSRC regime but the culprits were not booked. "The YSRC government could not complete even one major irrigation project. If the TDP was in power, the Bhogapuram airport would have been constructed by that time," Naidu observed. Addressing the huge crowd, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan regretted that the Andhra Pradesh government diverted the funds of MGNREGA scheme to other purposes. "During the YSRC regime, Rs 450 crore funds of NTR Health University were diverted to other purposes. The GFP money of government employees was used by the government without their knowledge. The government also diverted Rs 8000 crore funds of panchayat raj to other purposes," he lashed out.

alliance. Sajjala said that as the alliance will lose the elections, the leaders have been speaking as they wish, violating norms. It is a joke to hear Chandrababu saying that he has supported Dwrcra women. He is the one who cheated Dwrcra women. Chandrababu has a history of cheating by saying that he will waive off loans. He alleged that Pawan Kalyan and Chandrababu have no culture, and Chandrababu does not know family values. He asked where Chandrababu's younger brother Ramurthy Naidu and his sisters were.

Fear of defeat haunting...

Continued from page 1
He added that Chandrababu is playing various tricks to become the CM. In 2014, BJP and Jana Sena supported TDP. TDP has insulted BJP and JSP leaders, and now they are back together and formed an

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IPE unveils advanced micro-CT facility

It's a sophisticated instrument leveraging X-ray microscope architecture that presents immense potential for diverse research fields

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IPE) marked a significant advancement in its research capabilities on Wednesday with the inauguration of a cutting-edge Micro-Computed Tomography (micro-CT) facility. The ceremony was held during the inaugural visit of Professor Arvind Kumar Mishra, Director of CSIR-CIMFR, Dhanbad. Esteemed members of the IPE administration, including the Registrar and Dean (R&D), were also present.



contrast technology facilitates intricate analyses, including porosity/fracture assessment and the differentiation of oil phases from water, air, or mineral phases.

Prof Mishra unveiled the micro-CT facility, a sophisticated instrument leveraging X-ray microscope architecture. It boasts advanced functionalities such as phase contrast tomography, high-speed computed tomography, and real-time X-ray visualisation. This high-

The micro-CT equipment presents immense potential for diverse research fields, encompassing Geological Science, Petroleum Engineering, Material Science,

Biological Science, Energy Science, and Chemical Engineering. This acquisition enables automated quantitative multiphase characterisation and property estimation across various applications. Following the inaugu-

ration, an interactive meeting was held. Professor Vijaya Kumar, Dean (Research & Development), provided insights into IPE's ongoing research activities, while Prof Shalivahan presented the institute's noteworthy milestones and achievements.

Prof Mishra commended the research initiatives undertaken by IPE, particularly in the promising realm of Green Hydrogen. Expressing keen interest in fostering collaborative research endeavors, he extended an invitation to IPE researchers to explore the facilities available at CSIR-CIMFR. The event fostered a collaborative environment conducive to knowledge exchange and joint research efforts.



No repeat term for candidates in Pendurthi

Incumbent MLA Annamreddy Adipraj of YCP faces Panchakarla Ramesh Babu of Jana Sena-TDP-BJP alliance

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the political arena of Pendurthi, a constituency spanning Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts, a longstanding tradition of electoral unpredictability persists. With a blend of rural and urban voters shaping its unique demographic, Pendurthi has defied conventional political norms for over four-and-a-half decades. Historically, no candidate has managed to secure a consecutive victory in Pendurthi. The constituency's electoral history is marked by a series of alternating wins, challenging the aspirations of candidates from major political parties.



standing tradition of single-term MLA representation in Pendurthi. The contest between Adipraj and Babu symbolises a departure from the historical norm, potentially reshaping the constituency's political landscape for years to come. Reflecting on past elections, candidates from various political affiliations have experienced both victory and defeat in Pendurthi. However, since then, the constituency has witnessed a carousel of political fortunes, with no candidate securing a repeat term.

As the campaigning intensifies and polling day approaches, all eyes are on Pendurthi, awaiting the outcome that could redefine its political trajectory.

MLA Annamreddy Adipraj, representing YCP, facing off against Panchakarla Ramesh Babu, backed by a coalition of Jana Sena, TDP, and BJP. Both contenders have previously tasted victory in Pendurthi, setting the stage for a potential shift in the constituency's electoral pattern. The roots of Pendurthi's political legacy

back to its formation in 1978, with Gudivada Appanna emerging victorious in the inaugural elections. However, since then, the constituency has witnessed a carousel of political fortunes, with no candidate securing a repeat term. The upcoming election holds particular significance as it promises to break the long-

MCC violations: Hyd DGC releases Rs 2.69 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad District Election Officer (DEO) Ronald Rose said that in the MCC violations of 107 cases in the district, Rs. 3,60,81,895 has been recommended to the District Grievance Committee (DGC), while the DGC has released Rs.2,69,35,895 pertaining to 102 cases.

The DEO said that in connection with the two cases of seized cash exceeding Rs 10 lakh, Rs 24,97,000 has been referred to the Income Tax and Commercial Tax departments.

TDP supporter's house catches fire during YSRCP rally

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a tragic incident, a TDP follower's house caught fire during the rally organised on the occasion of YSRCP's sitting MLA Simhadri Ramesh Babu filing the nomination papers at Avanigadda in Krishna district on Wednesday. While the supporters of the YSRCP and MLA Ramesh Babu burst firecrackers, the pieces fell on the house and it caught fire.

According to sources, the house belongs to the late TDP leader Yasam Venkateswara Rao. His house site was under dispute many times and YSRCP leaders even tried to vacate him from there. Rao died two months ago unable to suffer the pressure from



YSRCP, family members alleged. Still, the YSRCP leaders are vigorously trying to get that site.

Meanwhile, Rao's house caught fire after firecrackers

were burst. TDP leaders alleged that the fire accident was planned by YSRCP. However, the YSRCP leaders said that it was an unfortunate incident.

GITAM School of Science students excel in mega placement drive

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A total of 128 students from GITAM Deemed to be University, School of Science, secured placements during a recent mega placement drive here on Wednesday. The drive saw participation from various established organisations, including Eugia Steriles Private Limited (Aurobindo), Laurus Bio, WNS Global, Choice Canning Company, and Jindal Biosys Ltd, who recruited GITAM students for the first time. Other prominent recruiters included ADP, Accenture, Verizon, Federal Bank,

Hetero, and Aragen Life Science.

Federal Bank emerged as the top recruiter, offering the highest package of Rs 14.25 LPA to a GITAM student. Several other companies, including Vimta Labs, Biological-E, and Indian Immunology, have also expressed interest in recruiting from GITAM.

Vamsi Kiran Somayajula, GITAM Career Guidance Centre (CGC), emphasised the university's dedicated support for students throughout their academic journey. Career counseling and mentoring, along with competence develop-

ment activities, equip students for career opportunities aligned with their aspirations. The Career Development & Career Fulfillment (CD & CF) teams play a proactive role by conducting career orientation sessions, training programmes, mock interviews, and webinars with industry experts to ensure student preparedness and success.

GITAM School of Science Dean Dr K S Krishna and Principal Prof Vedavathi commended the students for their remarkable academic performance and placement success.

DC, SP receive Election observers

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector P Ranjit Basha and Superintendent of police Vakul Jindal here on Wednesday received Election Observers.

Election Observers Parimal Singh and Kajan Singh arrived here today. The Collector and SP formally welcomed them in Chirala at the ITC guest house. The District Election Officers discussed with the Collector and SP on the steps being taken to conduct elections peacefully.

The Collector and SP also discussed with the Election Observers about the general election management, advance preparations and plans. The observers were given reports on the measures being taken in the district to ensure that the elections are held in a peaceful environment without any problems of law

Devineni Avinash files papers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP candidate Devineni Avinash filed his nomination papers for the Vijayawada East Assembly constituency before the Returning Officer (RO) and Vijayawada Sub Collector Ch Bhavani Sankar at the Sub-Collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday, after holding a big rally organised with his supporters and followers.

Devineni Avinash started his rally from the NTR Circle at Patamana by taking blessings from Kesineni Nani. The rally went via Ramalingeswara Nagar, Screw Bridge, Ranigiri Thota, Satyamagari Hotel and reached the sub-collector office.

58 nominations filed on 6th day On the sixth day, 58 nominations were filed for the Vijayawada Lok Sabha seat and seven Assembly constituencies in NTR district. As many as 11 nominations



YSRCP Vijayawada East candidate Devineni Avinash and MP candidate Kesineni Srinivas participating in the rally organised on Wednesday, as he filed nomination papers

cer and Collector Dr S Dilli Rao.

YSRCP candidate Kesineni Srinivas alias Nani, Congress candidate Valluru Bhargav, TDP candidates Kesineni Shivnath and Kesineni Janaki Lakshmi filed their nomination papers, he said.

Meanwhile, around 10 nominations were filed for the Vijayawada West constituency. BJP candidate

Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdary alias Sujana Chowdary filed two sets of nominations. Also, CPI candidate G Koteswara Rao, YSRCP candidate Shaik ASIF and others filed papers. YSRCP candidate Velamapalli Srinivasa Rao, TDP candidate Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao and other parties' candidates filed their nominations for the Vijayawada Central Assembly constituency.

Seven nominations were filed for the Vijayawada East constituency. MLA Gadde Rama Mohan Rao, Gadde Kranathi Kumar and others filed papers. Meanwhile, five candidates filed their nominations for the Mylavaram assembly segments. Sitting MLA Dr Monditoka Jagan Mohana Rao submitted his papers for the Nandigama segment.

Nine nominations have been filed for Tiruvuru, and four for the Jaggayyapet constituency. Thursday is the last day for filing nominations.

Election observer visits Integrated Command Control Room

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the upcoming general elections, Manju Rajpal, a senior IAS officer, who has been appointed as the general observer for the Vijayawada East, West and Central assembly constituencies visited the Integrated Command Control Centre (ICCC) at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday. She enquired about the C-Vigil, Election Model Code of Conduct, IT, Banking, Commercial Tax, Election Seizure Management System, Customs and other department activities. She expressed her happiness over employees who successfully performed their duties.

NTR District Revenue

Officer (DRO) V Srinivasa Rao explained that after the release of the election schedule, as many as 1,766 complaints were resolved out of the total of 1,799 in the district. Also, she talked about the various flying squads, and static surveillance teams working in the district. Later, she observed the day-to-day activities and expressed satisfaction.

After that, she verified the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee and Social Media Wings activities. She enquired about the political advertisements, Pre Certification, Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media posting details. Later, she said that she would be available at the Municipal



Election general observer Manju Rajpal visiting the Integrated Command Control Centre on the premises of the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Guest House at Brindavan Colony in the city to receive grievances from the public.

She said she would be available between 2 pm to 4 pm every day.

Seshu challenges PK for debate on Kapu funds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Kapu leader Adapa Seshu has come down heavily on JSP chief Pawan Kalyan for making false allegations that CM Jagan has lakhs of crores rupees. Speaking to the media persons on Wednesday, Seshu said that the people of the State are ready to teach a lesson to Pawan for the third time. During YS Jagan's tenure, more funds were released to Kapus. Is Pawan Kalyan ready to discuss the issue of Kapu funds? Kapu women were developed through various welfare schemes introduced by the YSRCP government.

Seshu asked if Pawan, who claims to have read lakhs of books, knows what elec-

tion affidavit means. He said that Jagan has officially declared his assets in the election affidavit.

He advised PK to visit the website of the Election Commission for more clarity on CM Jagan's assets. PK is talking baselessly to impress Chandrababu and create confusion among the people. Make sure that there is a declaration of assets in the election affidavit, said Seshu.

Seshu pointed out that PK praised Chandrababu during 2014 elections, and cursed Chandrababu and Lokesh in 2019. Again, in the 2024 elections, Pawan is making the Kapu clan support Chandrababu to become the Chief Minister. Pawan is the person who pledged the self-respect of those who are working

for the Jana Sena, for the package given by Chandrababu Naidu.

He said that Jagan became the CM after being the leader of the Opposition for five years, but Pawan Kalyan, who floated Jana Sena, failed to gain the trust of the people in both the constituencies he contested in 2019. Adapa Seshu stated that even if he allies with BJP and TDP, people will not trust Pawan Kalyan.

Only for political gain, PK brought Chiranjeevi's topic that Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said something against the actor, said Seshu, and pointed out that PK is using his brother Chiranjeevi for political advantage. He added that CM Jagan has a lot of respect for Chiranjeevi.

AOI adopts innovative approach in breast cancer surgery

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A high-risk breast cancer patient was successfully treated at American Oncology Institute (AOI) in Mangalagiri using a novel anaesthetic technique, marking a significant milestone in cancer care. Modified radical mastectomy (MRM) with axillary dissection is a standard surgical procedure for breast cancer treatment, typically performed under gen-

eral anaesthesia. However, patients with severe comorbidities such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cardiomyopathy, and chronic kidney disease face increased risks with general anaesthesia.

"The pioneering approach by utilising Paravertebral block (PVB) along with pectoral nerves (PECS) block as the primary anaesthetic technique. This innovative method allowed the patients to undergo MRM surgery

safely and successfully, without the risks associated with general anaesthesia," said Dr Kalyan Polavarapu, Surgical Oncologist at AOI. He said treating patients with breast cancer who also suffer from significant comorbidities presents a unique set of challenges. "Our goal is to provide the best possible care while minimizing risks and ensuring patient safety."

Dr Sreedevi, Consultant Anesthesiologist, commented: "Paravertebral block (with

ultrasound guidance) involves administering a local anaesthetic near the spinal nerves, resulting in somatic and sympathetic nerve blockade. This technique boasts a low incidence of adverse effects, making it a safe and effective alternative for high-risk patients. By implementing Paravertebral and PECS blocks, we were able to tailor the anaesthetic approach to each patient's individual needs, resulting in successful surgical outcomes."

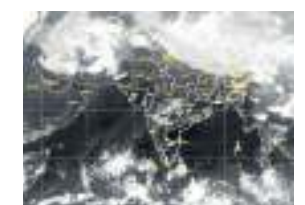
Cyclonic circulation lies over Coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A cyclonic circulation lies over Coastal Andhra Pradesh at 0.9 km above mean sea level, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that a trough/wind discontinuity runs from above cyclonic circulation over Coastal Andhra Pradesh at 0.9 km above mean sea level.

The cyclonic circulation over South Interior Karnataka at 1.5 km above mean sea level has become less marked. Heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh from Friday to Sunday. Hot, humid and uncomfortable weather is likely to prevail



at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours. Dry weather is likely to prevail in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from April 26 to 30. Light rain is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours. Heatwave conditions prevailed at Kalingapatnam, Visakhapatnam in Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

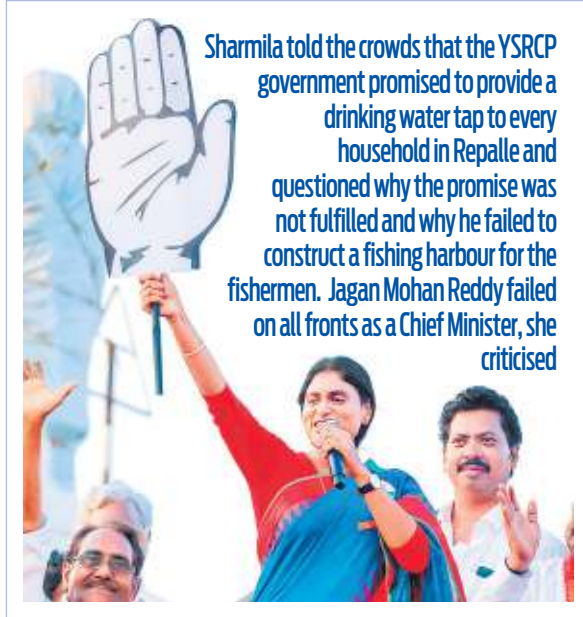
Establishment of Aqua Park remains unfulfilled: Sharmila

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Launching a scathing attack against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and highlighting his failures, APCC President YS Sharmila has said that Jagan Reddy has assured of establishing an Aqua Park but failed to do so and she called upon the voters to elect the Congress candidates as it has assured to grant SCS.

Addressing an election meeting in Repalle on Wednesday, she recalled that Jagan Mohan Reddy promised to establish an Aqua Park and questioned why he failed to establish the same. She also pointed out that the Chief Minister assured of constructing check-dams to provide irrigation water for one lakh acres but he could not construct check dams. He promised of constructing a 100 bed hospital in Repalle and asked why he backtracked from his promise.

Sharmila told the crowds that the YSRCP government promised to provide a drinking water tap to every household in Repalle and questioned why the promise was not fulfilled and why he failed to construct a fishing harbour



Sharmila told the crowds that the YSRCP government promised to provide a drinking water tap to every household in Repalle and questioned why the promise was not fulfilled and why he failed to construct a fishing harbour for the fishermen. Jagan Mohan Reddy failed on all fronts as a Chief Minister, she criticised

for the fishermen. Jagan Mohan Reddy failed on all fronts as a Chief Minister, she criticised.

