

Prevent drinking water crisis

Priority for providing safe drinking water: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy directed officials to ensure that there is no drinking water crisis during summer and to take all necessary precautions to avoid a crisis.

After water levels hit dead storage levels at many reservoirs due to deficient rainfall this year, the CM held a review of measures to tackle the drinking water crisis in summer with Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and top officials of the Panchayat Raj, Municipal Administration and Urban Development and drinking water supply wings at the Secretariat on Thursday.

The officials explained to the CM details of water storage in the reservoirs and the quantity of water required for drinking purposes in the state.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to prepare a comprehensive action plan for supplying drinking water to all households in tandas, gudems, SC colonies, villages and urban



areas.

The action plan will be prepared by the Irrigation, MA and UD, Panchayat Raj and drinking water supply departments.

The officials told the Chief Minister that Andhra Pradesh is taking around nine TMCs of water from the Nagarjuna Sagar for drinking water needs. The Chief Minister ordered officials to do a proper assessment of the utilization of water and to ensure that water is not diverted for other purposes.

The Chief Minister asked officials to review in detail the requirement of water and write a letter to the KRMB (Krishna River Management Board) seeking permission to draw

water from Nagarjuna Sagar and Srisaillam for drinking purposes.

The officials told the CM that the state did not face any water crisis as the Jurala project was filled with rainwater during April and May in the past. Otherwise, the state would have had to request the Karnataka Government to release water from the Narayanpur reservoir. The state drew water from the reservoir three years ago.

The CM told officials to write a letter to the KRMB first and consider the request for water from Karnataka as the last option. The Chief Minister said that many water resources were neglected after new water

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supply schemes were launched and asked officials to find out the possibility of reviving them.

Citing the Kagna River as an example, the Chief Minister said that there was an opportunity to use water from Kagna in Tandur and Kodangal. The river was abandoned after the Mission Bhagiratha scheme was launched. All such water resources should be revived and drinking water bore wells, ordinary wells and motors must be repaired immediately.

It's not reasonable to call me KTR's proxy: Ranjith

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP leader Maheshwar Reddy's derogatory remarks are baseless and meaningless, BRS MP Ranjith Reddy said.

He said that it is not logical or reasonable to accuse him of being KTR's benami and issued an open challenge that he is ready to accept anything if it is proved that he owns even an inch of land.

Chevella MP Dr G. Ranjith Reddy affirmed that he entered politics only to serve the poor of Chevella who gave him political birth and that it was never his intention to make money.

He said that comments made by BJP leader Maheshwar Reddy on Thursday were false and meaningless.

Ranjith said that it was shocking to see Maheshwar Reddy coming to Chevella and speak at a press conference from a script written by someone else.

Integrated schools will create casteless society

Quality buildings for integrated residential schools: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu directed the Education Department to construct buildings like those of international schools for integrated residential schools.

Bhatti was speaking at a review meeting of the Education Department attended by senior officials regarding the construction of integrated residential schools at the Deputy CM's office in the Secretariat on Thursday.

He said that in Indiramma Rajyam emphasis is being laid on the design of school infrastructure. As part of that, the construction of 100 SC, BC and minority residential school buildings is being undertaken across the state with an outlay of Rs 2500 crore this year, he said.

The government has sanctioned Rs 25 crore for each residential building. He said that as funds have been allocated in



The government has sanctioned Rs 25 crore for each residential building. He said that as funds have been allocated in the budget for construction, steps should be taken to start construction as soon as possible.

the budget for construction, steps should be taken to start construction as soon as possible. An action plan should be evolved in such a way that buildings constructed in future will be in one place instead of separate residential schools now.

There are suggestions that problems associated with building SC, BC and minority residential schools can be overcome by opting for integrated construction in one place. He said that this could

pave the way for a casteless society due to students from all classes mixing and developing a sense of brotherhood. He also said that it would be good to develop it as a mini-education hub. Madhira has been selected as the location for a pilot project for the construction of integrated residential schools. He said that SC, BC and minority boys' residential schools will be constructed on 10 acres near the indoor stadium in Chintakani Mandala Centre.

Free & fair election imperative for representative democracy: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ensuring a free and fair electoral process is imperative for maintaining people's trust in representative democracy, the Supreme Court has said.

The court had on February 20 declared defeated AAP-Congress alliance candidate Kuldeep Kumar the mayor of Chandigarh after overturning the result of the controversial civic poll where the BJP nominee had emerged an unlikely winner amid allegations of rigging of the counting process by the returning officer.

In its judgement, which was

uploaded on the apex court website on Thursday, a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud noted the top court has consistently held that free and fair elections are a part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

It said elections at the local participatory level act as a "microcosm of the larger democratic structure in the country" and local governments, such as municipal corporations, engage with issues that affect citizens' daily lives and act as a primary point of contact with representative democracy.

Govt to use reservoirs to generate solar power

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government is planning to generate floating solar power from reservoirs, Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka said.

The plans for generating floating solar power from the Mallannasagar and Lower Manor Dam were explained through a PowerPoint presentation.

Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and SCCL officials conducted a review of

floating solar power generation from reservoirs at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy CM ordered to set up solar plants on state reservoirs to generate 1,000 MW of floating solar power.

He said that a study should be conducted on the possibilities of establishing solar plants, preparing DPRs and ensuring that no damage occurs to fishing resources.

He explained that floating

solar power generation is being promoted to encourage pollution-free power generation.

Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy said that floating solar power generation will be encouraged by the Irrigation Department.

He said that SCCL which has the financial support of government organisations stands to gain from floating solar power generation and that it would benefit both the public and the government.

Open purchase centres, provide MSP to sunflower farmers: Tummala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao issued orders to Marketing and Marketed officials to open sunflower purchase centres in market yards from Friday and to provide a minimum support price for sunflower farmers.

Sunflower farmers have been advised not to sell below the minimum support price of Rs 6,760. Earlier BRS MLA Harish Rao said that sunflower farmers all over the state are suffering due to the non-availability of support prices.

"This year the support price

is Rs 6,760 but in the market, farmers are selling it for Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000. They are losing around Rs 2000 per quintal. Earlier, our government used to buy sunflower from farmers at the support price," he said.

He requested Tummala Nageshwar Rao to immediately order authorities to open sunflower buying centres across the state and buy sunflowers at the support price to protect farmers.

Meanwhile, guidelines have been issued to 197 agricultural market committees in Telangana to set up new working groups.

ED issues fresh summons to...

Continued from page 1

Kejriwal has been asked to depose on February 26 and record his statement in the excise policy linked money laundering case, the sources said.

The ED had recently filed a fresh complaint against the 55-year-old national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for disobeying its summons in this case.

The court listed the matter for further hearing on March 16 as it exempted him from personal appearance last week.

Gearing up for two more...

Continued from page 1

The Chief Minister also issued clear instructions to officials to ensure that all those who have applied during Praja Palana are given the benefits of the two guarantees.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka held a review meeting along with the Cabinet Sub-Committee at the Secretariat on Thursday. Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and the Chief Advisor to the Chief Minister, Vemmarender Reddy, attended the meeting.

The government has already implemented two of the six guarantees – the Mahalakshmi scheme, which provides free bus travel for women on TSRTC buses and has enhanced the Arogyasri scheme's limit to Rs 10 lakh from Rs 5 lakh.

Now, the CM has decided to implement two more election guarantees – the Gruha Jyothi and the Rs 500 LPG cylinder

schemes.

The Cabinet Sub Committee discussed in detail the arrangements which are being made for implementing the two schemes and the procedures to be followed for that.

The Chief Minister ordered officials to extend the Rs 500 LPG scheme to all eligible applicants who applied through the 'Praja Palana' programme.

The CM enquired with the Finance and Civil Supplies officials about the challenges and hurdles that could be faced and the possibilities of disbursing the LPG subsidy either directly into the accounts of beneficiaries or the LPG agency.

The Chief Minister emphasized that a user-friendly mechanism should be adopted so that the beneficiary gets the LPG cylinder by paying Rs 500 and asked officials to hold talks with gas distribution agencies.

He said that arrangements should be made to pay the subsidy immediately to gas agencies on behalf of the government.

The Chief Minister directed

Energy Department officials to implement the Gruha Jyothi scheme transparently without giving room for doubts. The CM gave clear instructions to the authorities to extend the scheme to all those who possessed a white ration card and consumed less than 200 units per month for domestic needs.

The Energy Department has been asked to issue 'zero' electricity bills to all eligible beneficiaries of the Gruha Jyothi scheme from the first week of March.

The CM suggested that officials should allow applicants to rectify errors like wrong card numbers and power connection numbers mentioned in the applications submitted via praja palana. This will help applicants who were rejected to avail of the scheme.

Electricity bill collection centres and service centres will undertake the correction of wrong details in applications.

The CM asked energy officials to launch a mass campaign through flexies so that everyone becomes aware of the scheme's implementation.

Kharge gets Z-plus...

Continued from page 1

The decision was taken by the home ministry early this month based on the threat perception of Kharge, they said.

Commandos of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) will provide the Z-plus security to Kharge on all India basis, the sources said. As president of the principal opposition party, Kharge is expected to tour across the country extensively in the run-up to the general elections as well as during the polls and the decision to enhance his security

cover was taken keeping in view this fact, the sources said. Kharge will now be covered by a security blanket of about 30 CRPF commandos round the clock in three shifts. This cover also includes a bulletproof vehicle, pilot and escort. The Z-plus is the highest category security provided to a person of high threat perception in India.

There are four categories of VIP security Z plus, Z, Y and X -- depending on the threat perception analysis by the Intelligence Bureau.

CM blames BRS agents...

Continued from page 1

The Chief Minister ordered to strong action against officials and staff who behave carelessly and also asked them to inform consumers in the areas of respective sub-stations in advance if supply has to be suspended for repairs.

The CM said that the government has taken all measures to provide enough electricity to meet demand in the state. It has already made arrangements to provide sufficient electricity during the peak demand season of February, March and April.

The CM said that from

Wants to cripple main oppn...

Continued from page 1

"Has the BJP ever paid Income Tax? Looting Opposition and blackmailing donors to fill BJP's coffers is a dark phase for our democracy. We shall fight this tooth and nail - Both in the court of law and in the court of the people," Kharge said. "A conspiracy is being hatched to make the Congress financially crippled. This is an attempt to murder democracy," Ramesh alleged, adding that this is politics of vendetta.

He also said that the action shows that the BJP government

is rattled by the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, the farmers' movement and rising inflation.

He said demonetisation was done just before the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, because the Modi government wanted that parties should not be able to contest elections. Similarly, before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, opposition parties have been 'attacked', he added.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also slammed the government over the issue.

"The BJP government first put

the ED, IT department and CBI after the opposition parties and leaders. Attempts were made to crush the 'janadesh' (mandate) by toppling governments with 'dhanadesh' (money power). They broke parties, bought leaders, made every effort to eliminate the opposition," the Congress general secretary alleged.

"Now it has come to such an extent that they are trying to weaken the biggest opposition party by withdrawing money from its bank account so that there is no opposition in front of them in the elections.

Employees...

Continued from page 1

While the Revenue Department plays a vital role in public administration, secretariat officers and staff should be models for other departments, he said. The Minister said that government officers and staff should work honestly and bring a good name to the government.

Jupally blames BRS for...

Continued from page 1

He said that discrimination was also shown in the allocation of funds for the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy project, and due to the non-implementation of canal works under other projects and failure to complete projects, the announcements of providing irrigation water to the district's people remained just on paper.

He said that even work on canals and baby canals has not been completed and so far they have not been able to irrigate the last ayacut.

Govt removes KCR's videos...

Continued from page 1

"Revanth Reddy said in the Assembly that he would wipe out KCR without a trace. Touching him is not as easy as deleting videos on I & PR Department's YouTube channel. Remember Revanth Anumula, you can do nothing more than that," the BRS social media convenor said.

The latest video available on the I & PR Department's YouTube channel is that of Revanth's swearing-in.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Chaturdashi: Feb 22 01:21 PM to Feb 23 03:34 PM

Purnima: Feb 23 03:34 PM to Feb 24 06:00 PM

Nakshatram: Ashlesha: Feb 22 04:43 PM to Feb 23 07:25 PM

Magha: Feb 23 07:25 PM to Feb 24 10:20 PM

Rahukalam: 11:02 AM to 12:29 PM

Yamagandam: 03:23 PM to 4:50 PM

Varjyam: 08:53 AM to 10:40 AM

Gulika: 08:09 AM to 9:36 AM

Amritakalam: 05:38 PM to 07:25 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:52 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 32°C

Humidity: 35%

Sunrise: 6:39 AM

Sunset: 6:21 PM

Updated: February 22, 2024 5:00 PM

Govt ready for...

Continued from page 1

While the Congress did "nothing" for the farmers during its regime in the past, the AAP kept pressing former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh for announcing MSP at state level but did not do anything in this regard when it came to power in the border state, Thakur charged.

"It is my request to all demonstrators that they do not follow the path of violence. Government is always ready to hold talks with farmers on whatever their organisations want to discuss," he told reporters here.

"In the first four rounds of talks, the Modi government's senior ministers met them in Chandigarh and

held talks for several hours in a very positive manner. And we have said that in future also, whenever need arises, we are ready for talks," he said.

Congress calls...

Continued from page 1

The opposition party also urged the Punjab government to convene a similar session of the state assembly to deliberate on the issue. A farmer was killed and about 12 police personnel were injured in clashes at Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border on Wednesday. The incident took place when some protesting farmers were trying to head towards barricades.

Complete Dindi, SLBC projects...

Continued from page 1

Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy directed Irrigation Secretary Rahul Bojja to set up a committee of officials to complete the works.

"Dindi and Pendli Pakala reservoirs should be completed immediately. 95 per cent of the work has been completed. Rs 90 crore is required for land acquisition. Procedures to get environmental and forest clearances must be speeded up. Works that can be used for watering the ayacut should be completed immediately. Every penny spent should be put to good use," he said. "Dindi and SLBC work should be completed in two years. Work should be speeded up through weekly reviews.

Congress govt faces...

Continued from page 1

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Wednesday announced that the promises to supply 200 units of free electricity to every household and LPG cylinders for Rs 500 will be implemented within a week.

The Congress plans to invite Priyanka Gandhi to launch the two schemes. The event is also likely to mark the launch of the party's campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. Revanth also announced that Rythu Bharosa will be implemented from March 15. Under this scheme, the Congress had promised an annual investment support of Rs 15,000 per acre for farmers, up from the Rs 10,000 they are receiving under the Rythu Bandhu scheme of the BRS government.

The Chief Minister made the announcement while addressing

a public meeting at Kosgi in Kodangal. This was the first visit to his constituency after assuming office last December. The announcements for implementing the promises came as the opposition stepped up its attack on the ruling party for the delay in implementing the six guarantees.

Both the BRS and the BJP are looking to make this a key issue in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. Since the 100-day deadline set by Congress leaders is ending on March 17, the ruling party is likely to come under intense pressure.

The monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 for women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, financial assistance of Rs 12,000 per year for agricultural labourers, Rs 500 bonus per quintal for paddy crops above the Minimum Support Price (MSP), house sites and Rs 5 lakh

for the construction of houses for BPL families, a monthly pension of Rs 4,000 for senior citizens and the Vidya Bharosa Card worth Rs 5 lakh each for students are the other promises of the six guarantees.

Immediately after assuming office, the Congress implemented its promise to provide free travel for women in TSRTC buses. It also raised the coverage under Rajiv Arogyasri (health insurance for BPL families) from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh.

The free bus ride for women has imposed a financial burden of Rs 300 crore every month on the government.

Soon after coming to power, the Congress government released a white paper on the state's finances to highlight what it called financial indiscipline during the 10-year rule of the BRS which pushed the state to the brink of bankruptcy.

Call to expedite construction of super-specialty hospitals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha held a review meeting to evaluate the progress of construction of super-specialty hospitals in the State. He checked the status of construction of 2,100 beds in Warangal, the TIMS Super-Specialty Hospital with a capacity of 1,200 beds being constructed in Alwal, Hyderabad, progress of the construction works of 1,000 bed capacity super-specialty hospital in LB Nagar, 1,000 bed capacity super-specialty hospital being built in Sanatnagar and the progress of the expansion work of NIMS hospital in Erramanzil with a capacity of 2,000 beds.



Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha hold a review meeting on Thursday

In this review meeting, the

progress of the work was discussed with the engineering officers of the R&B department who are supervising the construction work of the newly constructed hospitals. The Minister directed the officials to complete the construction works expeditiously. The Minister ordered the officials of the medical and health department to work hard to provide better medical services by making the hospitals immediately accessible to the public as soon as the construction work is completed.

He ordered the constitution of a technical committee on treatment for blind patients

coming from various districts to Hyderabad city for better medical services. Minister Damodar Rajanarsimha ordered measures to provide specialty services and treatment in the respective hospitals as suggested by the technical committee.

In this review meeting, the Secretary to the Government of the State Medical Department Christina Z Chongthu, Director of Medical Education Dr Vani, Dr Sivaram Prasad, Senior Medical Officers, R&B ENC Ganapathi Reddy, Engineering Officers and Consultants participated.

Speed up storm water drain works at Charminar: GHMC chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose instructed the officials to speed up storm water drains works undertaken from Yakuthpura, Maulika Chilla Ganganagar to Bhavaninagar and also restoration works of Sardar Mahal building, Charminar.

The Commissioner, along with MP Asaduddin Owaisi, inspected the SWD nala works from Ganganagar to Bhavaninagar and the Commissioner instructed the officials to complete the works well before monsoon to avoid inundation in the city during rainy season.

While on inspection at Moghalpura Sports Complex, on noticing the various departments of GHMC in the sports complex building, the Commissioner directed the officials to identify the suitable buildings for shifting the offices from the sports complex and also to take up



GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose along with MP Assaduddin Owaisi inspect civic works in the Old City on Thursday

repair works of the swimming pool.

Later, the Commissioner inspected the progress of renovation works of Sardar Mahal Charminar and multi-level parking works at Charminar and directed to speed up the works.

MLAs Mir Zulfekar Ali, Zafar Hussain Miraj, MLC

Mirza Rahmath Baig, Corporator Sohail Qadri, CCP Rajendra Prasad Naik, Sanitation, Sports Additional Commissioners Upender Reddy, Yadagiri Rao, Zonal Commissioner Venkanna, Dattu Panthu, Quli Qutub Shah EE Venkatesh and senior officials participated in the visit.



Government Advisor Mohammed Ali Shabbir holds a review meeting with officials various departments on Thursday

Training Calendar for Skill Development programmes: Shabbir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Advisor to the Telangana government (SC, ST, BC & Minorities) Mohammed Ali Shabbir informed that the State government would release a Training Calendar to provide skills development training to the youth belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Minorities.

Shabbir Ali held a high-level review meeting with the top SC and BC Welfare Department officials at Dr BR Ambedkar State Secretariat on Thursday.

Shabbir Ali also expressed concern over the negligible number of beneficiaries in skill development initiatives and courses for competitive exams. He stated that SCs constitute more than 16% of the total population, and the training programmes had not reached more than 10,000 beneficiaries. He directed the officials to increase the number of training camps across Telangana. He emphasised that more SC students should be provided training for competitive exams, especially for Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 exams.

Shabbir Ali urged the officials to study the Central Government schemes and explore ways to secure more funds for the State Government schemes.

The officials of the SC Department informed that

106 residential schools were operating in rented buildings, for which a yearly rent of Rs 52.52 crore is being paid. The estimate for constructing one new residential school complex is Rs 25 crore. This can be undertaken in four phases at Rs 6.25 crore in each phase, similar to Tribal Welfare Residential Schools. The estimated budget for constructing 103 Residential Schools is Rs 2,575 crore at Rs 25 crore per school.

For the civil works proposed in phase -I for the construction of 103 residential schools, the total budget proposed to allocate is Rs 643.75 crore at Rs 6.25 crore per school for the FY 2024-25.