Coming down heavily on Minister Botsa Satyanarayana, the APCC President recalled that Botsa Satyanarayana abused her father and farmer Chief Minister Y S Rajasekh Reddy. She took strong exception to

Jagan Mohan Reddy for equating Botsa with YSR and strongly objected to treating Botsa as a father figure as he abused YSR. Botsa Satyanarayana also humiliated her mother YS Vijaya Lakshmi, she slammed. "Most of the Cabinet Ministers in Jagan Reddy's cabinet abused YSR. Those who abused YSR were taken

into the Cabinet and those who conducted padayatra to save the YSRCP, when Jagan was in prison, were ignored," she lamented.

Addressing another election meeting in Pamaru in Krishna district, YS Sharmila reiterated that Jagan Reddy needs to step down and then only AP would get SCS and the Polavaram project would be completed.

"The YSRCP leaders have plundered the sand from the Krishna river bed. The YSRCP leaders usurped the government lands and the lands of the poor by creating fake documents. The YSRCP leaders purchased one acre of land at Rs 15 lakh and sold them to the government at Rs 40 lakh," she criticized, accusing Jagan Reddy of pushing the state to Rs 10 lakh crore debts.

Despite the BJP led Centre deceived AP by not granting SCS, Jagan Reddy and Chandrababu Naidu are being loyal to Modi, she flayed.

The BJP could not win a single seat in AP in the last election but it is controlling the state, she lamented. She introduced the Congress candidates and wooed voters to elect them.

Election Observer Krishna Kant takes charge

PNS ■ ELURU

Krishna Kant Pathak, General Election Observer of Eluru Parliamentary Constituency and Denduluru, Eluru and Unguturu Assembly Constituencies has taken charge.

A release here on Wednesday said that as per the guidelines of ECI, any grievance or suggestion related to election process, can be directly submitted to the Krishna Kant Pathak, General Election Observer of Eluru Parliamentary Constituency and Denduluru, Eluru and Unguturu Assembly Constituencies.

Anyone can meet him in Eluru Revenue Guest House, near the District Collector's office, as and when required. Whenever he will be on supervision, one can meet before 11.30 am and after 5.00 pm. Any Complaint can also be made through phone on his number 9154690377 details can also be submitted. Citizens can also access the facilities of help desk and c Vigil, the release added.

Minister Satyanarayana for holistic development in North Andhra

Flays Naidu's derogatory remarks; emphasises importance of maintaining decorum in political discourse

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

State Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has unleashed a scathing critique on the impatience and backbiting politics of former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, Botsa Satyanarayana expressed his dismay over Chandrababu's rhetoric and highlighted the detrimental effects of impulsive speech in politics. He condemned Chandrababu's derogatory remarks and emphasised the importance of maintaining decorum in political discourse.

Minister Satyanarayana reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to the holistic development of North Andhra, firmly emphasising Visakhapatnam's pivotal role as the executive capital. Brushing aside Chandrababu's opposition, the minister emphasised the government's dedication to uplifting the entire North Andhra region.

On the education front, Minister Satyanarayana outlined ambitious initiatives



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aimed at empowering underprivileged children. Drawing attention to the government's collaboration with the International Baccalaureate

organisation to introduce IB education in government schools, he stressed the significance of quality education, including TOEFL training and CBSE syllabus implementation, for the holistic development of students.

Furthermore, Satyanarayana lauded the government's healthcare initiatives, including the establishment of 17 new medical colleges and the provision of free medical seats for economically disadvantaged students. He criticised the TDP chief's governance, contrasting it with the current administration's focus on welfare programmes benefiting the poor. Satyanarayana emphasised the inevitability of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's victory, citing widespread support for the government's progressive reforms. He cautioned against the potential regression in education, healthcare, and agriculture if the current administration is not re-elected, echoing sentiments expressed by intellectuals and experts across various fields.

Three killed as car collides with lorry



PNS ■ NELLORE

Three persons were killed and two others were injured when the car in which they were travelling collided with a lorry at Musunuru toll gate plaza in Kavali rural mandal on the highway on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased belonged to Koyyalagudem in West Godavari district and went to Chennai for shopping. When they were going back to

Koyyalagudem, their car collided with a lorry while overtaking another lorry. The deceased were identified as Jyothi Kalyan, Rajee, and Kumar.

Two persons were injured in the accident and they were admitted to the GGH in Kavali and they were later shifted to the GGH in Nellore as their condition turned to be serious. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

'Clinic' run by quack raided, medicines seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) on April 23 raided a pharmacy operated by a quack in Jayashankar Bhupalpally and seized anti-ulcer medicine.

The pharmacy was owned by accused K Narendra, who claimed to be a rural medical practitioner. During the raid, 29 varieties of medicines, including antibiotics, analgesics, anti-ulcer drugs, etc., were found stocked on the premises. DCA officials seized the stock worth Rs 26,800.

Several higher generation antibiotic injections were seized from Narendra's premises. Officials lifted the samples for analysis. Further investigation will be carried out and action will be taken as per the law against all the offenders.

House gutted in accident



PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

The house of a Telugu Desam party sympathizer was gutted in fire in Avanigadda on Wednesday.

According to victims, the YSRCP MLA candidate Simhadri Ramesh took out a rally to file his nomination papers. The YSRCP activists fired crackers on the occasion. A firecracker fell on the thatched house, owned by Yasam Venkateswara Rao, who died two months ago.

The deceased Venkateswara Rao was a TDP activist. There was dispute on the house site as the officials claimed that it was government land while

Venkateswara Rao argued that the site belonged to him. Venkateswara Rao approached the high court on the dispute and got a stay order. In the backdrop, the fire accident, which took place when the YSRCP activists were taking out a rally, raised suspicion.

The family members of Yasam Venkateswara Rao told the media that volubles worth Rs 2 lakh, including seven tulas of gold, were gutted in the fire accident. The fire tenders rushed there and extinguished the flames but by the time the house was completely gutted. However, no one was hurt in the fire mishap.

Man gets 5 years' jail in attempt to rape case

PNS ■ NELLORE

The Eluru 5 th Additional district Judge G Rajeswari sentenced a man to five years imprisonment and also imposed a fine Rs 1,500 for attempting to rape a married woman at Bulusugoyyapalem in Veeravasaram mandal in WG district.

According to Additional Public Prosecutor DV Ramanjaneyulu, the convict D Ramesh belongs to Bulusugoyyapalem village in Veeravasaram mandal in WG district. Ramesh intruded into the house of the victim on September 10, 2017

and attempted to outrage her modesty. She screamed for help and the neighbours rushed to the house and rescued. The accused Ramesh fled the scene after seeing the villagers.

She lodged a complaint and the then Veeravasaram sub-inspector N Srinivasa Rao registered a case under crime number 150/2017, u/s 448, 376 r/w 511 IPC. The police arrested the accused and filed the charge sheet in the court. As the prosecution succeeded in providing witnesses and proved the case, the judge sentenced him to 5 years imprisonment and imposed a Rs 1500 fine.

2 burglars arrested; Rs 45 L. worth gold recovered

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police arrested two notorious burglars and recovered gold jewellery worth Rs 45 lakh. Superintendent of police Sumit Sunil told the media here on Wednesday the two burglars V Venugopal Reddy and Sheik Rafi committed burglary in the house of complaint Pamidi Padmasri in Chimakurthi town at Vidyanagar colony on the night of April 21 and a case under crime number 121/2024, U/s 457,380 IPC was registered.

The burglars broke open the door of the house when the family members were out of station, broke open the almarha and decamped with gold jewellery weighing 598.7 grams worth Rs 45 lakh and cash of Rs 60,000.

Pamidi Padmasri's close relative died and the family left for Pedda Ambatipudi village to attend the funerals on April 21 and returned on April 22 and



notified the theft. Taking the family going out of station as an advantage, the two notorious burglars committed burglary.

The police formed special teams under the directions of Additional SP (Crimes) SV Sridhar Rao. Using technology, the police traced one of the accused V Venugopal Reddy and Sheik Ravi at Ramachandrapuram village in Tallaru mandal and recovered

the booty. The accused one V Venugopal Reddy was involved in 13 offences in various districts including in Guntur and Vijayawada city. He also committed six burglaries in Telangana state.

The second accused was also involved in criminal cases. The SP appreciated the police personnel who arrested the notorious burglars and recovered the booty.

Traffic diversions for IPL match today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda CP Tarun Joshi announced the traffic diversions in the view of IPL match which will be held on Thursday at Uppal Stadium.

He said, "Under Section 21 clause (1) & (b) of the Hyderabad City Police Act, 1348 Fasli, I hereby notify that in order to maintain smooth flow of traffic, prevent danger and inconvenience to the public, the traffic diversions are imposed on the movement of traffic in the limits of Uppal Traffic police station on Thursday from 4 pm to 11:50 pm in view of IPL-2024 match between Sunrisers Hyderabad VS Royal Challengers, Bengaluru, which is scheduled to be held at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal. Medchal-Malkajigiri district."

With regards to the traffic diversions, categories of heavy vehicles for which diversions will be made are lorry, dumper, Earth-movers, truck tankers, RMC truck and all other types of trucks.

Heavy vehicles or traffic that approach from Chengicherla, Boduppal, Peerzadiguda traffic towards Uppal should be diverted to HMDA Bhaghyath layout - Nagole. The diversion point is opposite to Toyota Show Room- HMDA Bhaghyath Road. Those commuting from LB Nagar to Nagole and Uppal, should be diverted to Nagole Metro Station - HMDA Layout, Boduppal and Chengicherla Cross Road. The diversion point is under Nagole Metro Station U-turn. The traffic coming from Tarnaka towards Uppal should be diverted towards Nacharam - IOCL Cherlapally.

Constable Ratnababu suspended for violation of MCC

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Police constable DNB Ratna Babu, who is working in Ongole Taluk PS, has been suspended for participating in a political party candidate's nomination rally by violating Model code of conduct.

An official release here on Wednesday said that since the ECI released the General Elections-2024 schedule, the Code of conduct for elections has

come into force across the country. The District SP has repeatedly instructed the police personnel that police personnel should perform their duties effectively by following the Model code of conduct and not to violate the rules laid down by the Election Commission under any circumstances.

According to the Model Code of Conduct, the conduct of a Government servant should be impartial as per Memo No. 2147/Elec. A2/A1/2024. March 15, 2024 issued by the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh. A Government servant should not be part of any political related activities. If any government servant takes bene-

fit/gift from any political party or tries to exert undue influence during elections it is against the code of conduct and legal action may be taken against such Government servant.

On April 4, 2024, Constable Ratnababu who was drafted for Check Post duty near FCI under Ongole Taluk PS, participated in the nomination rally program of a political candidate and violated the MCC. A case under Cr.No 70/2024 u/s

188, 171-F r/w 171-C IPC was registered against the constable in Ongole two Town PS on the complaint of Ongole Municipal Corporation Commissioner & Assistant Returning Officer M. Jaswanta Rao and as it was proved the said constable was suspended. The district SP warned that strict action will be initiated as per the law if any police personnel violate the MCC during election.

CM REVANTH TO BRS CHIEF KCR Let's debate on Kaleshwaram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has challenged former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to come for a debate on the soundness of the Kaleshwaram project if he has guts and thinks that the project is indeed a wonder as is being claimed by the Bharat Rashtira Samithi.

The Chief Minister pointed out that KCR was an opposition leader who chose not to come to the Assembly but sat in a TV studio for four hours. He said that the Medigadda barrage pillars collapsed possibly because KCR might have designed it in an intoxicated state. Mocking KCR for claiming that Kaleshwaram was his brainchild, he stated that Medigadda and Sundilla barrages had become dysfunctional. People must compare the projects constructed under the erstwhile Congress regime with those constructed under the BRS rule, he underlined.

The CM remarked: "I am telling KCR in a straightforward manner. Let us visit Kaleshwaram. There we will discuss the soundness of the project with experts around. KCR should come to Kaleshwaram if he has guts. BRS

is not in a position to get deposits anywhere. KCR has been speaking lies despite having been the Chief Minister for 10 years".

In the context, Revanth Reddy also advised former Minister T Harish Rao to be ready with a resignation letter in his pocket.

Earlier, responding to Tuesday's pincer by the CM, Harish Rao stated at Siddipet on Wednesday that he was ready to resign from his MLA position if CM Revanth Reddy waives Rs.2 lakh loans of farmers by August 15.

Revanth Reddy said: "Harish Rao... you should be ready with a resignation letter in your pocket. I am giving my word with Ramappa Shiva, Thousand-Pillar temple and Bhadrakali Ammavaru as witnesses that I will waive Rs.2 lakh loans by August 15. I will not leave Harish Rao. On that day, it is not going to be like saying: "I can't find a lighter," after sprinkling petrol". (He was alluding to Harish's self-immolation bid during the Telangana statehood movement)

Addressing the Warangal Jana Jata on Wednesday, Revanth Reddy stated that Warangal was fit to become the second capital of the State.



INDIA CORNER

Woman hacks husband to death in UP's Ballia village

A woman allegedly killed her husband on Wednesday by attacking him with a machete following a dispute in a village here, police said. According to police, an argument broke out between Deen Dayal Prasad (55) and his wife, Hira Muni Devi (52) over some issues in a village under the Ballia Kotwali police station. "The duo argued over some issue in the morning. The husband started hurling abuses and enraged by this, his wife attacked him with a machete on his neck," the local police outpost in charge, Gyan Prakash said. "Deen Dayal Prasad was referred to Varanasi district hospital on the doctor's advice. He succumbed to his injuries on the way. The body is being brought back and will be sent for post-mortem examination," Prakash said. Devi is currently absconding and will be arrested soon, he added.



Man standing atop truck dies after his head hits metro station beam

A 20-year-old man standing atop of a moving truck died after his head hit a metro station beam in northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar area on Wednesday, police said. Mahendra Park police station received a call regarding the incident in a fruit market in Azadpur. A team was rushed to the spot and they found that the truck driver took Mohammad Bilal to BJRM Hospital where he was declared dead, a senior police officer said. To know the sequence of events, police checked the CCTV footage of the nearby places and found that Bilal was standing on the top of the truck facing the rear side, the officer said. In one of the footage, he was seen standing but moments later when the truck crossed Adarsh Nagar Metro Station, Bilal was lying on the floor of the truck, the officer said. According to the police, Bilal's head bumped into the beam of the metro station and he collapsed.



West Bengal CM Mamata hits out at Rajnath Singhon CAA remark

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday criticised Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for asserting that nobody in the world can stop the implementation of the CAA. She also remarked that Singh now appeared reliant on PM Narendra Modi's favour. "You are surviving at the mercy of Modi. You are saluting Modi daily to save your chair. You or Nitin Gadkari could have been the PM today. There would have been no problem... at least there would have been a gentleman in the chair who knows minimum courtesy," she said. Singh while addressing an election rally in Murshidabad on Sunday had said no power in the world would be able to stop the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). "We have made a law to give citizenship to those who have been persecuted in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan for their religion."



Voting for BJP means backing Ram Rajya: Shah

PNS ■ AMRAVATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said if people vote for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, their votes will go to the patriots, who want to establish a 'Ram Rajya' in the country and not to the anti-nationals, who want dynastic politics to thrive. He also hit out at the Congress, saying it kept the Ram Janmabhoomi issue pending for 70 years, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi solved it soon after coming to power and built a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Shah was addressing a public meeting at Amravati to campaign for BJP's Amravati Lok Sabha seat candidate Navneet Rana and Wardha candidate Ramdas Tadas. Urging people to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shah said, "Your vote will go in favour of patriots and not anti-nationals. It will be in favour of



those who want to establish a Ram Rajya and against those who indulge in dynastic politics. Every vote in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will go towards exterminating terrorism and Naxalism in the country and making India the third largest economy in the world." "Congress kept the Ram temple issue pending for 70 years. But within five years (of coming to power), PM Modi solved the issue and performed the temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya," he said. Shah attacked Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "insulting" Lord Ram by skipping the Ayodhya Ram temple consecration ceremony despite being invited. "Uddhav Thackeray was invited for the Ram temple consecration, but the fake Shiv Sena chief did not attend it fearing Congress leader Sonia Gandhi.

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'INDIA bloc leaders are in jail or on bail, says Nadda

PNS ■ BHAGALPUR/KHAGARIA

Calling the opposition INDIA bloc a group of "Ghamandia" (arrogant) parties, BJP president J P Nadda on Wednesday claimed that majority of the leaders of those "corrupt" parties are either in jail or out in bail. Addressing public meetings in Bihar's Bhagalpur and Khagaria seeking votes for party candidates, Nadda also said that constituents of that anti-BJP coalition are dynastic parties.

Gadkari faints while speaking at a rally

PNS ■ YAVATMA (MAHA)

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday fainted while speaking at an election rally in eastern Maharashtra's Yavatmal district. The BJP leader was campaigning at Pusad which comes under the Yavatmal-Washim Lok Sabha constituency. As he suffered a fainting fit, the security personnel accompanying him carried him off-stage. The minister, however, recovered after a few minutes and completed his speech. "Felt uneasy due to heat at a rally at Pusad, Maharashtra. But now I am completely alright and on my way to Warud to take part in the next rally," the 66-year-old leader said in a post on X.