However, Shabbir Ali stated that Telangana was entitled to receive Rs 20 crore each for the construction of 97 SC girls' hostels, and for the boys' hostels, the contribution can be in the 60:40 ratio.

He emphasised that SC, ST, BC, and Minority welfare departments should study all the Central schemes and prepare a list wherein funds can be sought for the State's schemes. "Whether they are Central or State funds, our focus should be on developing infrastructure for the welfare of Dalit, Girijan, BCs and minorities. Ultimately, it is the taxpayers' money which should be utilised properly for the betterment of society," he said.

DCA seizes medicines worth Rs 50,000; 2 quacks arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Drugs Control Administration (DCA) officials apprehended two quacks on Wednesday in raids at two locations in Hyderabad.

Those caught are D Hanmanth Reddy, who ran a clinic at Ambatipally village in Lingal mandal of Nagarkurnool district and Ayyub Khan, who ran a clinic at Nawabsaheb Kunta, Tadban, Hyderabad.

Hanmanth Reddy and

Ayyub Khan claim to be 'Rural Medical Practitioners' and practise medicine without qualification at their clinics.

During the raids carried out on their premises, the DCA officials detected huge stocks of medicines without any drug licence. "In all, 45 varieties of medicines including antibiotics, analgesics, anti-ulcer drugs, etc. were found stocked at the two premises," said DG DCA, VB Kamalsan Reddy.

The DCA officials seized stocks of a total worth Rs

51,500 during the raids and detected several higher-generation 'antibiotics' at the clinics during the raids.

Indiscriminate sale of antibiotics by an unqualified person may have disastrous consequences on the health of the public, including the emergence of 'Antimicrobial Resistance'. The DCA officers lifted the samples for analysis. Further investigation will be carried out, and action will be taken as per the law against all the offenders.

PJTSAU validates Marut's rice cultivation via drones

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Marut Drones, India's leading drone manufacturer, has been granted the world's first utility patent for a term of 20 years, under the provisions of the Patents Act, 1970. This patent recognises Marut's direct seeding drone, developed in collaboration with Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agriculture University (PJTSAU), which incorporates a multi-nozzle aerial seed dispensing device. With this patent, Marut Drones endeavours to facilitate the widespread adoption of direct seeding drones for rice cultivation at the grassroots level.

Marut's seeding drones have obtained the patent following scientific validation by PJTSAU, which has also released Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for their use.

This validation underscores the reliability and efficacy of the technology in enhancing rice production.

The patented system enables the aerial dispersion of diverse rice seeds through a meticulously designed multi-nozzle mechanism, optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of seed-sowing processes. Marut has adhered to standard operating procedures for seeding,



Prem Kumar Vislawath, CEO and Founder of Marut Drones

ensuring precise parameters such as drone speed, swath width, nozzle type and pressure, spray volume, spraying altitude, and droplet size in Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) using drones.

Prem Kumar Vislawath, CEO and Founder of Marut Drones, emphasised, "This patented technology will revolutionise rice farming practices in India. By reducing on-farm manual labour through drone technology, we aim to address the persistent challenges faced by farmers, particularly labour shortages due to rapid urbanisation. From seeding paddy to controlling mosquitoes and pests

in rice fields, labour costs pose significant hurdles. Through our collaboration with PJTSAU, we seek to promote the widespread adoption of Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) through drones, fostering a more economically viable and sustainable rice cultivation ecosystem."

Marut's direct seeding drone is a multi-utility attachment, enabling farmers to utilise drones not only for pesticide application/spraying but also for direct seeding, thereby accelerating Return on Investment (ROI). This multifunctionality allows the drone to be utilised round the year, justifying its name AG365.

TSMC chief summons hospital authorities for allowing quackery

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Medical Council on Thursday sought an explanation from Continental Hospital for allowing quacks to attend conferences and other events. The hospital authorities were asked to appear before the ethics committee on February 28.

In a letter to the Medical Superintendent and the Managing Director of the Continental Hospital, TSMC chairman Dr K Mahesh Kumar said, "It is most unethical and unpardonable for the activities of your hospital to conduct quacks. The National Medical Commission is very much particular to crack down on this illegal activity by hook or crook. Despite the action taken earlier vide the letter cited in the reference, your hospital has resorted again to practice this unethical programme by name 'Cancer Awareness Programme' and invited unqualified quacks to attend."

Bigg Boss contestant Shanmukh, his brother detained in drugs case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telugu Youtuber and Bigg Boss contestant Shanmukh Jaswant Kandregula and his elder brother Vinay Sampath were on Thursday detained by the Narsingi police in a drug case.

The drugs angle was discovered when the police arrived at their flat after a woman filed a complaint against Sampath for cheating.

The police officials went to question him in their house at Puppalguda.

The victim alleged that while Shanmukh cheated her on the pretext of offering a role in short films, his brother cheated and indulged in sexual relations with her on the pretext of marriage.

Upon visiting Shanmukh's house, police officers recovered about 20 grams of marijuana.

ACB nabs four officials over sheep distribution scam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested four government officials involved in the sheep distribution scam worth Rs 2.10 crore.

The accused were identified as Dr Dharmapuri Ravi, Assistant Director, Area Veterinary Hospital,

Kamareddy, Dr Muntha Aditya Kesava Sai, Assistant Director, O/o. DV & AHO, Medchal, Pasula Raghupathi Reddy, District Ground Water Officer, Ranga Reddy district and Sangu Ganesh, Deputy Director, Adult Education Department. They will be produced before the ACB court.

Rainfall expected in Hyd amid rising temperatures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is likely to receive much-awaited relief from the summer-like temperatures as the city is expected to be hit by rainfall.

Eastern parts of Telangana are also likely to receive rainfall due to the convergence of easterlies and moisture pull from the Bay of Bengal.

Telangana weather expert T Balaji, known for accurate predictions, forecasts short but isolated rainfall during February 25 and 26. In the case of eastern Telangana, rainfall is expected between February 24 and 26, as forecast by the weather enthusiast. Hyderabad has been experiencing summer-like temperatures for the past few weeks, with many areas recording temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius.

According to the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), no rainfall occurred in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

FOUNDER'S DAY OBSERVED AT CCMB

Green hydrogen key for low carbon emission

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad celebrated the birth anniversary of its Founder Director Dr PM Bhargava. This was the eighth consecutive Founder's Day celebration at the CCMB.

The institute celebrated the day with the institute's PhD scholars connecting with their alumni, Dr Subhashini Sadashivam, Vice-President, Exegene Genomics and Dr Rajesh Ramachandran, Associate Professor, IISER Mohali. Atal Incubation Centre-CCMB showcased the technologies it supported towards COVID-19 mitigation funded by Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited. The keynote lecture was delivered by Dr Ashish Lele, Director, CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory, Pune,



on India's energy status and the possibility of using green hydrogen fuel in the country. In his address, Dr Lele stated, "Green hydrogen produced through processes with substantially low carbon emission will play a key role in India's energy transition, particularly in the sectors of industry and heavy-duty commercialisation."

"This is a day for us, as an institute, to remember everything that CCMB stands for. It was established as a place where scientists can get creative with their thoughts and yet stay rooted to the realities of society. And that has been the essence of our celebrations this year," said Dr Vinay Nandicoori, Director, CCMB.

TRAINING IN GROWING VEGETABLES ON SUNDAY

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Keeping in view rapid urbanization, unavailability of required area for cultivation of vegetables and escalating vegetable prices, the Department of Horticulture, Telangana, is organizing a training programme on Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm at Horticulture Training Institute, Red Hills, Hyderabad under 'Mana Illu Mana Kuragayalu' programme. This programme is being organized to create awareness on growing quality food, pesticide residue-free vegetables on terraces, thereby promoting public health and reducing carbon emissions. For further details contact 7674072539 or 7997725413 or 7997725411.

MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi visits Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi on Thursday visited the Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society.

The Chandrayangutta MLA was given a tour of the facility by the authorities during which he witnessed first-hand crucial services provided to patients and their families. He also interacted with the doctors, TSCS staff and other working members at the society.

Addressing the gathering Owaisi stressed the need for greater awareness and support for patients and their families. He stated, "Looking at the dire need for more awareness towards Thalassemia, I have assured TSCS society that I will put every effort to talk to the Health Ministry and the Govt of Telangana for a special GO to be passed making HbA2



Chandrayangutta MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi takes a tour of the Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society and interacts with the authorities

test mandatory all over Telangana. It is our collective

responsibility to provide comprehensive care and support to

those affected. I commend the Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society for their unwavering commitment to this cause."

Dr Chandrakant Agarwal, President - Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society, expressed gratitude, "It is a pleasure to have Akbaruddin visit our society and show his support for the cause. His presence encourages us to continue our efforts in raising awareness about Thalassemia and Sickle Cell disease and continue to provide quality healthcare services, and advocating for the rights of affected individuals."

Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society has been at the forefront of addressing these challenges by providing vital medical services, organizing awareness campaigns, facilitating support groups, and advocating for policy changes to improve the lives of affected individuals.

Cong won't rub BJP on wrong side

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The meeting of Opposition party MLAs with the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is an indication of their joining the Congress in future. It may be correct in the case of BRS MLAs, but not in the case of BJP MLAs. Recently, some BRS MLAs met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. With this, speculation has started that the BRS MLAs may join the Congress soon. BJP Sirpur MLA Palvai Harish Babu met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. This time also speculation

began that the BJP MLA also may join the Congress. But even if the BJP MLAs are ready to join, the Congress is not ready to admit them.

TPCC sources said that the party has taken a decision not to touch the BJP MLAs. At present, BJP is in power at the Centre and there are chances for the BJP retaining power at the Centre after the coming Lok Sabha elections. The Congress formed the government in the State with not overwhelming majority. Congress has just four MLAs majority over the required strength to form the government.



Under this circumstances, if the Congress admits the BJP MLAs, the BJP, which is in power at the Centre may not keep quiet. If the BJP also takes

up the same operation, the Congress government in the State may face problems and the existence of the Congress government also may become questionable.

With this scare, the TPCC reportedly has taken a decision not to touch the BJP MLAs. When the meeting of BJP MLA with CM Revanth led to speculation, the BJP leaders questioned what is wrong in meeting the Chief Minister by their party MLA. But the BJP MLA who met the CM is silent.

But in case of BRS MLAs, it was reverse. When the BRS MLAs met the CM, there was

speculation that they may join the Congress. The BRS MLAs who met the CM held a media conference and questioned what was wrong in meeting the CM by them.

But the party leadership is silent on this. Sources said that the BRS leadership thought if it says that there is nothing wrong in meeting the CM than every BRS MLA will meet the CM and the speculation over their joining the Congress will appear in the media and thus damage the image of the party. Due to this only, the BRS leadership kept silent on this issue, sources added.

US cop who ran over Telugu student won't face charges



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Seattle police officer who struck and killed 23-year-old Telugu student Jaahnavi Kandula will not face charges, the King County Prosecutor's Office announced Wednesday. Officer Kevin Dave was driving 74 mph in a 25 mph zone on January 23 in 2023, speeding through red lights on the way to a high-priority overdose call. Kandula was walking along a crosswalk at Dexter Ave N and Thomas St when Dave fatally struck her and sent her 138 feet down the street. Dave was then seen on body camera calling dispatch for help and performing CPR on the deceased Kandula.

Former Pierce County prosecutor Mark Lindquist said if a civilian were behind the wheel, this would likely have been vehicular homicide. Dave's status as an officer changes the calculus.

King County Prosecuting Attorney Leesa Manion

KTR asks US Embassy to provide justice to Jaahnavi Kandula

HYDERABAD: BRS MLA KT Rama Rao expressed outrage over a US court dropping criminal charges against the police who ran over an Indian student last year. Jaahnavi Kandula, a Master's student from Andhra Pradesh, was hit by a speeding police vehicle driven by Seattle police officer Kevin Dave on January 23, 2023. US Cop who struck and killed Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula hailing from Andhra won't face criminal charges due to 'lack of evidence'. KTR

said it is "I demand the @USAmbIndia to take up the matter with US Government authorities and deliver justice to the family of young Jaahnavi Kandula. I request EA Minister @DrSJaishankar Ji to take up the matter with his counterpart & demand a independent investigation into the matter. It is tragic that the life of a a youngster with soaring ambitions has been cut short but what's more tragic is the callous disregard for justice to the victim".

MEDARAM JATHARA

No such thing as national festival status: Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy said that there is no such thing as national festival status.

During the Medaram Maha Jathara, Union Minister Kishan Reddy visited Sammakka and Saralamma and presented jag-gaery.

He said, "any people are asking to organise Medaram Jathara as a national festival. There is no such thing as a national festival policy. As a Union Culture Minister, I affirm that there is no existing mechanism for declaring any festival as a national festival". He said that he will try to get international recognition for Medara in the coming days. The Centre sanctioned Rs 3.14 crore this year to the state government



Union Minister for Culture G Kishan Reddy at Medaram Jathara in Mulugu district on Thursday

for the conduct of the 'jathara'.

He said that he offered prayers to Ammavaru that the country should be prosperous with crops without natural calamities.

Also, a temporary campus of Tribal University will be set up in Mulugu. He said that the Tribal University will work under the auspices of Hyderabad Central University.



BJP MLA K Venkat Ramana Reddy addressing the media in Nalgonda on Thursday

Congress, BRS are cut from same cloth: Kamareddy MLA

PNS ■ NALGONDA

BJP legislator from Kamareddy K Venkata Ramana Reddy has said that there is no difference between the ruling Congress and the BRS.

Addressing the party's Vijay Sankalp Yatra in Nakrekal in Nalgonda district on Thursday, he observed that both the parties totally ignored the people's welfare.

The Congress came to power on the plank of implementing six guarantees in Telangana. Surprisingly, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy declared that the Congress would implement the guarantees provided the party comes to power at the Centre after the Lok Sabha polls. This indicated the power hungry of the Congress, he pointed out.

Activists of both the parties clash at the party workers' level but at the higher level the leaders of the parties display comradery, he compared and said expressing agony.

The Congress is not focusing on the agenda before it barring releasing the White Paper on the omissions and commissions of the predecessor BRS government, he said.

He exuded confidence that the BJP would win 12 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. The credit of defeating two CMs in Telangana goes to the BJP, he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would never practise the politics of spreading lies. He always thinks development of the nation. He ruled out BJP having truck with any other political party. He predicted that the BJP would come to power in 2028 elections in Telangana.

Earlier he addressed a media conference at Lakshmi Sujata Function hall here.

Bhongir former MP Boora Narsaiah Goud, district BJP president Nagam Varshit Reddy, Assembly convener Myla Narasimha and several party leaders took part in the event.

Restraining order against Rapolu Bhaskar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Based on the petition filed by M Mahendar Reddy, Ex-DGP, Telangana, against Rapolu Bhaskar, who made per se defamatory false, baseless and concocted allegations against Mahendar Reddy, the XI Additional Chief Judge, City Civil Courts granted an injunction against the respondent Bhaskar, thereby restraining him or his associates or any other person on his behalf from making or publishing or defamatory / libellous / scandalous statements, posts, updates, videos, audios, articles, private notices, comments and communicate on any public or private platform including in meetings, interviews, social media, internet, websites, TV interviews, all forms of print and electronic media or through any other medium against Mahendar Reddy.

Assault on bus driver triggers protest by drivers, conductors

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

The TSRTC drivers and conductors have been facing difficulties from bus passengers, including assaults from the woman passengers, in spite of discharging their duties efficiently.

RTC Managing Director Sajjanar cautioned people against assaulting the drivers and conductors on more than once, but of no avail.

A TSRTC driver was assaulted in Armour of Nizamabad district recently. The TSRTC employees staged a protest condemning attack on Narsaiah. Later, they complained to the police.

Bus driver Narsaiah was about to switch on the bus engine at 7 am on Thursday. The bus conductor did not turn up yet. When it was time for the bus to commence the trip, he honked the horn twice perhaps to attract the attention of people or conductor.

A passenger in the bus abused the driver a filthy language for honking the horn. There was a heated exchanged between the passenger and the driver. The passenger, along with two others, allegedly assaulted the driver. The employees came to the rescue of the driver and shifted him to hospital.

If it is the condition of the drivers at the bus station, the situation would be worse while driving the bus on the highways and villages, the drivers and conductors said, expressing concern over the rude behaviour of passengers.

In spite of safely taking the passengers, including children and the aged, to their destination, what they get is assaults, the drivers and conductors felt bad expressing concern over the clashes with the passengers.

Even women are not hesitating to abuse the drivers and conductors in unprintable languages.

Need to defeat BJP for survival of democratic secular state stressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPI-M state unit secretary Tammineni Veerabhadram has stressed the need to defeat the BJP for the survival of democratic secular state.

Addressing the CPI-M plenary held at Sundaraiah Vignana Kendram here on Thursday, he told the party rank and file that they should not be under the false impression that the Lord Rama's Akshatas delivered to the people at their door-step would not convert into votes. The BRS lost the recent Assembly elections due to its own omissions and commissions. The people, instead of voting for the development ini-



Tammineni Veerabhadram

tiated in the state by former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, hated his egoism, he noted.

The CPI-M hailed the BRS electoral defeat and welcomed the Congress to form government in Telangana, he said.

The Congress has apparently plans to approach the Lok Sabha elections delaying the implementation of the six

guarantees to the people, he observed.

Out of six guarantees, the Congress implemented two but not giving any clarify with regard to the implementation of the four more guarantees, he said.

On the pretext of the financial crisis, the feasibility of Congress implementing the guarantees appears to be impossible, he said.

Going by the Congress attitude, the CPI-M would have to pay the role of the Opposition in the days to come, he observed.

It is a myth to think that the Congress government would take a pro-poor stance, he said.

Telangana DG Prisons inaugurates training programme for jail warders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Director General of Prisons and Correction Centres, Dr Soumya Mishra on Thursday inaugurated a training session for the third batch of jail warders at the State Institute of Correctional Administration (SICA), Chanchalguda.

In all, 85 trainees, including 78 male and seven women reported to the venue. They will undergo physical and mental training over the next nine months. The physical fitness will stress on foot drill, firing practice, karate, self defence and yoga. The candidates will also have to study the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Jail manual Legal Acts and security protocols, inmate management and rehabilitation strategies. While the physical training will last for seven months, two months have been allocated for studies.

Addressing the candidates, Mishra said, "It is a great achievement to secure a government job. Following the training all the candidates will become an asset to the Telangana Prison

Department. The department is well reputed all over India and I believe all of you will add value to it. The training provided here will polish your skills. As a lay person you must have thought of prisons as high walls built to apprehend people. Prisons are much more than buildings and walls. The purpose of prisons is to reform people. The aim is to reform criminals and not just to keep them in custody. The Prison department aims to reform these people so that they could be accepted by the society and lead a good life."

She further said, "This is why it is called the Prisons and correctional services department. Telangana is well known as far as prison reform is concerned. All of you will be taught the basics; warders are the face of the department since they are in close contact with the inmates. This is why you are required to be physically and mentally be fit to face various challenges. Hence, the course includes lessons on criminology, psychology, human rights, modern technology and legal knowledge."

Chevella may witness three-cornered contest

PNS ■ CHEVELLA

The BRS has announced that it will field the sitting MP Ranjit Reddy from the constituency. Similarly, former MP Konda Visweswar Reddy is aspiring to contest from the seat on behalf of BJP. For the past several days, it is speculated that Kitchennagari Lakshma Reddy may contest from the seat.

The Chevella Lok Sabha constituency in Rangareddy district is likely to witness three-cornered contest as BRS, BJP and Congress are likely to field political heavy weights.

The three major political parties have set their sights on winning the seat, which emerged crucial in the district.

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Vikarabad ZP chairper-

son Sunita Reddy who crossed over to the Congress very recently from the BRS is likely to be fielded from Chevella, it is speculated. Therefore, all the three parties are fielding political heavy weights, the Chevella LS contest is going to be the cynosure of all eyes.

In 2019 elections, at least 23 candidates tried their luck from the constituency.