KHARGE'S SHARP ATTACK ON BJP-LED GOVT

'Modi & Shah are sellers and Ambani-Adani are buyers'

PNS ■ KALABURAGI (KARNATAKA)

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with selling state-owned factories established decades ago to industrialists Ambani and Adani. He also challenged Modi to recover the looted money from the Gandhi family instead of blaming them though none of its members has been Prime Minister, Chief Minister or any Minister since 1989. "Modi says the Gandhi family looted the country. You are the Prime Minister, recover the looted money." "Modi says he has done big things. What have you done? You are selling and eating the big factories former PM Jawaharlal Nehru had established," Kharge said addressing a public meeting at Alzalpur in his home district of Kalaburagi.



The Congress has fielded Kharge's son-in-law Radhakrishna Doddamani from Kalaburagi, which will go for polls on May 7. He alleged: "What's happening in this country is that there are two sellers and two buyers. The sellers are Modi and Shah and buyers are Ambani and Adani." Kharge alleged that Modi and Shah are "living for Ambani and Adani and not for the people of the country." "They (Modi and Shah) want power for them (Ambani and Adani) and not for you,"

Kharge told the crowd. Kharge slammed the Prime Minister over his statement that the Congress plans to give people's hard-earned money and valuables to 'infiltrators' and 'those who have more children', and would steal the 'gold of mothers and sisters' if voted to power. "Modi says if Congress comes to power they will snatch your Mangalsutra. What kind of PM he is? He should be ashamed. We ruled this country for 55 years. Whom did we snatch from and give to others?" the Congress chief said. The Congress president attacked Modi for calling the Congress manifesto an imprint of the pre-independence Muslim league. He sought to know whether it was the Muslim league when Congress promised to offer 30 lakh jobs to youths, minimum support price to farmers, scholarships and filling backlogs to benefit SC/ST youth.

'Chandrayaan-3 beyond mere call to embrace space studies'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman S. Somanath has said the essence of Chandrayaan-3 extends beyond a mere call to embrace space studies; it urges participation in the broader realms of engineering and science, fostering a dynamic scientific community. Somanath highlighted the importance of cultivating a scientific pool that not only fuels space exploration but also explores diverse industrial advancements in these fields. The success of the moon mission has not only energised space-related disciplines, but also opened avenues in engineering, mathematics, and cutting-edge technologies like electronics, he added. "We have to attract the young generation and tell them about the challenges in science



and engineering and improvement in the working environment. The success and enthusiasm in the moon mission brought that excitement," he said. "We are very good in the IT sector and continue to be one of the leading employers, but now we have started electronics. If you are looking into electronics industries, we are not looking at the top. We are supplier of systems. But not the creator of hardware systems. Slowly that is coming in," he said. Somanath envisioned the moon mission's ripple effects, foreseeing increased interest in AI, robotics, IoT applications in agriculture, remote sensing for crop insurance, telecom equipment manufacturing, and medical technical instrument production, among others.

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Destruction of forests is destruction of humanity: Murmu

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday emphasised re-evaluating the standards of development and said the destruction of forests is, in a way, the destruction of humanity. "Unsustainable exploitation of resources has brought humanity to a point where the standards of development have to be re-evaluated," Murmu said while addressing trainee officers of the Indian Forest Service (2022 batch) during their convocation ceremony at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy here. She mentioned the Anthropocene Age, which is the period of human-centric development, and said "We are not owners but trustees of the earth's resources" and hence our priorities should be human-centric as well as nature-centric. "Our priorities should be ecocentric along with anthropocentric. Only by being ecocentric, we will be able to be truly anthropocentric," she said. The president expressed concern over the rapid loss of forest resources in many parts

of the world saying, "Destruction of forests is - in a way - the destruction of humanity. It is a well-known fact that conservation of earth's biodiversity and natural beauty is a very important task which we have to do very quickly." The president said that human life can be saved from crisis through conservation and promotion of forests and wildlife. "We can repair the damage at a faster pace with the help of science and technology. For example, the Miyawaki method is being adopted at many places. Artificial intelligence (AI) can help in identifying suitable areas for afforestation and area-specific tree species," President Murmu said. She said that there is a need



to assess various such options and develop solutions suitable to India's geographical conditions. Referring to the mass hunting of wild animals during the British period, the president said that when she visits museums where animal skins or severed heads adorn the walls, she feels that those exhibits are telling the story of the decline of human civilisation. She said that IFS officers not only have to conserve and augment India's natural resources but also use traditional knowledge in the interest of humanity.

BJP, PM diverting people's attention from real :Priyanka

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged on Wednesday that prices of essential commodities are rising under BJP's rule but Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the saffron party are diverting attention from real issues even during the election campaign. Launching a scathing attack on the BJP and the Prime Minister at three corner meetings in Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency where her brother Rahul Gandhi is seeking re-election, she said the BJP government led by Modi failed to address issues like price rise and unemployment. She accused Modi of manipulating people's votes for the BJP on the basis of religion and stated that the Lok Sabha election is an opportunity to "protect democracy" and the Constitution of India. Vadra alleged the prices of

petrol, diesel and other essential commodities have risen "exponentially" in the last 10 years of the BJP's rule. Similarly, she stated that the unemployment rate has increased. She lamented the absence of any debate in the country during the general elections regarding unemployment and what the Modi-led government has done to alleviate the rising prices of essential commodities.

18 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada

PNS ■ DANTEWADA

As many as 18 Naxalites, including a militia platoon section commander and three women, surrendered on Wednesday in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada, a senior police officer said. Hidma Oyam (34) was working as the Hurrepal Panchayat Militia Platoon (HPMP) section commander, said Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai. The three women are identified as Sambati Oyam (23) who was working as a deputy commander of HPMP, Gangi Madkam (28), the vice president

of Kakadi Panchayat Krantikari Mahila Adivasi Sangthan (KAMS) of the banned CPI (Maoist), and Hungi Oyam (20), a member of Hurrepal Panchayat. "The 18 Naxals laid down arms in front of police and CRPF officials. They were part of Bhairamgarh, and Malanger area committees of the Maoists in south Bastar," Rai said. He said the Naxals surrendered themselves as they were impressed by the police's rehabilitation drive 'Lon Varratu' and disappointed with the hollow Maoist ideology.

WHO calls for equitable health access

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On World Malaria Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasised on the need for heightened focus on addressing the obstacles to health equity, gender equality and human rights in malaria responses. Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, stressed on redoubling efforts to overcome challenges posed by malaria and ensure all individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic status or geographical location, have access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment services for the disease. "Moreover, by leveraging digital technology, we can better understand the diverse health needs of populations, collect and analyse data and monitor progress in real-time, enabling us to identify and address health inequities through both proven interventions and innovation in service delivery," Wazed said. "On World Malaria Day 2024, we unite under the theme 'Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world,'" she said. This theme, which is in sync with this year's World Health Day theme -- "My Health, My Right" -- underscores the urgent need to address the stark inequities that persist in access to malaria prevention, detection and treatment services.

Wazed said in recent years, global efforts to reduce malaria have stagnated, posing a significant threat to public health and exacerbating inequalities within communities. Everyone has the right to quality, timely and affordable malaria services, yet this remains elusive for many, perpetuating a cycle of inequity that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable among us, she stated.



Infants and young children, especially those under five, are particularly affected, with disparities in access to education and financial resources compounding their risk, Wazed said, adding that pregnant women also face heightened risks as pregnancy reduces immunity to malaria, making them more susceptible to infection and severe disease. She added that refugees, migrants, internally displaced people and indigenous people are also at heightened risk of malaria. "Malaria remains a significant public health challenge in our region, affecting nine out of eleven countries and accounting for a third of the global burden outside Africa," the WHO regional director for South-East Asia said. "Despite the formidable obstacles we face, I am heartened by the progress we have made in recent years. In recent years, our region witnessed a substantial decline in malaria cases and deaths, marking the most significant reduction among all WHO regions," she added.

Wazed said in recent years, global efforts to reduce malaria have stagnated, posing a significant threat to public health and exacerbating inequalities within communities. Everyone has the right to quality, timely and affordable malaria services, yet this remains elusive for many, perpetuating a cycle of inequity that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable among us, she stated. Infants and young children, especially those under five, are particularly affected, with disparities in access to education and financial resources compounding their risk, Wazed said, adding that pregnant women also face heightened risks as pregnancy reduces immunity to malaria, making them more susceptible to infection and severe disease. She added that refugees, migrants, internally displaced people and indigenous people are also at heightened risk of malaria. "Malaria remains a significant public health challenge in our region, affecting nine out of eleven countries and accounting for a third of the global burden outside Africa," the WHO regional director for South-East Asia said. "Despite the formidable obstacles we face, I am heartened by the progress we have made in recent years. In recent years, our region witnessed a substantial decline in malaria cases and deaths, marking the most significant reduction among all WHO regions," she added.

NO ELECTRICITY, MOBILE CONNECTIVITY

Election a ritual in remote Tripura village!

PNS ■ CHAWMANU (TRIPURA)

Bikramjoy Tripura, a 'jhumia' (shifting cultivator) residing at a remote village in Tripura's Dhalai district said politicians come to his hamlet during elections and though their promises remain unfulfilled, he casts vote every time with the hope of getting electricity at his home and mobile phone connectivity in the area. The main problem of Vidya Kumar Roaja Para village, which is located around 62 km away from Ambassa, the district headquarters of Dhalai is connectivity as the village does not have a motorable road from Chawmanu, the block headquarters, he told the PTI reporter who visited this remote village. There is no electricity, mobile connectivity or health-care facility in our village, he said. "The Lok Sabha election is coming and we all will vote on April 26 but it remains a five-year ritual for us because it will bring no solution to our problems", the 41-year-old said. "During monsoon, the village which houses 763 jhumia families, all involved in shifting cultivation, remains cut off from the rest of the state. The road from Chawmanu to Vidya Kumar Roaja Para (Thalcherra) turned into a death trap because of the lack of repair for the past several years. Jhumia families living in 11 villages need to travel 10 to 20 km on

travel 10-12 km which is close to Chawmanu block headquarters," he said. Chardene Tripura, an elderly woman, echoed the same problems of her native village Vidya Kumar Roaja Para (Thalcherra). "We have not seen our MLA



Shambu Lal Chakma for many months. He does visit us when the election comes. Hope he will visit our village soon to seek votes", said the 54-year-old woman. The village falls under East Tripura Lok Sabha constituency which goes to voting on April 26. "We have a ration shop at our doorstep but it opens once a week. The jhumias who come from interior hamlets face trouble if they don't get ration stuff on the scheduled day. Several people are living in remote habitations after Vidya Kumar Roaja Para, who have to travel several kilometres on foot to get rice, salt, kerosene and sugar", said Bishayna Tripura, husband of Chardene Tripura. "We have not seen our MLA



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Turncoats

Former Veep Venkaiah Naidu flags party-hopping, calls for strengthening anti-defection law

The pervasive trend of politicians of all hues switching parties, for better career prospects or in pursuit of election tickets especially ahead of Assembly or Lok Sabha polls, is nothing new. This phenomenon, commonly known as party-hopping, has now been flagged by former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu as particularly damaging to our democracy. It also raises questions about the efficiency of the anti-defection law in curbing such practices. The law, enshrined in the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, was introduced to deter elected representatives from switching allegiance to other political parties after being elected. The law aims to maintain stability and integrity within the political system by penalising defections and preserving the sanctity of electoral mandates. However, despite its existence, party-hopping remains a disturbing trend in Indian politics. Politicians often defect from their original party to join another for a ticket, ministerial position or personal ambitions. Additionally, the anti-defection law is limited in its scope and does not address the broader issues of political morality and ethics. Politicians often exploit legal loopholes and engage in prolonged legal battles to circumvent disqualification, thereby escaping accountability for their actions. This not only undermines the democratic process but also erodes public trust in the political system. However, the toothlessness of the anti-defection law and the failure to effectively address this issue reflect deeper systemic challenges within the political system.



So, why is the anti-defection law still toothless in addressing this issue? One of the primary reasons is the loophole in the law that allows for defection without disqualification under certain circumstances. The law permits defection if one-third or more of the members of a legislative party together decide to join another party, effectively legitimising mass defections. This provision has been exploited by political parties to engineer defections and destabilise rival Governments. Moreover, the anti-defection law lacks stringent enforcement mechanisms and timely interventions. While the law penalises individual defections, it does little to address the systemic factors that incentivise party-hopping, such as the allure of power, patronage politics and lack of internal democracy within parties. Furthermore, the anti-defection law is subject to political manipulation and selective application by ruling parties. To strengthen the anti-defection law and address the scourge of party-hopping, comprehensive reforms are necessary. This includes closing loopholes, imposing stricter penalties for defections, enhancing oversight mechanisms and promoting internal democracy within parties. There needs to be a concerted effort to foster a political culture based on principles of integrity, accountability and ethical conduct. Urgent reforms are needed to strengthen the law, uphold democratic principles and restore public trust in the integrity of the political process.

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PICTALK



Devotees carrying holy water from Ganga river wait in queues to perform 'puja' at Vindhyachal Dham, in Mirzapur PTI

Nurture workplace safety and inclusivity

Effective workplace safety and inclusivity initiatives demand a holistic approach, addressing fundamental needs while nurturing higher aspirations

In the ever-changing landscape of workplace safety and inclusivity, this journey is quite often likened to Maslow's theory where foundational components set the stage for higher aspirations. Like Maslow's hierarchy that progresses from physiological needs to self-actualisation, our modern-day approach must deal with basic requirements before going up to more ambitious aspirations. The demand of today goes further than what organisations aspire for but rather addresses what is most urgent at the particular moment. Statistics indicate a diverse workforce composition inclusive of X-Gens, Millennials, Gen Zs and soon Generation Alpha. As this demographic shift occurs, are we ready? What kind of policies and practices should be considered for this new era?



Safe Workplaces: Organisations are increasingly investing in creating both physically and psychologically safe environments. Initiatives encompass Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies, which not only ensure workplace safety but also serve as a magnet for high-performing employees. ESG's emphasis on societal contributions resonates with individuals seeking purpose beyond monetary benefits.

Respectful Workplaces: Establishing psychologically safe environments mandates clear policies, including Codes of Business Conduct, Grievance Redressal protocols and Workplace Harassment guidelines (including Prevention of Sexual Harassment). Additionally, dedicated committees should address issues promptly while proactively working on prevention initiatives. Diversity and Inclusion: To remain relevant, organisations must adopt equal employment policies, refine communication practices, foster employee resource groups and establish Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) councils. Failure to prioritise these initiatives could deter potential candidates and partners, underscoring their importance in today's landscape.

Flexibility: Sensitivity toward employees' diverse needs is paramount. Accommodations for special circumstances, accessibility for differently-abled individuals, gender-neutral facilities and amenities such as nursing spaces are essential. Appreciation: Cultivating a culture of appreciation is pivotal for fostering a sense of belonging among employees. Initiatives such as team bonding activities and addressing unconscious biases contribute significantly to creating supportive environments. This culture of appreciation propels individuals

toward self-actualisation, the pinnacle of Maslow's theory, counteracting toxicity and promoting inclusivity. Training and Development: Prioritising continuous training and development programs is essential to cultivate a culture of growth and inclusivity within organisations. By equipping employees with the necessary tools and resources to excel, companies demonstrate their unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Guaranteeing accessibility for all employees, irrespective of their physical capabilities, is imperative to foster inclusivity. This involves implementing measures such as installing wheelchair ramps, providing ergonomic workstations and offering assistive technologies to facilitate equal participation in the workplace. Additionally, organisations need to establish policies that address accommodation requests promptly and with utmost respect for employees' needs and preferences. (The writer is founder Kelp; views are personal)

Meera Iyer | Bhopal

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The rising power of nano influencers", published on April 24, this is my response. The rise of nano influencers marks a shift towards authenticity in social media marketing. These individuals, with modest followings of 1,000 to 10,000, offer brands a refreshing avenue to connect with consumers. Unlike macro and celebrity influencers, nano influencers embody relatability and community-driven engagement. Their appeal lies in their resemblance to ordinary individuals—friends, family and colleagues—eschewing the polished facades of traditional influencer marketing. This authenticity fosters genuine rapport and trust, essential commodities in an era inundated with impersonal ads. Brands increasingly gravitate towards nano influencers for their cost-effectiveness and heightened engagement rates. Moreover, their endorsements carry the weight of peer recommendations, bolstering consumer confidence and purchase decisions. Yet, challenges persist. Identifying influencers aligned with brand values and managing logistics pose hurdles. Nonetheless, the allure of genuine connections propels brands towards embracing nano influence, fostering deeper, more meaningful consumer relationships amidst the din of commercialism. (The writer is founder Kelp; views are personal)

Graft dominates election discourse

Mounting concerns over corruption and economic uncertainties are shaping the contours of the political contest



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Innocuous developments are unfolding amidst the growing fervour of the impending elections. Despite concerns of the RBI regarding inflation, escalating toll rates, and transportation costs, the nation finds itself amidst a politically charged atmosphere. Nonetheless, certain court rulings are adding intrigue to the evolving scenario.

In addition to the impact of electoral bonds, which have added colour to the political landscape and influenced prices, three other judgments are exerting significant influence. These include the Supreme Court's hearings on the Voters Verifiable Print Audit Trail (VVPAT), commonly known as the voting slip; a judgment regarding the denial of payment to Reliance Infra for the Delhi Airport Metro EPL; and the severe criticism of Patanjali's owners, who are contemnors of court orders regarding their advertising. These developments are intensifying the dynamics of the electoral contest.

Not less interesting is the ED mounting fresh money laundering probe into the Chhattisgarh liquor scam and the ED linking Kerala CPM leaders to bank fraud. Could there be more arrests even after Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Kavita of BRS? Will prices take a backseat to politics and court rulings, or will they remain pressing concerns alongside these factors? Voters, though reticent, are far from oblivious. Whether attending rallies of prominent leaders or not, they are keenly aware of every development that influences their lifestyle. Conversations range from questioning why individuals with questionable backgrounds align themselves with the BJP to analysing defections from BJP to Congress factions. Both voters and party members evaluate the potential implications of each unfolding event, particularly returning officers of Chandigarh municipal polls and Himachal defections.

Corruption is not a non-issue. Arrests of select opposition State leaders on corruption charges by central investigative agencies such as CBI, ED, and income-tax department are unlikely to change



the general public perception that corruption pervades all political parties. Many view the pre-election arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as a strategic move aimed at thwarting the popular politician's participation in the election campaign, rather than a genuine effort to address corruption. It leads them to think that possibly price surges of many medicines and commodities or galloping rises in tolls have electoral bond connections. Former Vice President Venkaiah Naidu's recent remark on corruption involving all parties has given it a new dimension for the voters to rethink the extent of the impact of corruption. Amidst the dropping of corruption charges against former Union Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, allegedly implicated in an Rs 25,000-crore aircraft purchase scandal, questions arise as to why Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal faces arrest for his alleged involvement in a Rs 100 crore State liquor policy issue. People ponder whether the Air India sell-off was conducted transparently or mired in controversy. The action against Kejriwal has spurred opposition unity, evident from the overflowing rally at Delhi's Ramlila Ground.

The recent Supreme Court decision concerning Reliance Infra's Delhi Airport Metro's EPL has prompted questions



THE COURT'S REJECTION OF PATANJALI'S APOLOGY IN A CONTEMPT CASE STEMMING FROM MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS CONTRAVENING ITS ORDER SERVES AS A STARK EXAMPLE OF HOW THE RULE OF LAW CAN RECTIFY CORRUPT PRACTICES

about corporate exploitation of public sector Delhi Metro. The Court overturned its own 2021 order directing Delhi Metro to pay Reliance Infra Rs 2782 crore, which had ballooned to Rs 7686 crore with accrued interest. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, along with Justices R Gai and Surya Kant, justified this drastic action, citing a 'miscarriage of justice' resulting in an 'undeserved windfall' for Reliance Infra. This ruling, following closely after the electoral bond controversy, has heightened voter scepticism. Had Delhi Metro been forced to pay, it could have burdened commuters with significantly higher fares.

Likewise, the court's rejection of Patanjali's apology in a contempt case, stemming from misleading advertisements contravening its order, serves as a stark example of how the rule of law can rectify corrupt practices, unveil false brand images, and maintain price stability. The court's warning to be prepared for consequences, along with its criticism of the Uttarakhanda Government, underscores the power of legal intervention. Erratic power bills and arbitrary demands in UP and many States are also potential issues. Each of these cases, people realise, are instances of political linkages affecting price rises and profiteering. The glaring lapses on the part

of the executive and administration add to the woes of the people and the breakdown of the law-and-order machinery. The judiciary is uncovering corrupt practices that impact economic and administrative systems, consequently rising cost of living. Dainik Bhaskar has done a study on prices in Rajasthan. It finds that compared to 2019, prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas increased by 42 per cent; food items cost 34 per cent more; medicine prices for diabetes and heart diseases rose by 54 per cent and people's dining outside has been reduced by 40 per cent. Pulses have become costlier by 20 per cent, vegetables by 233 per cent, taxi fares by 67 per cent, edible oil 100 per cent, and FMCG rose by 60 per cent. Salaries during the period for different classes have risen by 11 per cent to 26 per cent. Price concerns persist, with numerous unnecessary infra, road airport and metro projects shocking even political workers. However, this doesn't diminish the significance of religious fervour surrounding the Ram temple and Modi's assurances, which remain potent issues in certain regions, albeit overshadowed by economic factors and caste considerations. Amethi and Raebareilly, however, remain in focus, more than Varanasi. (The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EMBRACING NANO INFLUENCE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The rising power of nano influencers", published on April 24, this is my response. The rise of nano influencers marks a shift towards authenticity in social media marketing. These individuals, with modest followings of 1,000 to 10,000, offer brands a refreshing avenue to connect with consumers. Unlike macro and celebrity influencers, nano influencers embody relatability and community-driven engagement. Their appeal lies in their resemblance to ordinary individuals—friends, family and colleagues—eschewing the polished facades of traditional influencer marketing. This authenticity fosters genuine rapport and trust, essential commodities in an era inundated with impersonal ads. Brands increasingly gravitate towards nano influencers for their cost-effectiveness and heightened engagement rates. Moreover, their endorsements carry the weight of peer recommendations, bolstering consumer confidence and purchase decisions. Yet, challenges persist. Identifying influencers aligned with brand values and managing logistics pose hurdles. Nonetheless, the allure of genuine connections propels brands towards embracing nano influence, fostering deeper, more meaningful consumer relationships amidst the din of commercialism. Meera Iyer | Bhopal

PHULE'S PROGRESSIVE LEGACY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A timeless inspiration for India's reform agenda", published on April 24, this is my response. Jyotirao Phule's legacy as a pioneering social reformer resonates strongly in modern India. His relentless efforts to uplift marginalised communities, particularly women and Dalits, laid the groundwork for a more inclusive society. Phule's advocacy for education, gender equality and social justice remains as relevant today as it was in the 19th century. His establishment of the Satyashodhak

Unveiling historical wounds



Apropos the news article, "Historic legal battle unfolds over Gyanvapi", published on April 24, this is my response. The ongoing legal battles concerning worship rights at Gyan Vapi, from Varanasi courts to the Supreme Court, resonate with ethical implications. Both sides' legal prowess seems even-

ly matched, yet the essence of the dispute is far from symmetric. One side defends worship rights, while the other asserts property ownership, blurring the lines of justice. The roots of this conflict delve deep into history, where Aurangzeb's divisive legacy still casts its shadow.

Reverend Sherring's accounts vividly depict the systematic desecration of Hindu temples under Mughal rule, highlighting a painful chapter often overlooked. The struggle over Gyan Vapi transcends legalities; it's a battle to reclaim dignity and heritage. As the judiciary delves into this sensitive matter, it must recognise the injustice endured, ensuring that this trial isn't merely legalistic but a reaffirmation of justice for a wounded community. History's scars must not dictate the present; it's time for healing and restoration. Divya Menon | Chennai

Samaj provided a platform for empowerment and caste equality, echoing the need for grassroots movements in contemporary times.

Moreover, Phule's forward-thinking educational reforms, such as vocational training and multilingual education, mirror present-day policies like the New Education Policy, of 2020. Embracing Phule's vision means prioritising the inclusion of marginalised groups in all spheres of society, from politics to education. As we commemorate Phule's legacy, it's imperative to mainstream the periphery, ensuring every citizen's voice is heard and valued. By doing so, we honour Phule's spirit and move closer to realising his dream of a truly egalitarian society. Kavita Mehra | Jaipur

ETERNAL QUEST FOR LIBERATION

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The Mysteries of Afterlife", published on April 24, this is my response. The Upanishads, with their timeless wisdom, unravel the intricacies of existence

and the journey of the soul beyond mortal realms. Central to their discourse is the juxtaposition of the transient with the eternal, delineating the essence of the self (Atman) from the cycles of birth and death.

Karma, the architect of destiny, weaves the fabric of our lives, transcending the boundaries of time and space and shaping our journey through successive rebirths. Yet, amidst the karmic tapestry, lies the ultimate pursuit — moksha, liberation from the shackles of samsara, a merging with the divine essence. Through contemplation of these profound concepts, the Upanishads beckon us to introspect, to seek beyond the veneer of mortality, towards the realisation of our true nature and the attainment of eternal bliss. In embracing their teachings, we embark on a voyage of self-discovery, navigating the depths of consciousness towards the shores of enlightenment. Naina Kapoor | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN NAVIGATING WORKPLACE ANXIETY

The pressure to consistently perform and deliver causes stress and anxiety



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's fast-paced and competitive work environments, it is not uncommon for employees to experience feelings of stress, worry and anxiety. While it is commonly associated with professional settings, at the same time it is important to recognise that similar dynamics even occur in educational environments, particularly at the school level. One of the primary contributors to workplace anxiety is the pressure to perform at a high level consistently. Employees often face demanding deadlines, complex projects and performance expectations that can create a sense of overwhelm and inadequacy.

Workplace anxiety can manifest in various forms, ranging from mild nervousness before a presentation to debilitating panic attacks triggered by overwhelming workloads or toxic office dynamics. Left unaddressed, it can have detrimental effects on both individual well-being as well as organisational productivity. Various studies and researchers have found a negative correlation between workplace anxiety and job performance that indicates that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower performance ratings across various job tasks and responsibilities which brings in a dire need for employers to understand the root causes of workplace anxiety and implement strategies to mitigate its impact. By understanding the root causes of anxiety and implementing strategies to address them, not only the schools but also the organisations can create supportive environments where all members of the community can thrive. The recent concept of 'Unhappy leaves' which isn't even a standard term in employment or HR terminology, could soon refer to situations where employees take leave from work due to dissatisfaction, stress or burnout caused by their job or work environment. Employees might take such leave to address their mental health, seek new opportunities or simply take a break from the stresses of their current job.



Addressing workplace anxiety requires a multi-faceted approach that involves both the individual experiencing the anxiety and the organisation. Today, an increasing number of employers are becoming aware of the adverse effects that stress can have on an employee's performance and are offering different programs to help employees manage stress in their lives. This approach is an initiative that will prove to increase workplace performance as well as employee loyalty and retention in the long run.

Employers must work to improve employee satisfaction through measures such as providing support for mental health, fostering a positive work environment, offering opportunities for professional development and addressing any concerns or grievances that their employees may have.

On an individual level, employees can take proactive steps to manage workplace anxiety and safeguard their well-being which may include practicing self-care activities such as regular exercise, mindfulness meditation and relaxation techniques to reduce stress levels. Setting boundaries, prioritising tasks and seeking social support from colleagues or professional networks can help alleviate feelings of anxiety and promote resilience in the face of workplace challenges. Organisations and schools can implement policies and practices that promote work-life balance, stress management and mental health awareness. Providing access to resources such as counselling services, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and wellness initiatives can equip employees with tools and strategies to cope with workplace anxiety proactively and foster positive working relationships for creating a psychologically healthy workplace. Remember that overcoming workplace anxiety is a journey and it may take time to find what works best for you.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

The democratic status of India under scanner



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

The latest report from the V-Dem Institute categorises India as one of the 'worst autocracies' globally, significantly undermining its democratic reputation

The Gothenburg-based V-Dem Institute's report on Democracy Report 2024 claims that India has been reduced to the status of an "electoral autocracy" in 2018 and has further downgraded to "one of the worst autocracies". The report categorically found that almost all elements of democracy have worsened in more countries than improved and the report also singled out freedom of expression, fair elections and freedom of association/civil society as the three most affected elements of autocracy. There is ostensibly a clarification for India to take on this global index based on arbitrary methods. The time has come to decolonise the democracy index and frame a domestic democracy index in the global area.

Suffice it to say, that this report based on faulty methods has shaken India's sentiment. The dichotomy is quite apparent that India has been measured in a biased manner in the scale. The flawed methodology and nonchalant attitude of people who helm the global index have put India on a declining global index. The global criticism has allegedly hurt India's sovereign ratings. The Indian Government publicly rejected this global democracy index, arguing that Delhi did not need the sermons. India has accused the rank and file of hypocrisy, calling them self-appointed guardians of the world who find it very difficult to stomach the fact that no one in India seeks their approval.

Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) gives an overview of the State of democracy in 165 independent countries and two territories. This includes almost the entire world population and most of the world's States (micro States are not counted). Rated on a scale of 0-10, the democracy index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, Government activity, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. Based on the results of various indicators in these categories, each country is classified into one of four regime types- "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime". Note that since 2015, the EIU has observed a decline in democratic standards in India. While democracy can be subjective, the EIU Democracy Index is based on five key indicators - the electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of Government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. It is criticised that this democracy index sent out faulty information to the entire world.

According to the EIU Democracy Index, India's civil liberties score was lower than in 2014. Civil liberties are assessed by freedom of expression, freedom of speech, restrictions on the Internet, the independence of the judiciary of the State and the ability of citizens to address their complaints to citizens. The perceptions of human rights, perceptions of religious discrimination and whether the Government uses new risks and threats as an excuse to limit civil liberties. Since 2017, civil liberties scores have been in free fall. It was 7.35 in 2017 and 2018, then dropped to 6.76 in 2019 and bottomed out in 2020 at 5.59.

In 2021 and 2022, India's civil liberties score was 6.18 and by 2023 it had fallen again to 5.88, the score of Ghana, Thailand, Ecuador and Guatemala, all of which have lower Democracy index scores than India.

While the civil liberties scores of developed countries have not improved over this peri-



THE LATEST REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) REPORT SAYS INDIA'S RANKING IN THE 2023 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX HAS FALLEN TO 161 OUT OF 180 COUNTRIES. IN COMPARISON PAKISTAN FARED BETTER IN TERMS OF MEDIA FREEDOM, RANKING 150TH, AN IMPROVEMENT FROM 157TH LAST YEAR

od, India's deterioration has meant that India no longer ranks above them in this parameter. Precisely, according to the report declining civil liberties have affected India's democracy scores. As a result, the Indian Government decided to create its framework for democracy ratings after it was downgraded by international groups and indices. It contacted the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), one of India's largest think tanks, which has partnered with the Government on several projects and initiatives.

According to the EIU Democracy Index, national elections will be held in 2024 in eight of the world's ten most populous countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia and the United States. There are no choices in half of them for free and there is no lack of justice and many other prerequisites of democracy, such as freedom of speech and association. Not surprisingly, elections in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Russia - where opposition forces are subject to State repression - do not lead to regime change or democracy. Elections in the United States, Brazil, India and Indonesia - all classified as "flawed democracies" - at least offer the possibility of change, although they are also likely to see incumbents or anointed followers win. The EIU Democracy Index's position on India's elections is problematic in terms of the methodology used in the study.

The World Happiness Report is a publication that contains articles based on respondents' ratings of their own lives and national happiness ratings, which the report also correlates with various life (quality of) factors. In March 2024, Finland was declared the happiest country in the world seven times in a row. However, India is currently ranked 126 out of 146 countries with a happiness score of 4.054. India is lower in the happiness index than its neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and China. The decline in happiness levels is closely linked to India's deepening mental health crisis, exacerbated by the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pan-

dem. However, one can understand the situation in China. Then China can be ahead of India in terms of the happiness index.

In the report, experts from fields such as economics, psychology, survey analysis and national statistics discuss how well-being measures can effectively measure national progress and address other related topics. Each report is structured into chapters that address the issue, delving deeper into topics related to happiness such as mental health, the tangible benefits of happiness, the role of ethics, political implications and links to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) approach to measuring subjective well-being and other international and national initiatives.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) publishes a World Press Freedom Index every year. RSF is an international non-Governmental organisation whose mission is to protect and promote media freedom. It is headquartered in Paris and has consultative status with the United Nations. This annual World Press Freedom Index aims to "compare the level of press freedom for journalists and the media in 180 countries and territories" with the previous calendar year. The latest Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report says India's ranking in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has fallen to 161 out of 180 countries. In comparison, Pakistan fared better in terms of media freedom, ranking 150th, an improvement from 157th last year. In 2022, India was ranked 150th on the scale. However, the press freedom index of India seems manufactured or could be based on flawed methodology. The history of Pakistani journalism has been turbulent, with periods of relative openness interspersed with severe restrictions on press freedom, especially during the military dictatorship. Similarly, press freedom in Afghanistan has been dismal for years. Even two years after the fall of Kabul, we hear almost every day from Afghan journalists, both

domestic and in exile, about the hostile environment they face.

The Committee to Protect Journalists' attempt is to provide support and assistance to journalists in exile. Since 2021, Afghan journalists have become one of the largest groups of journalists in exile receiving annual grants from CPJ, contributing to a 227 per cent jump in the CPJ grants to journalists in exile over the three years 2020-2022. It received increasing reports of Afghan journalists in exile who were targeted in immigration-related incidents. Afghan journalists seeking asylum in Pakistan told us they have been arrested and blackmailed for overstaying their visas and many are living in hiding and in fear. Then how India can be put below Pakistan and Afghanistan's press freedom index on the scale of press freedom?

The importance of methodology in any study remains vital. Research methodology is a way of explaining how the researcher intends to conduct his research. It is a logical, systematic plan for solving a research problem.

It provides researchers with a road map to ensure that their research is systematic, rigorous and objective. Without a well-defined research methodology, it is difficult to obtain accurate and reliable results, draw meaningful conclusions and contribute to the data set. Research methodology lends legitimacy to the research and provides scientifically sound results. It also includes a detailed plan to help keep researchers on track, making the process smooth, efficient and manageable. The methodology of the researcher allows the reader to understand the approach and methods of concluding. However, the methodology used in the democracy index has invited numerous issues. At this juncture, when the entire world is conspiring against India in terms of the democracy index, India must decolonise the index.