The successful BRs candidate Ranjit Reddy polled 5, 16, 363 votes against his Congress rival B Konda Visweswar Reddy who secured 5,00,318 votes. BJP nominee B Janardhan Reddy finished poor third in the race polling only 1,95,919 votes. As on Feb 8, 2024, the total number of voters in the constituency are 14,93,369, including 14,20,469 females and 269 transgenders.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

DEMAND FOR MEGA DSC

Sharmila detained for leading 'Chalo Secretariat' protest



APCC chief YS Sharmila being dragged away by the Guntur district police as she led a 'Chalo Secretariat' agitation demanding 'Mega DSC' on Thursday. - Pic by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), YS Sharmila, was detained by Guntur police as she attempted to lead a protest march towards the secretariat at the Kondaveeti Vagu Lift Irrigation Scheme near the Prakasam Barrage at Undavalli of Tadepalli Municipality on Thursday. Despite the police's assertion that no authorisation had been granted for the 'Chalo Secretariat' movement, Sharmila and other Congress leaders continued their march to the secretariat.

Consequently, the police took into custody Sharmila Reddy, a Special Invitee to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), along with former APCC chief Gidugu Rudra Raju and other participants. Initially held at the Duggirala Police Station, they were later transferred to the Mangalagiri police station. Subsequently, Sharmila Reddy was released after providing a signature under section 151 at the police station.

Authorities stated that the Congress party leaders and supporters were detained

'As elections loom in less than two months, the CM's announcement to fill only 6,000 positions is deceptive. Instead of conducting a comprehensive DSC (District Selection Committee for Recruitment), he is resorting to deceit. The YSRCP regime exhibits dictatorial tendencies, suppressing dissenting voices.'

for non-compliance with police directives. During the apprehension, Sharmila Reddy sustained minor injuries to her hands as female constables escorted her into a police vehicle. Sharmila Reddy initiated the 'Chalo Secretariat' protest march on Thursday morning in solidarity with the state's unemployed youth from the Congress party's headquarters, Andhra Ratna Bhavan, in Vijayawada. Former central minister JD Seelam, APCC Working President Dr N Tulasi Reddy, CWC special invitee Gidugu Rudra Raju, and others participated in the demonstration, advocating for the release of the Mega DSC notification to fill 25,000 teacher vacancies.

Naidu, Pawan to reveal seat-sharing details soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena Party (JSP) leaders, who attended a joint coordination meeting in Vijayawada on Thursday, deliberated on several key issues, including seat-sharing.

Senior leaders from both parties, including TDP State president K Atchannaidu and Jana Sena Political Affairs Committee chairman Nadendra Manohar, participated in the coordination meeting. Following the session, Atchannaidu addressed the media, stating that Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan would finalise the decisions and disclose details regarding seat-sharing and a joint manifesto.

"At the first coordination meeting between TDP and JSP, various crucial matters were discussed.

A joint public meeting will be held in Tadepalligudem on February 28, where the two parties will convey a unified message to the people of the State," Atchannaidu announced.


He further clarified that TDP and JSP leaders have unanimously agreed to address the joint public meeting on February 28 and have established a 12-member committee to oversee the arrangements for the event.

Atchannaidu also revealed that the common manifesto and seat-sharing details would be disclosed by the leaders of both parties soon. Additionally, the coordination meeting passed a resolution condemning the recent attacks on journalists and media houses, affirming solidarity with the media.

INDIA CORNER

Raj: Wrong blood transfusion puts patient's life in jeopardy

A 23-year-old man was allegedly transfused with the wrong type of blood that led to complications in both kidneys at the state-run Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital here, officials said on Thursday. The patient, Sachin Sharma, a resident of Bandikui town, was admitted to the Trauma Centre of the hospital on February 12 after he suffered severe injuries in a road accident in Kotputli city. The matter came to the fore when Sachin was being attended to at the hospital, SMS Hospital Superintendent Achal Sharma said. He said the patient's blood group is O positive but he was transfused with AB positive blood. An official familiar with the matter said due to the wrong blood transfusion, both kidneys of the patient developed complications and he was put on dialysis which led to further deterioration in his health condition. Sharma said a special committee has been formed to probe the matter and action will be taken accordingly.



Punjab woman involved in 2009 fake visa scam arrested

A 57-year-old woman from Punjab has been arrested for her alleged involvement in a fake visa scam busted in 2009, police said on Thursday. The accused has been identified as Rajvinder Kaur, a native of the Moga district in Punjab. She was declared a proclaimed offender in the case which was registered on July 25, 2009. In this scam, several passengers were caught travelling to Canada allegedly on fake visas. DCP (IGI Airport) Usha Rangnani said Kaur, along with her husband Sukhdev Singh and an associate identified as Ashok, used to arrange fake visas for passengers seeking to travel to Canada. For this, they would demand up to Rs 15 lakh from the passengers, she said. Rangnani further said that with the help of local intelligence, a team of IGI Airport police found out about the accused's arrival at New Delhi railway station on Wednesday, from where she was arrested.



Power dept officers told to feed orphans as punishment

Four Varanasi power department officers were told to feed orphanage inmates as 'punishment' for inflating an electricity bill to more than Rs 2 lakh, which they claimed had accumulated since 1911. The Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited officers were found guilty by the UP State Information Commission and were forced to reduce the power bill to Rs 3,998. The commission during the proceedings also asked the guilty officers whether the UPPCL was in existence in 1911, and whether the people in Varanasi were getting electricity then. Uma Shankar Yadav, a Varanasi resident, was asked to pay Rs 2.24 lakh in power charges by the UPPCL against a connection, it claimed, his father Basant Yadav had got in 1911 for his residence in the city's Maidagin area. Umashankar contested the amount, but when he could not get a favourable resolution, filed a Right to Information plea with the corporation in December 2022, and when he could not get a proper response, pursued the matter with higher authorities.



EAM on slow UN Security Council reform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday suggested that the 'short-sighted' approach of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council is holding back forward movement in the long-pending reform of the global body.

In an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue, he said the "biggest" opponent for reform of the UN Security Council is not a Western country, in remarks seen as an oblique reference to China.

The external affairs minister said the sentiments for changes in the UN system is "very strong, but the challenge has been to get the concurrence for it from certain quarters".

"If you are going to ask five countries saying would you mind changing the rules that you would have less power, guess what the answer is going to be," he said.

"If they are wise, the answer would be something else. If they are short-sighted, the answer is what it is today," he



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said.

The five permanent members are Russia, the UK, China, France and the US and these countries can veto any substantive resolution.

There has been growing demand to increase the num-

ber of permanent members to reflect the contemporary global reality.

India, Brazil, South Africa, Germany and Japan are strong contenders for permanent membership of the UNSC which has primary responsibil-

ity for the maintenance of international peace and security.

"When the UN was invented, it had approximately 50 members. We have four times the members. So it is a common sense proposition that you

can't continue the same way when you have four times the members," Jaishankar said.

Asked about various complex geopolitical challenges and diverse positions on them by key nations, he said the endeavour has to be to find middle ground.

If you take UN Security Council reform, the biggest opponent is not a Western country, Jaishankar said.

"So let's get the totality of the problem. I think the reality is we will have to battle bit by bit to create groups which will push for change," he said.

"On many issues, you will get different combinations of countries and we'll have to live with a long period of incremental progress before we get to some kind of landing point," he said.

The Raisina Dialogue is India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-strategy. The three-day conference began on Wednesday.

The theme of the three-day conference is "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create".

PNS ■ NAVSARI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday attacked the Congress over its comments about his caste and said the opposition party has no agenda except abusing him, but this attitude will only strengthen the resolve to win more than 400 seats for the BJP-led NDA in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"You have seen how Congress people abuse Modi's caste. But Congress people forget that the more abuses they hurl, the stronger will be the resolve to cross 400 (Lok Sabha seats)," Modi said at a public function at Navsari in south Gujarat during his day-long visit to the state.

The Congress has no agenda for the country and its only goal is to abuse him, PM said, hitting out at the grand old party.

"The more mud they throw, the more gloriously 370 lotuses (BJP poll symbol) will bloom (referring to ruling party's target of winning 370 LS seats on its own). Except for abusing Modi, the Congress has no other agenda for the future of the country," asserted the PM.

Speaking in Parliament earlier this month, Modi expressed confidence that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will get more than 400 seats and the BJP will win at least 370 seats in the Lok Sabha elections.

When a party comes under the grip of nepotism, then no one is above the family, he said at the Navsari event.

"When nepotism, appeasement and corruption become goals of politics, then attention



Only BJP is working in 'clean way' for advancement of poor: Nadda

PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP president J P Nadda on Thursday said only his party was working in a "clean" manner to ensure progress of the poor.

All other parties indulge in corruption and their leaders are either in jail or out on bail, he said, speaking at a party event here.

The Congress only gave slogans of poverty alleviation but the Narendra Modi government brought 25 crore people out of poverty, Nadda said. "Only the BJP is ensuring advancement of the poor and the country in a clean way. All other parties do corruption," he said.

"Be it Sonia (Gandhi), Rahul (Gandhi) or Lalu Prasad, they all are out on bail. Soren (apparently referring to former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren) is in jail," Nadda further said.

While 50 per cent of the country's population was living in poverty during former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's years in office, the proportion increased to 60 per cent after Indira Gandhi came to power, the BJP chief claimed.

"The Congress only gave slogans in the name of the poor, devised schemes and plans in the drawing room but they were never implemented," he said.

is not paid to preserving the country's heritage," Modi noted. The PM said his government has constructed nearly 4 crore pucca (concrete) houses for the poor.

At the function, Modi ded-

icated to the nation several development projects and initiated work commencement for construction of PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Park in Navsari.

PRIYANKA SET TO JOIN NYAY YATRA IN MORADABAD

Will cover remaining UP leg: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is set to join the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Moradabad on February 24 and will be part of it for the remainder of its Uttar Pradesh leg over the weekend, sources said Thursday.

She was to participate in the yatra when it entered Uttar Pradesh in Chandauli but could not do so because of ill-health and subsequent hospitalisation, they said.