(The writer is an associate professor at the School of Management, Presidency University Bengaluru; views are personal)

Determining the limits of corruption, the Indian way

The recent raids on public functionaries and private individuals speak volumes about the deep roots of corruption still existing in Indian society

Whether it is the issue of electoral bonds the liquor policy of Delhi or many others involving politicians, bureaucrats and even private individuals, perhaps after some hiatus, the ghost of corruption is back haunting the national discourse at present. People may have different perceptions and views on the prevalence of corruption in India depending upon their experiences, knowledge or even interests. Some may think that corruption is highly prevalent within the Government functionaries and in the political class, whereas others may opine that corruption of some form or the other exists in every sphere including in the private sector, even in small businesses. While there may



SIDDHARTH MISHRA

be some others who may justify corruption and yet others who vehemently criticize it. Does it mean that it is how one looks at the scenario that shapes the societal perspectives in this regard and if it is treated as true, does it require looking at the whole issue from different perspectives? Speaking honestly, corruption seems to be prevalent in all walks of life irrespective of whether it is the public or pri-

private sector. There is some other form of corruption visible everywhere in this country. However, the form of corruption that usually becomes the talk of the town is the Governmental or the political class corruption. By that account, for that matter, should even a rickshaw puller or a vegetable or fruit vendor asking for more than the genuine price or overcharging not amount to corruption? Should not the boss, in a private enterprise, dominating, harassing or seeking undue favours from subordinates as a condition of promotion, be seen as corrupt? Ironically, the law does not seem to be treating such attitudes as, falling in the purview of, and, requiring to be prohibited by corruption law, though perhaps, the law

might be providing some other type of remedy in such cases. It is not just that the corruption is not confined to the Government sector, rather monetary is also not the only type of corruption that exists. Other forms of corruption do exist in this country that usually go unnoticed or unchecked. Arrogance in people in power, delaying even genuine work and harassing, or humiliating ordinary people unnecessarily should amount to corruption. Public functionaries take oaths before assuming office and vow to remain honest in their duties, they hold public offices as the trustees for people, who have faith in them and it is their primary duty to serve the common people

and refrain from breaching people's faith. Scores of people throughout the country face tremendous challenges, harassment and humiliation in getting work done in the Government departments at every level but public memory is short-lived and people easily forget such issues as time passes. There is no doubt that corruption is not in the interest of the society or the State. Therefore, to curb the menace of corruption, the subsequent Governments have adopted numerous legal measures including the enactment of laws and the establishment of enforcement machinery. However, as is evident from the recent incidents of corruption, all such measures do not seem to deter people from

involving in acts of corruption. Does it mean that the laws have failed to curb corruption or is it that the laws per se cannot provide a solution to this problem? Does one need to look beyond the legal measures to get rid of this menace that is eating into the vitals of this country?

Can this country do away with the menace of corruption through law and its enforcement? If that was true, then this country would have become corruption-free long back. Does it mean that corruption inherently exists in ourselves and has acquired the status of an accepted norm and it is not possible to get rid of corruption in this country? The question that arises is whether corruption has become a way of life in this

country and whether should people now stop criticising corruption or people involved in it. Moreover, another disturbing aspect is whether involvement in corruption attaches any stigma or invites social backlash to the accused any longer. Doubts do exist about whether considerations of a person's involvement in corrupt practices weigh on people's psyche while making choices, especially political ones. Does this all not call for revisiting the whole gamut of social, educational and cultural moorings. The recent raids upon public functionaries and private individuals speak volumes of the deep roots of corruption still existing in Indian society. The author recalls a high-ranked IT officer, who was

once involved in the anti-corruption raids, telling him that one of the former bureaucrats who was raided for unaccounted assets, had illegally acquired numerous properties, most of which were not even ever seen or visited by him. That officer sadly quipped, 'how much corruption would or should one do and that there has to be a limit to corruption'. This Statement unfortunately and ironically seems to resonate with the general sentiment of the masses who seem to have painfully accepted administrative or political corruption as fait accompli, but wish that at least 'they must do it in limits'.

(The author is a Sr Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, the University of Delhi; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

CPCL Q4 profit falls 39 per cent to Rs 628 crore

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd, a subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), on Wednesday reported 39 per cent drop in March quarter net profit on lower prices and foreign exchange loss. Consolidated net profit of Rs 627.89 crore in January-March FY24 was lower than Rs 1,012.81 crore earning in the same period last year, according to a stock exchange filing of the company. The profit was up 71 per cent when compared with Rs 365.3 crore earning in the December quarter. Revenue from operations was lower at Rs 20,822.95 crore as against Rs 21,350.05 crore in January-March FY23. The company earned US\$ 8.64 on turning every barrel of crude oil into fuel in the year to March 31, 2024, as opposed to a gross refining margin of US\$ 11.91 per barrel in the previous year. Gross refining margin (GRM) for the quarter stood at US\$ 7.71 per barrel, compared to (-) US\$ 16.6 per barrel a year ago. Also, the company booked a foreign exchange loss of Rs 15.84 crore during January-March as compared to a gain of Rs 27.56 crore a year ago.



JNK India IPO fully subscribed on Day 2 of offer

The initial public offer of heating equipment maker JNK India was fully subscribed on the second day of subscription on Wednesday. The Rs 650 crore initial share sale received bids for 1,14,14,556 shares against 1,10,83,278 shares on offer, translating into 1.03 times subscription, as per NSE data. The portion for non-institutional investors got subscribed 1.25 times, while the category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) received 1.13 times subscription. The quota for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) got subscribed 68 per cent. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) of JNK India received 49 per cent subscription on the first day of bidding on Tuesday. The IPO has a fresh issue of up to Rs 300 crore and an offer for sale of up to 84,21,052 equity shares. Those offloading shares in the OFS are promoters Goutam Rampelli, Dipak Kacharula Bharuka, JNK Heaters Co Ltd, and Mascot Capital and Marketing Pvt Ltd, and a shareholder Milind Joshi. The IPO is in a price range of Rs 395-415 a share. On Monday, JNK India Ltd said it has garnered Rs 195 crore from anchor investors.



Grew Energy bags order to supply 200 MW solar equipment

Grew Energy on Wednesday said it has bagged an order to supply 200 MW of solar modules. The company has secured the project under an auction process conducted by Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), it said in a statement. "Grew Energy secures 200 MW of SECI's 400 MW solar PV module auction. Grew amongst the 3 MNRE approved manufacturers to win the mandate to manufacture, test, package, forward, supply and transport the solar PV module," the company said in the statement. The delivery of solar modules and its spare parts have to be completed spanning over a nine-month duration. "We are equipped with the technology and have the bandwidth to contribute to multiple solar products across the country," Vinay Thadani, CEO and Director of Grew Energy, said in the statement. The evaluated bid price is finalised at Rs 22.66 per Watt peak (Wp) for all three bidders creating a standardised rate for the supply of modules and also establishing preference for the upcoming subsequent auctions.



Report unauthorised forex trading to ED: RBI tells banks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Wednesday asked banks to exercise greater vigilance to prevent unauthorised forex transactions through banking channels and immediately report such instances to the enforcement directorate. In a circular, the Reserve Bank said it has come across instances of unauthorised entities offering foreign exchange (forex) trading facilities to Indian residents with promises of disproportionate/exorbitant returns.

"On investigation, it has been observed that to facilitate unauthorised forex trading, these entities have taken recourse to engage local agents who open accounts at different bank branches for collecting money towards the margin, investment, charges, etc," the RBI said.



these accounts are opened in the name of individuals, proprietary concerns, and trading firms, and the transactions in such accounts are not found to be commensurate with the stated purpose for opening the account in several cases.

It is also observed that these entities are providing options to residents to remit/deposit funds in rupees for undertaking unauthorised forex trans-

actions using domestic payment systems like online transfers, and payment gateways, the central bank said.

There is a need for greater vigilance to prevent the misuse of banking channels in facilitating unauthorised forex trading, said the circular addressed to Authorised Dealer Category - I Banks (AD Cat-I banks). "...banks are, therefore, advised to be more vigilant and exercise greater caution in this regard. As and when AD Cat-I banks come across an account being used to facilitate unauthorised forex trading, they shall report the same to the Directorate of Enforcement, Government of India, for further action, as deemed fit," the RBI said.

Sugar mills allowed to use molasses for ethanol production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has allowed sugar mills to use 6.7 lakh tonnes of B-heavy molasses as feedstock for making ethanol in the current year, a senior Food Ministry official said on Wednesday.

Sugar mills were holding excess stock of B-heavy molasses -- a byproduct of the sweetener -- produced before the ban on its use on December 7 last year.

However, a week later, the government reversed the ban and allowed the use of cane juice and B-heavy molasses, but within the overall cap of a diversion of 17 lakh tonnes of sugar for ethanol production for the



2023-24 supply year (November-October).

"We have permitted sugar mills to use B-heavy molasses lying with sugar mills for ethanol. The same has been communicated to the Petroleum Ministry," the official said.

This will be over and above the capped diversion of 17 lakh tonne of sugar for ethanol production for 2023-24, he added.

Currently, sugar mills have a B-heavy molasses stock of

"We have permitted sugar mills to use B-heavy molasses lying with sugar mills for ethanol. The same has been communicated to the Petroleum Ministry," the official said.

6.7 lakh tonnes as per the state cane commissioner. The move comes following the industry's representations to the food ministry to allow B-heavy molasses for ethanol production and improve the finances of the sugar mills.

Markets maintain momentum for 4th day

Sensex nears 74k

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ticked higher for the fourth straight session on Wednesday, helped by buying in metal and commodity stocks amid a positive trend in global equities.

However, intense selling pressure on telecom, IT and tech counters capped the upside, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 114.49 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 73,852.94. During the day, it jumped 383.16 points or 0.51 per cent to 74,121.61.

The NSE Nifty advanced

34.40 points or 0.15 per cent to 22,402.40. The indices witnessed some selling pressure towards the fag-end of the session that erased some initial gains.

"Indian markets lagged the Asian peers as Q4 earnings remained largely subdued with weak results from IT and a com, IT and tech counters capped the upside, traders said.

few index heavyweights results also disappointed. "However, buoyed by strong manufacturing and service sectors, the Indian composite PMI hit a multi-year high, reflecting domestic resilience and bringing some buoyancy in the broad market.

M&A deal value surged 60 pc to US\$ 19.6 bn : PwC India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Merger and acquisition (M&A) deal value soared by 60 per cent to US\$ 19.6 billion in January-March 2024, while that of private equity (PE) experienced a slight dip, according to a PwC India report.

With 455 deals amounting to US\$ 25.6 billion disclosed value, the first quarter of 2024 showcases a 24 per cent rise in deal volume compared to the fourth quarter of calendar year 2023 -- marking a notable resurgence, as per PwC India report 'Deals at a glance'.

"This signals a shift from the declining trend observed throughout 2023," it added. As per the report, there were 143 domestic M&A deals, with the largest one touching



US\$ 4.5 billion. The overall deal value for the first quarter of 2024 stands at US\$ 25.6 billion, a significant increase from the previous quarter and the corresponding period last year.

Sector-wise, traditional sectors took the lead, drawing significant investments in the changing deal-making scenario. The media and enter-

tainment sector topped the charts in terms of value, while the retail and consumer sectors continue to lead in terms of deal volume.

Dinesh Arora, Partner & Leader - Deals, PwC India, said that amid a landscape ripe with opportunities, the Indian economy emerges as a beacon of resilience. "The first quarter of 2024

showcases the best figures in the last six quarters, owing to the momentum of the market and large-ticket deals, hinting at a bold appetite for strategic expansion and market dominance.

"The quarter also heralds a promising horizon for capital markets and embodies an unyielding optimism. As deal-makers, businesses, and investors look towards the future, the energy is palpable," Arora said.

According to the report, in the first quarter of 2024, the market activity in terms of volume shows a significant uptick compared to the last two quarters.

In the first quarter of 2024, the market activity in terms of volume shows a significant rise compared to the last two quarters.

Gold, silver prices rebound after falling for two sessions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rebounded on Wednesday after falling in the past two sessions, with the yellow metal rising Rs 410 to Rs 72,610 per 10 grams in the local market due to strong trends in the global markets.

Silver prices also jumped Rs 250 to Rs 83,750 per kg.

According to H D F C Securities, gold prices bounced Rs 410 to Rs 72,610 per 10 grams in Delhi. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,200 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Silver prices also rose Rs 250 to Rs 83,750 per kg. In the previous close, it had settled at Rs 83,500 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the

Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,610 per 10 grams, up by Rs 410 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,322 per ounce, up US\$ 12 from the previous close.

Following the release of the US macro-economic data, the US dollar and the Treasury yields declined, which further helped the bullion prices bounce back from a recent low, Gandhi said.

Silver was also trading higher at US\$ 27.10 per ounce. It had ended at US\$ 26.80 per ounce in the previous session.



'Not in talks to buy Vodafone Group's stake in Indus Towers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Wednesday said it is not in discussions to acquire British telecom giant Vodafone Group's about 21 per cent stake in Indus Towers.

In a BSE filing, Airtel asserted that it has no desire to raise its stake beyond what is required for financial consolidation of Indus in the company "which shall be done as and when appropriate with compliance of applicable disclosure requirements".

Bharti Airtel holds 47.95



per cent stake in Indus Towers. "...we wish to clarify that the

Bharti Airtel is not in any discussion with Vodafone Group to acquire such stake in Indus Towers Limited," Airtel said, refuting reports that the Sunil Mittal-led telco was eyeing Vodafone's 21.05 per cent stake in Indus.

Indus is a provider of critical infrastructure services to the telecom industry and Airtel relies heavily on it.

"Airtel will therefore always ensure that Indus remains in robust health and financially stable," it said.

RBI Deputy Governor Rabi Sankar gets 1-yr extension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has extended the term of RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar for a period of one year, the central bank said in a statement.

"The Central Government has re-appointed Shri T Rabi Sankar as Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India, for a period of one year with effect from May 03, 2024, or until further orders, whichever is earlier," it said.

Sankar was appointed as the RBI Deputy Governor in May

2021 for a period of three years.

He joined the RBI in 1990 and worked in various positions at the central bank.

He was Executive Director of the Reserve Bank before being elevated to the post of deputy governor.

As an executive director, he was looking after the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, the Department of Information Technology, Fintech and the Risk Monitoring Department of the RBI.

IF PAN LINKED WITH AADHAAR BY MAY 31

No action for short deduction of TDS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department has said that no action will be taken for short deduction of TDS in case the assessee links his/her PAN with Aadhaar by May 31.

As per income tax rules, if a Permanent Account Number (PAN) is not linked with biometric Aadhaar, TDS is required to be deducted at double the applicable rate.

In a circular, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said several grievances have been received from taxpayers



that they are in receipt of notices intimating that they have committed default of 'short-deduction/collection' of TDS/TCS while carrying out the transactions where the PANs of the deductees/collectees were inoperative.

In such cases, as the deduc-

tion/collection has not been made at a higher rate, demands have been raised by the department against the deductors/collectors while processing of TDS/TCS statements.

To redress the grievances faced by such deductors/collectors, the CBDT specified that for "the transactions entered into up to March 31, 2024 and in cases where the PAN becomes operative (as a result of linkage with Aadhaar) on or before May 31, 2024, there shall be no liability on the deductor/collector to deduct/collect the tax (at higher rate)".

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DEALS

Microsoft and Amazon face scrutiny

PNS ■ LONDON

British competition regulators said Wednesday they'll scrutinise recent artificial intelligence deals by Microsoft and Amazon over concerns that the moves could thwart competition in the AI industry.

The Competition and Markets Authority said it's looking into Microsoft's partnership with France's Mistral AI and the company's hiring of key staff from another startup, Inflection AI. The watchdog also separately announced that it's investigating Amazon's \$4 billion investment in San



Francisco-based Anthropic. Big Tech companies have been pouring money into generative AI startups amid growing public and business interest in the technology, but the investments have also drawn attention

from antitrust authorities. The UK watchdog said it was seeking comments from "interested third parties," before deciding whether to carry out an in-depth antitrust investigation. "We will assess, objectively

and impartially, whether each of these three deals fall within UK merger rules and, if they do, whether they have any impact on competition in the UK," the watchdog's executive director of mergers, Joel Bamford, said in a statement.

Microsoft said it will provide the watchdog with the information it needs to carry out its inquiries.

"We remain confident that common business practices such as the hiring of talent or making a fractional investment in an AI start-up promote competition and are not the same as a merger," the company said.

Microsoft last month hired Mustafa Suleyman, who co-founded Google's DeepMind AI research lab, to head up its consumer artificial intelligence business, along with the chief scientist and several top engineers and researchers from Inflection, his AI startup.

Microsoft also teamed up earlier this year with Mistral, which has become France's AI darling after being founded only last year. That followed Microsoft's previous existing partnership with ChatGPT maker OpenAI, which is also facing scrutiny from the CMA.

HUL Q4 profit dips, net sales flat at Rs 15,013 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG major Hindustan Unilever on Wednesday reported a 1.53 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,561 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024 due to factors such as deflation and softening of commodity prices.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 2,601 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing from HUL. Net sales of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) were almost flat to Rs 15,013 crore



the previous fiscal was flat at Rs 15,441 crore as against Rs 15,375 crore a year ago. "HUL delivered a resilient performance in Q4 with underlying sales growth of 1 per cent, underlying volume growth (UVG) of 2 per cent and EBITDA margin at 23.4 per cent," HUL said in its earnings statement.

In the March quarter, HUL's gross margin improved 350 bps year-on-year and its advertising and promotional (A&P) investments increased 200 bps as it continued to step up investments on its brands.



Sona Mohapatra takes inspiration from Freida Kahlo for Senti Akhiyaan

The power couple, songstress Sona Mohapatra and acclaimed composer Ram Sampath, join forces once again to bring audiences a captivating new song titled *Senti Akhiyaan*. The song, born from the lyrical musings of young poet Roshanaara Qureshi, delves into the theme of eyes being the window to the soul, resonating with the raw emotion and energy that Sona is known for.

Sona has always been inspired by the fearless spirit, art, and unique fashion of the legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, and

it was Ram's idea to make a music video where Sona meets the icon Frida. Speaking of her inspiration, Sona said, "I've always been inspired by the fearless spirit, art, and unique fashion of the legendary Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Long before she was discovered by fashion editors in our art and lifestyle space, I had postcard prints of all her paintings framed and put up on my hostel wall as a student. I loved that she sported bushy eyebrows, wore colour unabashedly, and flaunted her roots and identity as a Mexican with

pride and great aplomb. It was his idea to make a music video where Sona meets Frida. He felt that the *Senti Akhiyaan* composition and music arrangement had a strong Latin American flavour, and it was fitting to draw inspiration from her imagery and, in a sense, also pay homage to our common love of celebrating our roots vs. blending into the generic landscape of what is considered glamorous in the larger public eye. I have always hated blending in! The first-time young femme lyricist of the song Roshanaara is also a rebel and

firebrand, and that also made us believe that this would be a perfect fit. It's always great fun to work on such projects because we get to reflect and express our tastebuds and not cater to the boundaries of creativity."

Musically, *Senti Akhiyaan* seamlessly blends timeless Indian melodies with a reggaeton beat, accented by Hindustani harmonium interludes played by Tanmay Deochake. The fusion of guitars, kalimbas, and percussion infuses the song with an organic Latin swing, creating a vibe that is both chill and infectious.

ADHYAYAN SUMAN HINTING ON KANGANA: 'I DON'T WANT TO DISCUSS THE PERSON YOU ARE REFERRING TO'

Actor Adhyayan Suman, recently discussed his previous romance with Kangana Ranaut. Suman claimed to have "forgotten" and "massively closed" his past in an interview. "I have forgotten the past, so I don't want to discuss the person you are referring to," said the *Heeramandi* actor. "I will respond to your question if you ask, but I have brought this to a significant conclusion. Life has advanced significantly. That was in my 20s. I am currently 36 years old." Shekhar

Suman, his father, was asked the identical question at the same interview. "They have both moved on in their lives," Shekhar said as well. "Keeping the charred and crumbled pages would be a foolish move. History has come to an end; they are done. Repeating and talking about them is pointless. When you were younger, that was a different time period. After that, you continued on. Life has progressed, people move on; the world moves on." When Siddharth asked Adhyayan if he had been unlucky in love, he clarified that it wasn't the case. He said, "I genuinely feel, as a

performer, *maine bahut kuch vaha se seekha hai emotionally apni life me*." He also revealed his plans for marriage! Within the next two years, he expressed his desire to tie the knot. For those who don't know, Adhyayan and Kangana fell in love while filming *Raaz: The Mystery Continues* with Mohit Suri. In the meantime, Adhyayan's next film is *Heeramandi*, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.



JENNIFER LOPEZ PLAYS ATLAS SHEPHERD ON A QUEST TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM AI

The trailer for the upcoming movie *Atlas*, starring Simu Liu and Jennifer Lopez, was released on Netflix. Jennifer Lopez plays Atlas Shepherd, a talented but misanthropic data analyst who has a strong mistrust of artificial intelligence. She enlists in an operation to apprehend a rogue robot, Simu Liu, with whom she has an enigmatic past. Her only chance to save humanity from AI, however, when things go wrong, is to put her trust in it. Alongside

Simu Liu, Sterling K. Brown, Gregory James Cohan, Abraham Popoola, Lana Parrilla, and Mark Strong, the film is directed by Brad Peyton. The trailer presents a future in which one woman, Atlas, will determine the fate of humanity, adding to the suspense surrounding Brad Peyton and Jennifer Lopez's cooperation with Netflix. The movie will be available on Netflix worldwide on May 24.

1947 Lahore, Preity Zinta's comeback to the silver screen!



Preity Zinta has returned to her forte, illuminating the silver screen. The actor is currently filming *Lahore 1947*, a period drama directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, starring Sunny Deol. The actor posted a number of behind-the-scenes images to social media, giving fans a fun glimpse into the making of the movie. Preity shared pictures from the movie set on social media to show off her delight and give followers a peek at *1947 Lahore*. Preity posted a picture of the clapperboard from the movie with the comment, "On set for *Lahore 1947*." Another photo showed the actor and director, Rajkumar Santoshi, in an intimate moment that alluded to their friendship behind the scenes.

The thrill that fans felt upon Preity's comeback to acting was uncontrollable. A response on Instagram said, "Wow!! Heart-eye emojis aside, I can't wait to see you on the big screen." Another added, "Yesss the prettiest woman @realpz is back." "Preity Zinta return?" inquired a second person.

Channing's Blink Twice draws comparison with Knives Out



Recently, the trailer for Channing Tatum's next psychological black comedy-thriller was released. In the film, Channing plays a software millionaire who, with his pals, takes off for his enigmatic private island. The trailer has received a resounding response from netizens, who have drawn comparisons between it and *Knives Out* and *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*. A burning house and several attempted murders mark the conclusion of the two-minute and 41-second trailer.

Twitter users expressed their appreciation for Channing's latest dark comedy-thriller on their handles. A Twitter user stated, "Zoë Kravitz's *Blink Twice* movie seems like a whole lot of fun. It looks like *Knives Out* without being devoid of any of its references." This ensemble as a whole is so awesome and hot. "It's giving me *Glass Onion* vibes but a different plot filled with thriller and horror," commented another moviegoer. "Looks great but the trailer gave us way too much. I was sold in half the trailer," another user noted, though. "The trailer is so good and promises a lot..." another fan wrote in a comment. "The entire movie has stunned me so much...I am eager for the film to be released in theatres."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



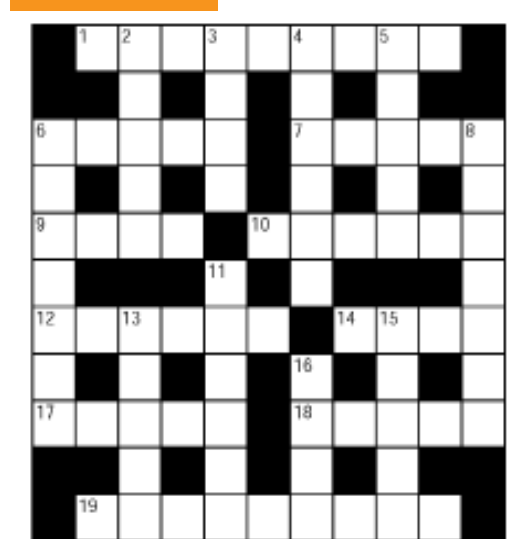
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- This accompanies thunder
- Leaving
- Correct
- Find these in a nest
- A large old fortified building
- Use this with a sewing needle
- A heavy metal
- A restaurant customer
- Enraged
- Yummy brown stuff

DOWN

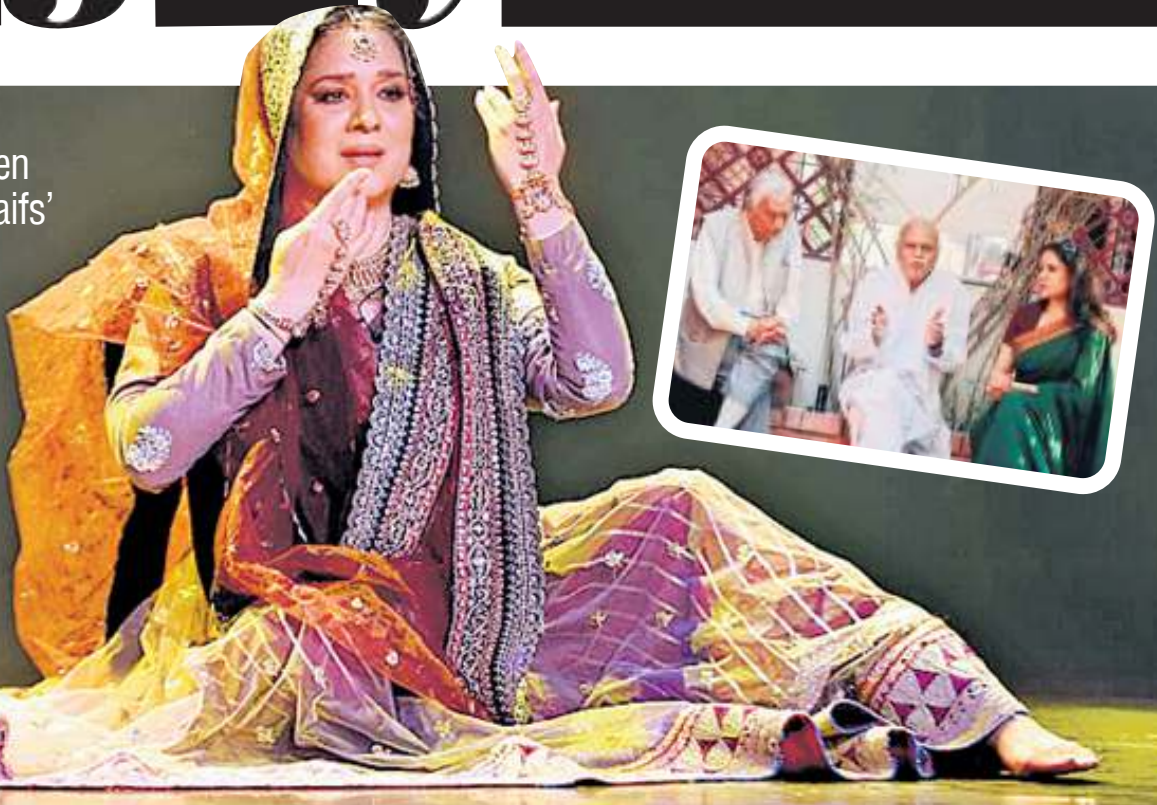
- Time of darkness
- Welcomed
- A weekday
- Cloth
- A large farm in America
- One fifth of forty
- Travel by yacht



GINGER MEGGS



Celebrating the women performers, the 'Tawaifs' and the 'Baijis', *The Pioneer* takes you through *The Courtesan Project*. In an exclusive chat with the founder, we discuss more in detail about the project.



Rediscovering legacy of Tawaifs and Baijis with The Courtesan Project

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Did you know that the highly trained courtesans of Awadh in the 18th and 19th centuries were known as 'Tawaifs', the trendsetters of their era?

They combined Persian and Indian elements to create the classic Kathak dance and the ethereal dadra and thumri music, raising the bar for style and sophistication. They were not only exceptional artists but also highly regarded conversationalists and etiquette instructors.

Manjari is the creator of *The Courtesan Project*, an idea that has grown to become one of the most popular dance revival movements in existence today—giving women a voice and acknowledging their centuries-long creative contributions to theater, film, and other performing arts. *The Courtesan Project* is well-known, adored, and valued all over the world for its distinctive storytelling that brings to light the underappreciated stories of dance and music!

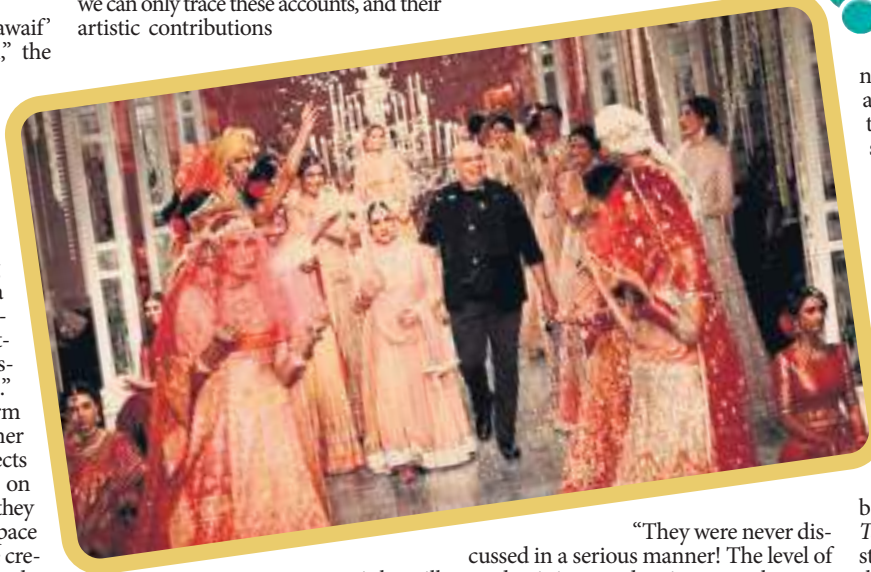
"Let's say 1999, when I met a 'Tawaif' by the name of Zareena Begum," the founder recounts in an exclusive conversation with us for the special weekly column. "I was a rookie in this field of dancing. The term 'Tawaif' among the Kathak community was unfamiliar to me. I recall her putting her hands out in front of me and questioning how I was meant to dance to a song sung by a 'tawaif' because I came from a wealthy household. I didn't understand! I became even more motivated to test this notion we're discussing after observing the stigma."

This initiative serves as a platform to educate the public about former courtesans and the detrimental effects that discriminatory practices had on their lives. Through cultural action, they are promoting the much-needed space for them as 'artists' in society. The creator goes on, "I also manage a foundation where I provide medical and financial support to our community's elderly musicians. I began my investigation into the music connected to 'Tawaifs' without considering any stigmas at this point. I discovered that they had to sing from the doorway and were never permitted into the affluent homes. Why was this, I wondered? This social order is terrible."

Thus, the founder felt it was imperative that she share 'Tawaif's' inspiring tales with the world and showcase their artwork. This relates to gender in the arts and

how the performer's gender influences the work going forward! The enigmatic dancers known as Tawaif and Nachnewali are not included in the history of performing arts documentation, while their male counterparts are named 'Ustads' and the amazing women are simply called 'Nautch Girls'.

Additionally, she recalled asking the tawaifs' sponsors, "I was told straight out that Sufi has a strong brand, so why would you want to work with the tawaifs? It provided me with yet another perspective on the project I was working on. We were not sponsored! However, I have a strong sense of stubbornness, so I went ahead and paid for the concert myself. However, I first gave a two-hour session to get people talking about Tawaif culture. 'Tawaif' isn't a terrible word, in my opinion! In their faces, the cultural minister consented to attend." These women were the first to perform as women in the major Hindi film industry after moving from Kotha to become a part of the Parsi theatre. The accounts of women who sang for India's independence have been lost to history; we can only trace these accounts, and their artistic contributions



are mainly still unacknowledged! Their art is highlighted by this endeavour now. Bravo!"

"I must admit that, despite what I was told, the media solely seeks financial benefit. This was disproven when 32 prominent newspapers covered the 'tawaif' without the support of sponsors! I was unable to even send out formal invitations as we do now, so I invited everyone—including the ministers—by writing simple letters. The 'tawaif' asked, 'Log humse abhi bhi mohabbat karte hai?' (People still love us?) as she broke down in tears.

There, my project won! I obstinately became more involved in this project moving forward," continues Manjari Chaturvedi. The founder has taken her passion for classical dance and transformed it into something more than just a means of expression. Under her direction, it is a kind of narrative form, as well as a cultural rebirth. *The Courtesan Project*, aims at documenting the historically extraordinary role of the 'Tawaif' in artistic life—as muse to poets and painters, writers and kings, musicians and leaders—and is the most evocative example of this. By doing this, she aims to restore the respect that these denigrated women deserve for their education and performance art, their wit and intelligence, their creativity, and their unadulterated sexual might.

Her personal experiences provided more insightful commentary. "I could sense how only sniggering conversations were held about the 'tawaifs' in the drawing rooms," she said.



Bollywood is to blame for the incorrect portrayal of 'tawaifs' in society. I began talking about dance and how it's associated with 'tawaifs'. Students began learning more about this culture as a result of the *Courtesan Project*. They even wrote a departmental book on them locally! The interest that authors and PhD candidates began to show in them for books or research papers was another way that the project had an impact. I won't name them, but a huge filmmaker is filming a picture about them; his writers sat down while I was in seminar. A movie on 'tawaifs' would never have attracted anyone's attention ten years ago. What unexpectedly occurred? It's my project's impact!

Even the one that was produced was a complete failure! My concert served as inspiration for *Bombay Begums* as well. However, since these movies would stop at nothing to get money, I'm not concerned about them."