The Congress general secre-

tary will join the yatra when it resumes from Moradabad on Saturday and will remain with the yatra during its leg in western Uttar Pradesh, the sources said.

The Congress has invited Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav to participate in the yatra in Agra, the sources said.

The yatra will resume on the morning of February 24 from Moradabad and will thereafter cover Sambhal, Aligarh, Hathras and Agra districts culminating in Dholpur in Rajasthan on Sunday.



The Congress has said February 26 to March 1 will be break days to enable Rahul

Gandhi to fulfill his long-standing commitment to deliver two special lectures at his alma mater Cambridge University in the UK on February 27 and February 28, and also to enable him to attend other important meetings in New Delhi.

The yatra will once again resume from Dholpur at 2 pm on March 2.

It will then cover Morena, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Guna, Shajapur, and Ujjain among other districts in Madhya Pradesh.

I am proponent of Ayurveda and holistic lifestyle: CJI Chandrachud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said on Thursday he is a proponent of Ayurveda as he pitched for adopting a holistic pattern of living for overall health.

He was addressing a function where he inaugurated an AYUSH Holistic Wellness Centre on the Supreme Court premises.

Minister of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH), Ports, Shipping and

Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal and Minister of State for AYUSH Munipara Mahendrabhai were also present.

An MoU for establishing, operationalising and providing expert services at the wellness centre was also signed between the Supreme Court and the All India Institute of Ayurveda. "For me, this is a satisfying moment. I have been working on this ever since I took over as CJI. I am a proponent of Ayurveda and holistic lifestyle. We have over 2,000 staff members, and we must look

at a holistic pattern of living, not just for the judges and their immediate families but for the staff members, too. I am deeply grateful to all the doctors of All India Institute of Ayurveda," CJI Chandrachud told the gathering.

The Ayush Holistic Wellness Centre is a state-of-the-art facility providing holistic care addressing physical, mental and emotional well-being, promoting overall health of the judges and staff of the Supreme Court of India.

'Zaiqa-E-Dilli': Festival dishes out Old Delhi delicacies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A symphony of 100 culinary masterpieces, orchestrated by 'khansamas' from the bylanes of Old Delhi, at 'Zaiqa-E-Dilli' has unravelled the intricate flavours and fragrances of good old Mughlai cuisine.

The ongoing festival is currently underway at Crowne Plaza, Mayur Vihar with 'Dil Delhi Degh Dastarkhwan' as its motif. So be it a stall serving the much-relished deep-fried breads from Chandni Chowk's iconic paranthe wali gali, different counters of melt-in-mouth kebabs or traditional welcome beverages like 'Mohabbat Ka Sherbat' and 'Bunta', each delicacy promises to transport food enthusiasts to the bustling lanes of Old Delhi.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exposure to extreme temperatures driven by climate change will increase risk of preterm birth by 60 per cent, causing several lifelong complications for millions of children around the world, a new research has found.

Analysing results from 163 health studies globally, researchers said they have determined that climate change will be directly responsible for multiple detrimental health impacts in children, including higher occurrences of respiratory illnesses and more hospitalisations. The researchers, led by those at The University of Western Australia, warned that lack of global action on climate change will likely devastate children's health for genera-



tions. They said their study, published in the journal Science of the Total Environment, was the first to collect all the available scientific evidence for the effects of climate change on children's health.

The team also said they have

distinguished which particular climate-driven extremes were linked to what kind of health impacts in future generations.

"The children's health issues we identified depend on weather extremes - cold extremes give rise to respiratory diseases,

while drought and extreme rainfall can result in stunted growth for a population," said study author Corey Bradshaw from Flinders University, Australia. The team said that most of the studies they analysed were in high-income nations, despite the fact that children in lower-income countries are most likely to go without adequate access to health-care, infrastructure, and stable food supply.

Their study revealed that even advanced economies would not avoid the impacts of climate change on children's health, even as they said health risks varied across continents and socio-economic circumstances. "Given that climate influences childhood disease, social and financial costs will continue to rise as climate

change progresses, placing increasing pressure on families and health services.

"For example, asthma has been estimated to cost as much as USD 1.5 billion due to a single fire season in the future, while another study estimated the costs of a single case of childhood asthma at up to USD 23,573 in the coming years," said Bradshaw.

Geography too dictated the health impacts of climate change, the researchers found.

While extreme temperatures have led to higher preterm births in Australia's East Coast, Northern Territory, and Western Australia and enhanced respiratory issues in Queensland, similar temperatures have increased mortality rates in South Africa, they said.

EXPOSURE TO EXTREME TEMPERATURES

Preterm birth risk to increase by 60 per cent

Rahul Gandhi, Pawar discuss seat-sharing formula in Maharashtra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi have discussed seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra, state NCP chief Jayant Patil said here on Thursday.

Earlier, Congress's Maharashtra in-charge Ramesh Chennithala had said seat-sharing talks between the constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) were in the last stage, and a final decision will be announced after a meeting of the alliance on February 27 and 28.

"Pawar and Rahul Gandhi



have spoken on phone," Patil told reporters here. The MVA alliance consists of Congress, NCP-Sharadchandra Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) and Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi.

Patil also said that he met Pawar on Thursday to discuss the ongoing seat-sharing talks besides organisational matters.

Modi with a message

The PM's planned visit to Sandeshkhali challenges Mamata, seeks to gain ground in Bengal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to Sandeshkhali on March 7 holds significant implications not only for the BJP's Lok Sabha poll strategy but also for the political fortunes of Mamata Banerjee, the TMC supremo and an important constituent of the INDIA bloc. Sandeshkhali, in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, has emerged as a focal point of political strife due to incidents of alleged sexual abuse and land grab by a TMC leader, Shahjahan Sheikh. Ahead of Modi's visit, the BJP has unveiled a 20-minute documentary highlighting the TMC's alleged atrocities in Sandeshkhali with the apparent aim of pushing Mamata on the defensive. The film features Sandeshkhali women's testimony recounting alleged instances of land grab and sexual assault by Sheikh and his cohorts. The BJP's decision to schedule Modi's visit to North 24 Parganas signals its intent to bolster its support base and make inroads into areas traditionally dominated by the ruling TMC. The timing, just ahead of the elections, underscores the BJP's



concerted efforts to sway voters in its favour by exposing the TMC's 'wrongdoings'. Modi's persona and oratory have often been instrumental in galvanising public support, and his presence in Sandeshkhali is likely to energise the BJP cadre and attract undecided voters. Besides, the symbolism associated with Modi's visit cannot be overstated. By highlighting Sandeshkhali, which has witnessed political unrest and clashes, the BJP aims to convey a message of development and security to the residents.

This narrative directly attacks Mamata's leadership, which has faced frequent criticism over law and order issues, and poses to her a formidable challenge. The BJP's relentless campaign, coupled with Modi's visit, threatens to erode TMC's support base in key constituencies. As she seeks to counter the BJP narrative, Mamata's response to Modi's visit will be closely scrutinised. It seems quite likely that the coming weeks would see a surge in BJP attacks on the TMC Government. This is not the first time that the BJP has launched a concerted attack on Mamata but her hold over the State remains more or less unshaken. That said, electoral outcomes are influenced by a multitude of factors beyond high-profile visits and political rhetoric. While Modi's visit may generate momentum for the BJP, the TMC's grassroots outreach, welfare schemes and organisational strength cannot be discarded. Mamata remains a formidable leader with a dedicated support base, especially among certain demographics and rural communities. Moreover, the political landscape in West Bengal is characterised by complex socio-cultural dynamics, where regional identity and issues often play a significant role. The BJP's attempts to make inroads into the State must navigate these intricacies sensitively to resonate with the diverse electorate. How the PM's visit plays out remains to be seen but the attention Sandeshkhali is getting would indeed have one positive outcome: The victims of Sandeshkhali may get justice and Mamata may have to bite the bullet.



Schoolchildren perform Surya Namaskar on the occasion of 'Surya Saptami', in Jaipur

Ayurveda: Seek balance of tridoshas for wellness

Ayurveda's mantra for wellness is 'seek balance.' Its holistic approach offers a timeless roadmap to good health in today's fast-paced world

In an era marked by fast-paced lifestyles, stress-induced ailments, and an increasing reliance on synthetic medication, the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda emerges as a beacon of holistic healing. Originating in the Indian subcontinent over 5,000 years ago, Ayurveda is not merely a system of medicine but a way of life deeply rooted in the balance between mind, body, and spirit. Its holistic approach offers a comprehensive framework for promoting well-being and preventing disease, making it highly relevant in today's fast-changing world.



At the heart of Ayurveda lies the belief that health is a state of equilibrium between the three doshas - Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (earth and water). According to Ayurvedic principles, imbalances in these doshas lead to physical, mental, and emotional disturbances, paving the way for illness. By understanding an individual's unique constitution, or Prakriti, Ayurveda seeks to restore harmony through personalised lifestyle modifications, dietary

changes, herbal remedies, yoga, and meditation. One of the key strengths of Ayurveda is its emphasis on prevention rather than cure. By addressing the root cause of disease rather than merely treating symptoms, Ayurveda empowers individuals to take charge of their health proactively. Through practices such as daily self-care routines (Dinacharya), seasonal detoxification (panchakarma), and mindful eating habits, Ayurveda cultivates resilience and strengthens the body's natural defences, reducing the likelihood of illness. Moreover, Ayurveda recognises the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence - from the food we eat to the environment we inhabit. This holistic perspective underscores the importance of living in harmony with nature and aligning our lifestyle choices with its

maintaining vitality and balance. Its integrative approach acknowledges the role of mental and emotional factors in health, emphasising practices that promote mental clarity, emotional resilience, and spiritual well-being. While Western medicine excels in acute care and crisis intervention, Ayurveda excels in promoting longevity, enhancing vitality, and restoring equilibrium. Integrating Ayurvedic principles into mainstream healthcare can lead to a more comprehensive and patient-centred approach, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and modern science. By embracing its principles of balance, harmony, and interconnectedness, individuals can cultivate resilience, vitality, and well-being on all levels - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. As we strive to navigate the complexities of modern life, Ayurveda serves as a guiding light, reminding us of the profound wisdom inherent in nature.

(The writer is a business consultant; views are personal)



KANISHKA SRIVASTAVA

PM PAYS TRIBUTE TO VIDYASAGAR JI
Sir — India is truly blessed with so many noble saints, intellectuals, and spiritual persons who have dedicated their entire lives to the welfare of mankind. Renowned Jain seer Acharya Vidyasagar Ji Maharaj was one of the greatest saints of our time who attained Samadhi "Sallekhana", saddening us. He was the most renowned saint in the Digambar Jain community. He took sallekhana, a Jain religious practice involving voluntary fasting until death, for spiritual purification.

PM Narendra Modi is paying tribute to this great saint. He will be all the more remembered by the generations to come for his invaluable contributions to society, especially his efforts towards spiritual awakening among people. His notable work was towards poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, and more. His life exemplified the core principles of Jainism, embodying its ideals through his actions and teachings. Today, the world over, fundamental elements are fighting, but the teachings of Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj to mankind have become even more relevant; they should be followed by all of us to enrich the lives of human beings and promote peace and harmony. We should all strive to live coherently to shape a new era of national and social integration. Education was very close to his heart. He was a true tapas, whose life was dedicated to the ideals of Bhagwan Mahavir. He will always be remembered for his rich contribution to society.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sandeshkhali crisis



commendable arrests have been made, holding accountable those in power implicated in these crimes is essential. With the Supreme Court rejecting a CBI or SIT investigation, the onus now falls on Mamata Banerjee's government to prioritise citizens' well-being over political considerations, ensuring transparency and decisive action to restore trust. Amidst the turmoil, concerns over authoritarianism arise with the arrest of a journalist, emphasising the need to safeguard the freedom of the press. The dismissal of widespread fear and systematic abuse by the government does not instil confidence in a thorough inquiry. Mamata Banerjee must demonstrate the same dedication to justice she exhibited in opposition, addressing these grave issues transparently. Acknowledging the plight of women prisoners and taking decisive action against sexual violence as a political tool is imperative for rebuilding trust and integrity in the government's response to the Sandeshkhali crisis.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

the ear and reduces the ability to hear. An international research team reviewed 14 studies conducted by nine countries in this regard. North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Asia, Australia, etc. were included in these nine countries. It is necessary to discourage children from playing video games. If not, a generation of young children will go deaf. This is a very sensitive subject. Parents should pay proper attention to their children and ensure that they do not watch those video games. It is necessary to tell the children about the consequences of this in various schools.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

NIFTY AT ALL-TIME HIGH

Sir — Indices moved up for a fifth consecutive session, with the Nifty hitting a fresh all-time high amid mixed global cues. Benchmark Sensex spurted by 349 points while Nifty scaled a fresh life-

time high on the sixth straight day of gains on February 20, driven by buying in banking and select FMCG shares. The broader market outperformed the front-line indices. Everything looks favourable, be it the strong macroeconomic fundamentals or the robust retail inflows. Both upstream and downstream oil companies benefit from a robust up-cycle in oil and gas markets and stable crude prices, which have boosted volumes and marketing margins, said Siddhartha Khemka, head of retail research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services. Reflecting broader investor bullishness, the 50-share index surged to a record high of 21,654.75 on intense buying in the metal, commodity, auto and banking sectors.

Jayanthi Subramanian | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Indian nationhood thrives amid diversity

Despite regional differences and identity quests, the strength of Indian nationhood persists, supported by a dedication to constitutional values and productive conversations

There is much talk about the nature of change in all aspects of Indian life, as is natural in changes envisaged at such a large scale. There are bound to be differences of opinion, multiple articulations, and an attempt to project one's point of view. This is how it should be. This is amplified by the Sanskrit dictum "Vade Vade Jayat Tatva Bodhah" (through discussion one arrives at the truth). However, discussion must follow a protocol. This protocol is often unwritten and is a bedrock of any civil society. It has some enduring principles. The first and foremost of which would be that it cannot be and must not be abusive. The right to civil disagreement in a civil manner is the foundation of a civil society. Thus, it is that mutual respect and agreeing to disagree are required as essential to civil discourse.

One can add to it, for good measure, certain other attributes and certain attributes of the mind. These attributes recognise the need to not only listen but honestly weigh the merits of another person's point of view and have a genuine openness to consider it. Agreeing to another point of view or modifying one's own in a civil society is not a hallmark of weakness but a source of genuine strength and maturity. Going by these principles, the Indian civil society has an interesting record with significant regional variations. The Dravid school of thought is an interesting example. They are saying in the twenties of this century, roughly the same things they were saying in the thirties of the last century. The Dravidian leadership has in the last seventy-five years then been in power in that part of India for several decades, though not always continuously. Similarly, the exclusionist identity sought by some of the DMK ideologues has had on various occasions to be moderated because they have been in power. Notwithstanding long patches of time, not much significant progress has been made in the implementation of some of the



components of the DMK ideology, such as it may be. The ideological component itself has undergone a major split with an exclusivist ideology for DMK being considerably whittled down in the birth of All India Anna Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam (AIDMK). M.G. Ramachandran was the major proponent of the AIDMK version. Jayalalitha was a key supporter. They linked up with the Dravidian Movement with all Indian processes. How it panned out is another story and fit enough for another discussion. More to the point, it is important to realise that similar identity quests or some version thereof have been witnessed in the North Eastern States, Jammu & Kashmir State, parts of Andhra Pradesh, and a few other pockets of the southern Indian peninsula. This is a very understandable process. By and large, it has been contained within the constitutional framework. At times the divergent point of view has been espoused by neighbouring states of the Deccan peninsula or between the

MORE TO THE CREDIT OF EVERYONE CONCERNED IS THE URGE ON THE PART OF MOST PEOPLE TO EVOKE THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION WHENEVER NEED BE AND NOT PRACTICE BRINKMANSHIP

Deccan States and the Central Government at New Delhi over many matters including the distribution of river waters. Notwithstanding these differences, Indian nationhood has endured and might even be seen as having gone from strength to strength. It is this resilience which is, also, the hallmark of Indian nationhood. This is not to deny the fact that once in a while, offensive or extreme statements are made, some of which are avoidable, though sometimes understandable. The long and short of it is the ability of people to work together despite differences and different articulations. More to the credit of everyone concerned is the urge on the part of most people to evoke the Indian Constitution whenever need be and not practice brinkmanship. The time is here to ensure that these practices of healthy debate and the setting of shared perspectives become a regular habit and a part of the national methodology of dialogue and discussion. Sometimes when extreme statements are made and

some new thinking seems to arise, there is nothing wrong with that either, only that the model of integrative thinking would have to show far more resilience than it is many times currently showing. This text has looked at the vantage point of collective cohesion. It is not as if there are no dangerous signs that need to be tackled, but that attempting to tackle them sensibly and systematically is necessary. It is this institutionalisation of handling dissent and allowing seemingly alternative perspectives to live peacefully with each other that will be the touchstone on which much of the future of Indian nationhood will continue to flourish. In an era where subtle dissent becomes a part of covert political strategy, much care needs to be exercised. The number game can have dangerous manifestations. There is no substitute for good sense and integrity of thought, deed, and follow-up.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

MONEY MATTERS

India's mineral production rises 5.1 per cent

India's mineral output increased by 5.1 per cent in December as compared to the year-ago period, the government said on Thursday. The index of mineral production of mining and quarrying sector for the month of December, 2023 at 139.4 is 5.1 per cent higher as compared to the level witnessed in the corresponding month of 2022, the mines ministry said in a statement. The cumulative growth rate in the mining and quarrying sector for the April-December period of the current fiscal over the corresponding period of previous financial year is 8.5 per cent, as per the provisional statistics of Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM). In December, the production of coal stood at 929 lakh tonnes while that of lignite at 40 lakh tonnes, iron ore at 255 lakh tonnes and limestone at 372 lakh tonnes. Production of lignite, limestone, coal, bauxite and natural gas showed positive growth. However, a negative growth was registered in the production of petroleum (crude), gold, chromite, phosphorite and diamond.



Gold slips Rs 50; silver tumbles Rs 500

Gold prices fell Rs 50 to Rs 62,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had finished at Rs 62,850 per 10 grams in the previous close. Silver also tumbled Rs 500 to Rs 75,200 per kilogram, while it had ended at Rs 75,700 per kg in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 62,800 per 10 grams, down by Rs 50 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading flat at USD 2,027 per ounce, unchanged from the previous close. However, silver was down at USD 23 per ounce. Following the release of the latest Federal Reserve's meeting minutes, which indicated that the US Fed is willing to maintain interest rates higher for longer. Accordingly, the yellow metal prices slightly declined on Thursday, Gandhi added.



Ashok Leyland reaches three million production milestone

Induja Group flagship company Ashok Leyland on Thursday said it has reached a significant milestone of having rolled out three million units out of its factory in Uttarakhand. The heavy commercial vehicle maker said it was moving steadfast on its vision to become one among the top 10 Commercial Vehicle (CV) manufacturers globally. "We are proud to have achieved this significant milestone. Ashok Leyland has always been ahead of the curve and leading the CV industry in product technology and innovation," Ashok Leyland MD and CEO Shenu Agarwal said in a company statement. "The roll out of our three millionth vehicle is a testament to our well-established reputation for manufacturing highly reliable products and delivering top-notch customer service," he added. "The achievement at the company's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Pantnagar, Uttarakhand highlights Ashok Leyland's dedication to innovation, technological advancement and strong customer relationships."



World trading rules have been gamed: Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In its first year of Independence, India put its trust on multilateralism and took the Kashmir "aggression issue" to the United Nations but others made it a matter of "accession" for geopolitical reasons, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday. He made the remarks while elaborating on the need for having coexistence between national interests and multilateralism at a session of the Raisina Dialogue.

"That was always the case. Look at our own example. Very literally in our first year of Independence, we put our trust in multilateralism and took the Kashmir aggression issue to the UN and others made it into an accession issue and they did it for geopolitical reasons," Jaishankar said. He was asked whether values are looking less important in the current geopolitical landscape as countries com-

"That was always the case. Look at our own example. Very literally in our first year of Independence, we put our trust in multilateralism and took the Kashmir aggression issue to the UN and others made it into an accession issue and they did it for geopolitical reasons."