There have been hundreds of concerts, including Manjari Chaturvedi's performance art of the 'tawaifs', four significant seminars, three Tedx speeches, and several other talks and lectures under the umbrella of *The Courtesan Project* series. Many historical walks have been inspired by the 'tawaifs', and the majority of singers and dancers currently use the 'tawaifs' art form in their performances. The 'tawaifs' are in style, and there are countless Instagram reels of them. This is the direct outcome of the last 14 years' worth of work that has led to a cultural rebirth. The contemporary classical dancer who aspires to be recognised among the singers and dancers of the past is challenging society's expectations of individuals and how the past has viewed female stage artists. She is making a bold statement by titling her event *Main Tawaif*, and that is admirable, and only a strong performer like her can transcend the existing narrative and craft a new one from the perspective of women. This is necessary to finally recognise the tawaif's performance art, to go past the jeers and drawing room giggles that come with the word 'tawaif', and to finally recognise their place in the annals of performance art history! Manjari herself had to wait for ten long years to use the name 'tawaif' in a classical concert without facing backlash. A contemporary classical dancer who is at last hoping to provide the performers and vocalists of the past some recognition. She is challenging stereotypes!

"They were never discussed in a serious manner! The level of academic interest does increase when you do seminars. Even the word 'Tawaif' was forbidden to be used in the lectures! I was astonished to hear that some institute staff members referred to the dancing performances as 'Mujras'! Observe the irony; the same institute was the scene of *Mughal-e-Azam*." So, she offered the younger generation a different perspective on the talented female artists who, up until now, have only been the subject of disparaging remarks that may have been heavily influenced by Bollywood. "I was addressing prejudices.

'No longer confined to handful of favourites'

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Popularly known for his ability to play various roles on television, Aamir Ali mesmerised the audiences yet again with his captivating performance in *Lootere*, streaming on Disney+ Hotstar. For those unaware, he had previously collaborated with the ace filmmaker Hansal Mehta once again post-*Faraaz*.

Getting candid with *The Pioneer*, Aamir, who plays the character of Ghulam Waris, reveals, "Initially, working with directors like Hansal sir, Shailesh sir, and Jai was a dream come true. *Lootere* intrigued me; its storyline was unlike anything I had ever encountered. In television, characters are often limited to hero and heroine archetypes, but in OTT, the diversity and complexity of roles are fascinating. *Lootere* delves into the gripping tale of a cruise ship crew comprising Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, held captive by Somali pirates with no hope of escape or rescue for the enslaved."

As we went on further in this chat, the actor couldn't praise the show enough. The reason, you wondered, is that he shares, "It's truly groundbreaking for Indian OTT. The production, featuring both Indian and African actors, is unparalleled. Its bilingual format, a bold move, sets it apart from the rest. I'm grateful to Hotstar for believing in Hansal Sir and Jai's vision."

Filming *Lootere* was an immense challenge for everyone involved, from actors to makers and technicians. Shooting in Cape Town, Africa, presented formidable obstacles with its harsh temperatures and unpredictable weather conditions. The decision to film solely at live locations added another layer of complexity to the production process. Despite having security measures in place, he reveals, "The cast and crew found themselves navigating unfamiliar terrain, immersed in the vibrant yet challenging environment of African slums reminiscent of Mumbai's Dharavi."

Portraying a character who shuns violence yet possesses a knack for getting things done was a fascinating challenge for him. And so, he drew inspiration from real-life individuals whom he knew and admired, crafting a character that resonated deeply with him. "This character became a source of inspiration, embodying traits I found truly admirable. In one pivotal scene, as my character engages in conversation with another individual, tension mounts as a gun is suddenly pointed in his direction. However, as the scene unfolds, it becomes evident that my character maintains complete control of the situation. Through his sharp intellect and quick thinking, he skillfully navigates the encounter, effortlessly turning the tables in his favour. This moment serves as a testament

ACTOR AAMIR ALI, WHO WAS RECENTLY SEEN IN HANSAL MEHTA'S LOOTERE, GETS CANDID WITH THE PIONEER IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT, AS HE DISCUSSES THE SERIES, SHOOTING IN CAPE TOWN IN EXTREME TEMPERATURES, HIS INCLINATION TOWARDS OTT, AND MORE.

to his astuteness and cunning nature. Watching the show will reveal why this character holds such significance for me as their journey unfolds on screen, showcasing the depth and complexity of their beliefs and actions."

The excellence of *Lootere*, he says, lies in its ensemble cast, comprised of incredibly talented actors who seamlessly embody their characters. Each actor was carefully selected not for their name recognition but for their ability to authentically portray their roles. He further shares, "The casting process was meticulous, ensuring that every actor perfectly fit their character, enhancing the authenticity and depth of the narrative. What truly sets this show apart is the remarkable chemistry between the cast members, evident in the nuanced reactions they elicit from one another. It's through these genuine interactions that the true essence of acting shines, demonstrating the importance of strong reactions in creating compelling performances."

Watching shows on international OTT platforms ignited a deep passion within him, sparking a desire to be part of such groundbreaking projects. "It was a dream I held close to my heart to explore the realm of OTT content in India and make a mark in the industry. As I embarked on this journey, I found myself living the dream I once envisioned. Being part of *Lootere* was the realisation of that dream—a moment of profound fulfillment and joy. I had longed to delve into the world of OTT shows, and now, having accomplished it, I feel a sense of gratification beyond measure."

Exploring the vast landscape of OTT platforms and world cinema, he says, has broadened his horizons in ways he had never imagined. "While I once admired iconic characters like Amitabh Bachchan's portrayal in *Agneepath* or Aamir Khan's roles, the diverse range of characters now available on OTT platforms has expanded my appreciation. No longer confined to just a handful of favourites, I find myself drawn to a multitude of characters from various shows and films. This newfound perspective has inspired me to seek out diverse roles and stories that challenge me as an actor."

Next in line after *Lootere* is a project titled *Doctors*, helmed by Siddharth P. Malhotra. "I'm eager to dive into this new venture, exploring the intricacies of the medical world and delving into complex characters under Malhotra's direction. As I continue to embrace the ever-evolving landscape of OTT content, I look forward to pushing boundaries and venturing into uncharted territory with each new opportunity that comes my way," signs off Aamir on a happy note.



Deep brain stimulation's impact on advanced parkinson's management

Parkinson's disease (PD), a degenerative condition of the nervous system, is a movement disorder characterised by slowness of movement, resting tremor (shaking of limbs), rigidity (stiffness), and postural instability (imbalance).

ADVANCED PARKINSON'S DISEASE MANAGEMENT:

Medical management remains the first line of treatment in patients with PD. Patients respond well to medications that temporarily replenish dopamine (L-dopa) or mimic the action of dopamine. However, as the disease duration increases, the requirement of L-dopa increases and the medical management of advanced Parkinson's disease can be quite challenging.

The most troublesome effects of L-dopa as the disease advances, usually after several years of treatment, are an end-of-dose reduction in efficacy, the more precipitous "on-off" phenomenon, and the induction of involuntary "dyskinetic" movements. This is when patients are evaluated for

Deep Brain Stimulation - a surgical procedure that helps people with advanced PD improve their quality of life.

DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION :

Deep Brain Stimulation involves applying high-frequency electrical stimulation to specific structures in the deep areas of the brain. Deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery was first approved in 1998 to treat Parkinson's disease (PD) tremor, then in 2002 for the treatment of advanced Parkinson's symptoms. It is now widely accepted as an effective, safe, and standard treatment worldwide.

The procedure involves placing a thin metal electrode into one of several possible brain targets and attaching it to a computerised pulse generator, which is implanted under the skin in the chest below the clavicle.

In DBS surgery, electrodes are inserted into a specific area of the brain (generally the subthalamic nucleus STN or the Globus pallidus GPi), using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and recordings of brain cell activity during the procedure.



This is the part of the procedure where the patient is awake. A second procedure is performed under General Anaesthesia (GA) to implant an IPS, impulse generator battery (like a pacemaker). The IPG is placed under the collarbone. The IPS provides an electrical impulse to a part of the brain involved in motor function.

ROLE OF DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE :

DBS is highly effective for patients who suffer from disabling tremors, wearing-off spells, and dyskinesias induced by medication. Although DBS significantly improves the quality of life in PD patients, it is not a cure and it does not

slow PD progression. It gives a good quality of life for 10-15 years depending on the age and stage of PD when DBS was performed. Most people after undergoing DBS, experience a considerable reduction of their PD symptoms, and their medications can be greatly reduced. However, it does not improve speech or swallowing issues, thinking problems, or gait freezing.

Like all brain surgeries, DBS carries a small risk (<5%) of complications. It can be procedure-related (haemorrhage that may be silent or symptomatic, transient confusion, infection), device-related (breakage of leads), or stimulation related (usually eliminated by adjusting stimulation settings). This is often avoided with stringent patient selection criteria, meticulous planning, and strict asepsis during DBS surgery. A controller is given to patients who undergo DBS surgery to turn the device on or off.

DBS surgery does not cause any damage to healthy brain tissues or nerve cells. It only interrupts abnormal electrical signals from targeted areas in the brain. It is a reversible procedure unlike other proce-

dures used in the treatment of PD like lesioning which involves irreversibly destroying tissues in a specific area of the brain.

IDEAL PD CANDIDATE FOR DBS :

- The patient has had PD symptoms for at least five years.
- S/he continues to have a good response to PD medications, especially carbidopa/levodopa, although the duration of response may be insufficient (Levodopa responsive).
- Age group of 40-70 years.
- The patient has "on/off" fluctuations despite regular medication dosing.
- S/he is unable to tolerate PD medications due to side effects.
- Tremors that are not well controlled with medication.
- Severe dyskinesias.
- The patient should be cognitively intact.

(The author, Dr. Sathwik R Shetty is a Consultant - Neurosurgery at Manipal Hospital.)

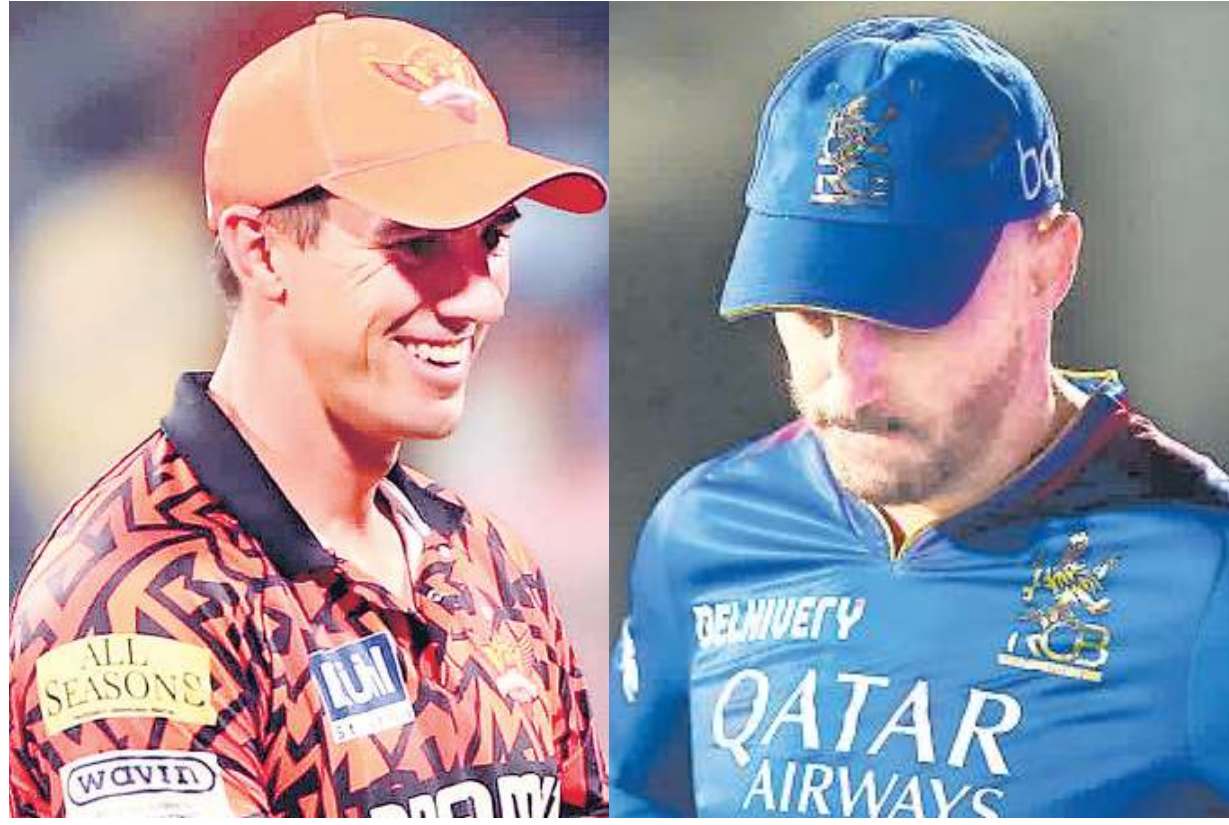


Rampant Sunrisers Hyderabad eye another run fest against bottom placed RCB

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to unleash their brute batting power on struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru when the two teams face off in their return-leg fixture of the IPL here on Thursday. Having breached the 250-run mark thrice in this IPL edition itself, Sunrisers Hyderabad are pushing the boundaries of T20 batting with their no holds barred approach. While Mumbai Indians were the first victim of SRH's new-found batting strength this season, RCB bore the maximum brunt when the Travis Head-led batting line-up powered the 2016 winners to IPL's highest-ever total of 287/3 in Bengaluru. If this was not enough, SRH's carnage against Delhi Capitals - which included a record 125/0 being scored in the powerplay - brought forth the possibility of the 300-run mark being breached for the first time ever in the IPL. And it won't be surprising if

SRH manage to do the unthinkable and that too against a bowling attack as frail as RCB's, whose struggles with in the bowling department could be gauged with the fact that their best bowler, Yash Dayal, is at 24th spot in the overall list with seven wickets. Placed at the bottom of the pool, RCB have conceded at least 180 in their last five matches. In the last two games, the opponents have raked up totals in excess of 200. RCB batters have worked hard to make up for their severe shortcomings in bowling, but for such a lopsided squad in terms of balance, the task to produce an all-round performance looks nearly impossible. To their credit, RCB fought incredibly hard with the bat but were unfortunate to have lost to Kolkata Knight Riders by a mere one run after conceding 222/6. Moreover, a collective batting effort must have pleased the RCB management to a large extent. He was a victim of a contentious call but Virat Kohli



remains RCB's best batter in the tournament so far, having scored 379 runs to keep the Orange Cap in possession. But hot on his heels are a few others including SRH's Head, who is making most of his purple patch. Head's game is designed not only on aggressiveness and ability to cash in on every opportunity, his ability to find gaps at will makes him a compulsory watch. Abhishek Sharma has flourished in Head's company and Heinrich Klaassen too has made merry with the bat this season. Overall, SRH's compelling shows with the bat have made the job of their bowlers and skipper Pat Cummins easier. SRH are placed comfortably at the third position in the table with 10 points from seven matches. While the journey so far has been fuelled by the batters' fire, SRH would know their bowling would be tested along the way and Cummins' men could do well to watch out against a hurting RCB side.

TEAMS (FROM):
Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat (wk), Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil, Saurav Chauhan.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaassen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

Stoinis eager to play for Australia despite missing CA central contract



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Despite missing out on Cricket Australia's central contract for the 2024-25 season, all-rounder Marcus Stoinis wants to use the impact hundred against Chennai Super Kings as a leverage to extend his white ball career beyond the upcoming T20 World Cup. Stoinis, who was not included in the 23-player central contract list, made an unbeaten 124 off 63 balls for Lucknow Super Giants here on Tuesday. However, Stoinis didn't read much into him missing the CA contract which was announced on March 28. "I've got a great relationship with the (Australia) coach (Andrew McDonald). Me not getting a contract, I knew that a while ago. "I think it is great to give younger kids a crack and let them take my spot. I'm absolutely fine with that on the contract list," Stoinis said after guiding LSG to a six-wicket

win over CSK. But the 34-year-old was firm in thoughts about his career with the national team. "But on the playing front, obviously, I want to make sure that I'm there and that's also why it's so lucky for us and for me particularly to have this competition (IPL), that's why I love it so much," he said. The Perth-born player was omitted from Australia's ODIs against the West Indies in January, but he is set to be part of the country's T20I World Cup campaign in the West Indies and the USA in June. Stoinis is most likely to be slotted into No. 5 in the Australian line-up during the marquee event. Stoinis is eligible for Australian selection for the tournament because his current contract for the 2023-24 season will run its course only on June 30. However, Stoinis was clear that he wanted to play for Australia in the white ball series against England (away) in September and against Pakistan at home in November.

Impact player rule: Entertaining cricket but takes all rounders out of game, says Voges

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Joining the raging debate around Impact Players in the IPL, Lucknow Super Giants consultant Adam Voges said he prefers something like the 'Power Surge' rule in the Australian Big Bash League where the batting team gets to decide a two-over phase of fielding restrictions. The Impact Player substitution rule, introduced last season, has been a heavy topic of debate this season with lot of players, including India captain Rohit Sharma calling it detrimental to the growth of all-rounders. Voges agreed and said while the rule makes for entertaining cricket, it hurts all-rounders. "The scores have been going up, and the teams have got genuine batters coming in at number seven or eight, while the batters have gone hard right from the start," the Australian said after the six-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings here on Tuesday night. "Certainly makes for entertaining cricket, but it takes the all-rounders out of the game for a little bit and

their effectiveness. The all-rounder always balances the side and perhaps it is not as important with the Impact Sub," he explained. Asked if the rule is comparable to Power Surge in Australia's Big Bash League, Voges said the latter adds to the contest, and he is a fan of it. Unlike the IPL, which has a six-over power play at the start of the innings, the BBL features a four-over power play. Power Surge is then a two-over phase of only two fielders outside the circle, sought by the batting team at any point following the 11th over of its innings. "I like the Power Surge back at home. It just adds another element to the game. "While chasing, you never feel like you are out of the game. But we have also seen multiple wickets fall during that period," he said. **STOINIS GRABBED CHANCE WITH BOTH HANDS:** Marcus Stoinis' unbeaten 124 ensured that Lucknow Super Giants pulled off a double over defending champion



Chennai Super Kings in the ongoing edition. Stoinis, who has been promising with the bat, was promoted to number three in this clash. Voges said the decision was easy given his successful outing as a top-order batter for Melbourne Stars in the Big Bash League.

"In the first half of the tournament, the number three batting position is something that did not work for us. We gave Marcus the opportunity since he has performed well in the top order in Big Bash," he told reporters here. "He has certainly made the most of it.

He has been hitting the ball well the whole tournament and has always been threatening." LSG's victory was heavily aided by the dew settling in at Chepauk on Tuesday, and Voges felt it was a good toss to win. "At the halfway stage, we could feel the dew on the outfield, and it played a part in the back end of the game. In the end, it was a good toss to win," he added. Voges lauded the hosts for keeping his team under pressure until the final over. "It was a tremendous game of cricket. The batting from both sides was outstanding," he continued. "CSK did put us under pressure with the ball, but it was our best night execution-wise. We needed someone to stand up, and Stoinis played an outstanding innings," he said. The CSK batters did a great job by setting a challenging total of 210 for four, thanks to skipper Rituraj Gaikwad's unbeaten 108, which was also aided by a 27-ball 66 from the in-form Shivam Dube.

OTHER SPORTS

Nadal says he is not 100 per cent fit ahead of Madrid debut

AP ■ MADRID

Rafael Nadal will play in the Madrid Open despite not being fully fit and didn't seem too optimistic about his chances of being ready for the French Open later this month. Nadal said Wednesday he would not play in Paris if he arrives there feeling the same way that he is feeling ahead of his debut in Madrid this week. "The sensations haven't been perfect this week. If it wasn't Madrid, maybe I wouldn't play. But there are a lot of emotions involved," Nadal said. "I don't

know what's going to happen in the following three weeks. I'll keep fighting and doing the things that I think I need to do to play in Paris. And if it's possible, then it's possible. If not, then not. I'm not going to play in Paris the way I'm feeling today. It was Paris, I wouldn't be playing." The 37-year-old Nadal has said this is likely his farewell year on tour, and is hoping to be competitive one last time at Roland Garros, where he is a 14-time champion. The 22-time Grand Slam winner is a record five-time champion in Madrid, with his last title in the



Spanish capital coming in 2017. He is scheduled to debut on Thursday against 16-year-old American Darwin Blanch. "Hopefully I can play without many limitations," Nadal said. "Then we'll see what happens. If I play without limitations, even if I lose, then it will be positive." Nadal, who had hip surgery last summer, lost to Alex de Minaur in the second round in Barcelona in what was his first tournament in more than three months. "The goal is be on court. Enjoy as long as possible," he said. "I mean, that's the thing. Try to finish the tournament alive in terms of body

issues, and enjoy the fact that I will be able to compete one more time in the professional tour and here at home in Madrid, a place that give me everything, no, in terms of support." He said he is giving himself "a chance" and hopes to "find better feelings" in his body going forward. "I don't lose hope. I just accept the situation that I have today," he said. "I mean, I am not playing bad. It's about more body limitations." He said the "body feelings are not enough good to feel myself playing with free enough in terms of body issues.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings are not looking for a "quick fix" to their issues in the batting department and head coach Stephen Fleming is ready to give the likes of Daryl Mitchell time to get settled in top-three after their fourth loss in eight games. CSK have been juggling batters in the top three through the season. On Tuesday against Lucknow Super Giants, Ajinkya Rahane and Rituraj Gaikwad came to open while Mitchell was promoted to number three from five. In the previous game, Gaikwad pushed himself down to number three to accommodate Rahane and Rachin Ravindra. Following their dramatic loss to LSG at home, Fleming said they need to get their batting combinations right. "It's a mixture of trying to find that (combination) and also form. We're a little bit uncomfortable with some areas, so we're trying to find not a quick fix, but the right combination where players are going to contribute for the back end of this tournament," said Fleming after first loss of the season at home.

Trying to find batting combination that does well for us at back end of IPL: Fleming

Mitchell, who was bought for Rs 14 crore at the auction, has totalled 146 runs in seven innings. Fleming insisted that number three is the ideal spot for the fellow New Zealander. "There's a lot of pressure, obviously. Getting up the order is more comfortable for him. Me putting him down the order in the hitting role wasn't his best position. "So, we've looked to rectify that and get him up the order where he has had his best performances internationally. That might take a little time, but the top three need to contribute the majority of runs. "Rituraj did that today, so hopefully, he can continue his form, and the others can pick that up... We're not firing on all cylinders by any means, but we're in each game asking teams to play well to beat us. We just got to get a little bit better," he said referring to skipper's unbeaten hundred in a losing cause.



While Mitchell's promotion did not yield the desired result, LSG sending Marcus Stoinis to

number three proved to be a game changer as he singlehandedly pulled off a

memorable win for his team with an unbeaten 124 off 63 balls. Fleming, who has

worked alongside the Aussie all-rounder in the Big Bash League for Melbourne Stars,

finding sixes and fours at will. Fleming considers himself among the lucky ones to witness fans' unparalleled admiration for Dhoni across venues. "It's an experience you like to have in the stadium every time he plays. It's been lucky for me to have this magical experience for 16-17 years. "The love for him throughout the world is a testimony to the way he has played the game. People talk about MS as a person, but he is also a great player, and he has done some great things for India and Chennai (Super Kings). "People take time to appreciate it, and we do that every day. We are lucky to have him in our side for so long. So, it's not lost on us, and we enjoy every moment." The CSK-LSG clash witnessed a huge amount of dew coming and Fleming and his team had anticipated it. "Apart from Gaikwad) We saw another great hundred from Marcus Stoinis, and they (GT) answered pretty well. It was a good game of cricket, and we felt we played well given the conditions in the backend, but we did some little things wrong under pressure."

Varalaxmi Sarathkumar talks of Sabari, a screenplay-driven thriller

PNS | HYDERABAD

In anticipation of the upcoming release of *Sabari*, a gripping action-thriller directed by Anil Katz and produced by Mahendra Nath Kondla, talented actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar recently engaged in a candid conversation with the media. The film, presented by Maharshi Kondla under the Maha Movies banner, is set to hit theaters on May 3, promising audiences an exhilarating cinematic experience.

Reflecting on her journey with *Sabari*, Varalaxmi revealed, "I first heard the story of *Sabari* even before I signed *Krack*. I was captivated by the plot from the outset and immediately agreed to be part of the project. It presented a unique challenge and allowed me to explore different facets of my acting beyond the negative roles I've often portrayed."

Regarding her role in *Sabari*, Varalaxmi shared insights into her character as a single mother grappling with personal challenges. "My character in this film is quite different from my previous roles," she explained, adding, "It's a relatable portrayal of a woman dealing with family issues, and the mother-daughter dynamic plays a pivotal role in the narrative."

Addressing the decision to work with a first-

time director and producer, Varalaxmi emphasised the importance of taking calculated risks in the film industry. "Life is all about taking risks," she remarked. "You can't judge success or failure until a film is made. The director and producer placed their trust in me, and I reciprocated by delivering my best performance."

Discussing her collaboration with producer Mahendra Nath, Varalaxmi praised his professionalism and dedication to the craft. "Mahendra Nath is a genuine person who deeply respects the art of filmmaking," she stated. "He ensures that all aspects of production are taken care of, demonstrating his commitment to quality."

On a lighter note, when asked about her fiancé Nikolai's views on her films, Varalaxmi humorously responded, "Nikolai is a straightforward critic. He doesn't hold back his opinions about my work, whether positive or negative. Fortunately, he appreciates most of my films." The actress also revealed her plans for marriage later this year.

Looking ahead, Varalaxmi hinted at her upcoming projects, including *Kurma Nayaki*, a Tamil film with Dhanush, and *Max*, alongside Kannada star Sudeep. "I have several films in the pipeline. Details will be announced soon as discussions progress," she disclosed.

As *Sabari* gears up for its theatrical release, Varalaxmi's enthusiasm and dedication to her craft

With the much-anticipated film *Sabari*, nearing its release, actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar interacts with the media here, sharing more insights about the upcoming film.

promise an enthralling performance that audiences won't want to miss. The film's screenplay-driven narrative, coupled with Varalaxmi's versatile acting, is poised to captivate viewers and deliver an unforgettable cinematic experience.



PUSHPA 2 MUSICAL JOURNEY BEGINS

In a blaze of excitement, Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings have set the stage on fire with the release of the promotional teaser for *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. The teaser claimed the coveted #1 spot for an unprecedented 138 hours, with over 110 million views. On Wednesday, the journey of *Pushpa 2* reached another milestone as the first single, *Pushpa Pushpa Pushpa Raj*, from the prestigious T-Series hit the airwaves. Clocking in at 20 seconds, this title track offers a tantalising preview of the musical extravaganza awaiting audiences. The full song, promising to be a mass anthem, is set to debut on the auspicious occasion of May Day, May 1, at 11.07 a.m.

Renowned director Sukumar, celebrated for his visionary storytelling prowess, once again showcases his brilliance with the *Pushpa Pushpa Song* teaser. This promotional snippet captures the essence of the film, leaving viewers clamouring for more. At the helm of this cinematic spectacle is the incomparable Allu Arjun, whose electrifying presence and unwavering commitment breathe life into every frame. His performance in the

teaser serves as a tantalising glimpse of the cinematic marvel that awaits. In the realm of music, maestro Devi Sri Prasad reigns supreme, showcasing his musical genius with the *Pushpa Pushpa Pushpa Raj* track. The song, a pulsating anthem echoing the movie's tagline, "Pushpa Mass Jaathara," promises to set the stage ablaze and elevate the audience experience to unprecedented heights.



Mark your calendars as *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead, gears up for a grand worldwide release on August 15, 2024.

Prepare to embark on an exhilarating journey that will redefine the action genre and leave an indelible mark on cinematic history.

Fahadh Faasil and Anasuya Bharadwaj will play other important roles in this film.

KUBERA MOVES TO MUMBAI

The much-anticipated film *Kubera*, starring actor Dhanush and Rashmika Mandanna, has commenced shooting in Mumbai, according to sources. The bustling streets and iconic landmarks of the city set the backdrop for pivotal scenes featuring the dynamic duo.

Dhanush, known for his versatile performances, brings his trademark charisma to *Kubera*. Rashmika Mandanna, hailed for her captivating screen presence, joins Dhanush in what promises to be a captivating on-screen pairing.

According to sources, the shooting schedule in Mumbai spans 10 days, offering ample time to capture the essence of the narrative against the vibrant urban landscape. Directed by a talented crew led by Karthik Subbaraj, *Kubera* holds great promise with its unique storyline and stellar cast.

Fans of Dhanush and Rashmika Mandanna eagerly anticipate glimpses from the film's sets as the duo embarks on this cinematic journey in the heart of Mumbai. With each passing day of shooting, excitement mounts as audiences await the unveiling of *Kubera*, poised to be a captivating addition to Dhanush's impressive repertoire.



Love Me-If You Dare locks release date

Prepare for a thrilling ride with the upcoming romantic horror thriller *Love Me - If You Dare*, starring young hero Ashish and the gorgeous Vaishnavi Chaitanya. Directed by debutant Arun Bhimavarapu, this unique blend of romance and horror has completed filming and is set to captivate audiences worldwide. Blockbuster *Balagam* makers Harshith Reddy and Hansitha Reddy will produce the film under the prestigious DilRaju Productions banner, with Naga Mallidi serving as the film's producer and Shirish presenting it. Amidst the buzz generated by its teaser and chart-topping album, the film's makers have announced its official release date. *Love Me-If You Dare* will hit theaters globally on May 25th, strategically timed for a summer blockbuster. DilRaju and the team are gearing up for creative promotional campaigns to reach a wider audience, confident that this spine-chilling ghost love story will be a resounding success. Accompanying the release date announcement is a striking poster that sets the tone for the film's eerie atmosphere. Featuring Ashish with a shovel in hand and a determined expression, alongside Vaishnavi Chaitanya, the poster promises a gripping cinematic experience. The film boasts a stellar lineup of technicians, with music composed by the legendary MM Keeravani, an Academy Award winner. Renowned cinematographer PC Sreeram will handle the visuals, ensuring a visually captivating narrative, while Avinash Kolla will oversee the art direction, promising an immersive and unforgettable cinematic journey.

MANJUMMEL BOYS ACTOR ENTERS THE WEDLOCK

Deepak Parambol, riding high on the success of his recent Malayalam film *Manjummel Boys*, embarked on a new journey as he tied the knot with his co-star Aparna Das from the film *Manoharam*. The couple exchanged vows in a traditional ceremony held at the renowned Guruvayur temple in Thrissur district, Kerala, on Wednesday, surrounded by their close friends and family. Pictures from Deepak and Aparna's wedding quickly spread across social media, capturing the couple adorned in elegant white and gold attire. Aparna looked resplendent in a Kasavu saree, while Deepak exuded charm in a classic Mundu.

Their love story blossomed on the sets of *Manoharam* back in 2019, where Aparna starred in a leading role while Deepak showcased his talent in a supporting capacity. Since then, their bond has grown stronger, culminating in a beautiful union celebrated with traditional rituals and heartfelt moments.

As their wedding photos continue to captivate audiences online, fans and well-wishers eagerly anticipate the next chapter in Deepak and Aparna's lives. The couple's union not only symbolises a personal milestone but also reflects the enduring magic of cinema, where relationships flourish beyond the screen.



Second single from Harom Hara unfolds a love tale

Sudheer Babu's highly anticipated film *Harom Hara*, directed by Gnanasagar Dwaraka of *Sehari* fame, kicked off its musical promotions with the release of its title song recently. Produced by Sumanth G. Naidu under Sree Subrahmanyeshwara Cinemas, the action thriller unveiled its second single on Wednesday.

The soulful melody titled *Kanulenduko*, composed by Chaitan Bharadwaj, has vocals by Nikhita Srivalli with additional vocals by the composer himself. The song, embellished with acoustic guitar, bass, electric mandolin, and keyboard notes, amplifies its impact, complemented by catchy lyrics penned by Vengi.

Kanulenduko captures Malvika hinting to Sudheer Babu about a rendezvous, unfolding their love journey as they explore different places together. The duo's adorable chemistry in the song is visually captivating, making it an instant hit for its composition and appeal.

The film recently wrapped up its shoot, with post-production progressing swiftly. The official release date for *Harom Hara* will be announced shortly.

Set in 1989 in Kuppam, Chittoor district, *Harom Hara* showcases Sudheer Babu delivering dialogues in authentic Kuppam slang. With the tagline "The Revolt," this high-budget film features Sunil in a pivotal role, with cinematography handled by Aravind Vishwanathan.



Prithvi headlines new project with Rupali, Ambika

In a celebratory event marked by traditional puja rituals, the production commenced on Wednesday for a new Telugu film under the banner of Rachit Siva, RR Creations, and Palik Studios. IIT Krishnamurthy fame young hero Prithvi is set to lead the cast, with Rupali and Ambika as the heroines. The movie, helmed by director Palik Srinu, promises to be a captivating blend of romance, sentiment, and comedy.

Jointly produced by Durgam Rajesh, Ravula Ramesh, and TS Raju, the film boasts an experienced team of technicians. John Bhusan will compose the music with lyrics penned by Suresh Gangula. Venkat and Nishant will handle cinematography, while Nishant also takes on the role of editor.

The puja ceremony was attended by renowned producer Tammareddy Bharadwaja, who offered his best wishes to the team by clapping for

the heroes and heroines. During the ceremony, senior actress Amani revealed her involvement in the film, expressing excitement about her important role. Describing the film as an emotional comedy with elements of love and sentiment, Amani highlighted its rural backdrop and shared scenes opposite Ajay Ghosh.

Heroines Ambika and Rupali expressed joy at debuting in Telugu cinema with this project. They praised the director and producers for their encouragement and for providing them with this opportunity. Ambika, drawing from her experience in Hindi and Marathi films, underscored the film's emphasis on love, romance,

sentiment, and comedy. Lead actor Prithvi extended gratitude to director Palik for entrusting him with the role and thanked the producers for supporting a family-oriented project. He assured fans that the film's shooting will wrap up soon, promising an engaging cinematic experience for audiences.