If you say people are playing multilateralism, they always did. We have grown up. It is not that we should be against multilateralism.

We speak about globalisation for example. The fact is that the world trading rules have been gamed. And we have a lot of our challenges today that also emanate from how countries have used that for their benefit at the expense of the international system.



promise on principles but never on interests.

"If you say people are playing multilateralism, they always did. We have grown up. It is not that we should be against multilateralism," he said.

"Multilateralism is a kind of lowest common denominator and anything above that. It will exist side-by-side with national interests with the calculations

and competitions of countries," the external affairs minister said. At the same time, he agreed with the view that there is a place for sentiment and solidarity as well. Responding to a separate question on reform of the UN, Jaishankar, citing globalisation, said the "fact is that the world trading rules have been gamed."

"If you look at the last five

years, all the big issues, in a way, we have not been able to find a multilateral solution. So the results or lack of results demonstrates the case for reform," he said.

"But I think there is a larger global conversation and global rebalancing as well which is bigger than the UN, which is really (about) whose rules, how does it work because what has also happened in many cases is the rules have been gamed," he said.

"We speak about globalisation for example. The fact is that the world trading rules have been gamed. And we have a lot of our challenges today that also emanate from how countries have used that for their benefit at the expense of the international system," he noted. Asked about various complex geopolitical challenges and diverse positions on them by key nations, Jaishankar said the endeavour has to be to find middle ground.

'Small growers contribute to 47% of Assam's tea production'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Small growers contribute to more than 47 per cent of Assam's annual tea production, Industries and Commerce Minister Bimal Borah said on Thursday.

Replying to a question from Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi in the assembly, Borah said the total number of small tea growers in the state is 1,25,484, as per data provided by the Tea Board India.

A total of 1,17,304 hectares of land is under cultivation by these growers, and they contribute to 47.77 per cent of the total tea produced annually in the state, he said.

The minimum price for green leaves produced by the small growers in 2022-23 was Rs 13.78 per kg and the maximum was Rs 40.44 per kg.

The same rates per kg for 2023-24 were Rs 13.79 and Rs 33.97 respectively, as per information laid by the minister.

Das: Premature policy move could undermine efforts to check inflation

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India's job to bring down inflation is not over, and any premature move on the policy front could undermine the success achieved so far on the price situation, according to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das.

According to the minutes of the February Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting released by the central bank on Thursday, Das had said at this juncture, monetary policy must remain vigilant and "not assume that our job on the inflation front is over".

He stressed that the MPC must remain committed to successfully navigate the "last mile" of disinflation that can be sticky.

Das made the remarks while voting for status quo in the key interest rate earlier this month.

"As markets are front-running central banks in anticipation of policy pivots, any premature move may undermine the success achieved so far," the governor said, as per the minutes.

He argued that price and



financial stability were essential to sustain a long haul of high growth, and the monetary policy's objective was to stay focused on achieving the 4 per cent inflation target on a durable basis, keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Five of the six MPC members had voted to keep the short-term benchmark lending rate at 6.5 per cent.

External member in the MPC, Jayanth R Varma, had made a case to reduce the repo rate by 25 points, and to change the stance to neutral. The process of fiscal consolidation is projected to continue in 2024-25, he said, adding that this opens up space for

monetary easing without risking an inflationary spiral.

"In my view, the time has come for the MPC to send a clear signal that it takes its dual mandate of inflation and growth seriously, and that it would not maintain a real interest rate that is significantly more than what is needed to achieve its target," Varma said.

RBI Deputy Governor and MPC member Michael Debabrata Patra, according to the minutes, said monetary policy must remain restrictive and maintain downward pressure on inflation while minimising the output costs of disinflation.

Stocks rebound: Sensex jumps over 500 points, Nifty hits fresh peak

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices rebounded on Thursday, with Nifty hitting its fresh all-time high and Sensex surging more than 500 points as investors went on a buying spree in IT, automobile and technology stocks.

After starting off on a volatile note, the equity market staged a recovery in the second half of the day, especially after 2.30 pm as the 30-share benchmark Sensex soared 535.15 points or 0.74 per cent to close at 73,158.24 points.

As many as 22 Sensex constituents closed in the positive territory and the index touched an intra-day high of 73,256.39 points. The broader Nifty climbed 162.40 points or 0.74 per cent to hit its highest ever closing level of 22,217.45 points. During the intra-day trade, the index touched the peak of 22,252.50 points and 25 Nifty constituents ended the session with gains.

"The domestic market staged a recovery from the day's low, buoyed by positive PMI data from the Eurozone and an impressive earnings report from US tech stocks."

"The broader market showed resilience as India's economic activity continued to



expand in February, with both service and manufacturing PMI improving. Consequently, it resulted in outperformance in discretionary stocks and capital goods," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. BSE Midcap index gained 0.92 per cent, largecap index climbed 0.81 per cent and smallcap index rose 0.54 per cent.

In the Sensex pack, HCLTech rose the maximum by 3.12 per cent, followed by ITC which gained 2.73 per cent and M&M went up 2.61 per cent. TCS climbed 2.44 per cent. Tech Mahindra, Wipro, L&T and Maruti were among the other major gainers.

However, stocks of all major banks closed in the red with IndusInd Bank falling 1.87 per cent. While HDFC Bank dropped 1.28 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 1.11 per cent and SBI slipped 0.73 per cent.

Byju's shareholders to vote on resolution to oust CEO, family today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shareholders at Byju's are set to vote on Friday on a resolution brought by some investors to oust founder CEO Byju Ravendran and his family members over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup.

However, the outcome of the vote at the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High Court will next hear Ravendran's plea challenging the move by certain investors.

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Byju's. Ravendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company. The EGM notice calls for ouster of the current board of Think & Learn, the firm that operates Byju's, composed of Ravendran, his wife and co-founder Divya Gokulnath and his brother Riju Ravindran.

While reopening after the pandemic that saw students who earlier opted for online learning going back to physical classes and the recent acquisition of Aakash putting Byju's under financial strain, the edtech firm in last one year suffered others setbacks including its auditor resigning, lenders beginning bankruptcy proceedings against a holding company.

Decision to ease FDI in space sector to boost startup ecosystem in satellite making, assembly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government's decision to ease Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) norms for the space sector will help fuel the efforts of the startup ecosystem in launch vehicles, satellite manufacturing, and assembly segment, according to experts.

They also said that the move would help Indian companies integrate well into global space sector supply chains, and enable innovation.

The government on Wednesday eased FDI norms and permitted 100 per cent



overseas investment in making components for satellites, as part of efforts to attract overseas players and private companies into the segment.

Now, the satellite sub-sector has been divided into three different activities with defined limits for foreign investment in each such sector, according to

India needs to usher in Green Revolution 2.0 to promote less water-intensive crops

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to usher in Green Revolution 2.0 with a view to promote farming of less water-intensive crops such as pulses and oil seeds and discourage free power for the agri sector, economic think tank GTRI said on Thursday.

There is a need to "promote less water-intensive crops like pulses, oil seeds, and vegetables that can significantly reduce water demand and the government can guarantee MSP (minimum support price) on these crops."

Glenmark Pharma eyes US\$ 80mn from Ryaltris sales next year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals expects its nasal spray Ryaltris to hit about USD 80 million in sales next year, boosting its overall revenue, according to a top company executive. The drug firm has so far commercialised the product in 31 geographies across the globe.

Ryaltris is indicated for symptomatic treatment of seasonal and perennial allergic rhinitis in adults and children over 12 years of age. The drug relieves symptoms of allergic rhinitis, including stuffy nose, runny nose, nasal itching, sneezing, as well as itchy, red and watery eyes. "Ryaltris is a huge product for us, right? I mean next year, we anticipate sales of close to about USD 80-odd million. So it's a very large product already in a short time," Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Chairman and Managing Director Glenn Saldanha said.

The company is yet to launch the product in many of the major markets like China and Brazil, he added.

Further, Saldanha said, "So

I think from peak sales, this will be a substantial product for us, right, over the next five years. And in terms of market share, if we end up with like 15-20 per cent right off the market, I think we would have done really well with this product."

'Reforms over last 10 yrs lay foundation of solid growth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Strong reform measures initiated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government in the last ten years have laid the foundation of a solid economic growth in coming decades, Jefferies Equity Research outlook said.

It also said that India would become the third largest economy by 2027 and expected to achieve a market capitalization of US\$ 10 trillion by 2030.

"With a consistent history of 10-12 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) over the last 10 and 20 years, India is now the fifth

largest equity market and market cap will likely to touch US\$ 10 trillion by 2030," the report said.

It added that continued reforms should maintain India's status of being the fastest growing large economy.

Over the last 10 years, India's GDP has grown by 7 per cent CAGR in US\$ terms to US\$ 3.6 trillion, jumping from the eighth largest to the fifth largest economy.

"Over the next 4 years, India's GDP will likely touch US\$ 5 trillion making it the third largest economy by 2027, overtaking Japan and

The young demographics imply that the ratio of working age population is yet to peak, unlike several large economies and other comparable emerging market economies.



Germany, being the fastest growing large economy with the tailwinds of demographics (consistent labour supply), improving institutional strength and improvement in governance," it added.

Further, it said that GST implementation in 2017 simplified taxation and improved trade efficiencies, akin to the formation of Euro, and bankruptcy reforms drove a massive

cleaning up of corporate and banking sector balance sheets and improved governance.

RERA (Real Estate Regulation Act) cleaned-up housing sector laying the foundation for a multi-year housing upcycle, it said, adding the government's focus on physical (roads, airports, railways etc) and digital infra (UID, UPI, DBT) has helped the startup ecosystem.

It added that India, with the highest population in the world, also features favourable demographics with a vibrant and young population, whose average age is just a tad below 30

years. "The young demographics imply that the ratio of working age population is yet to peak, unlike several large economies and other comparable emerging market economies," it said.

The report added that a strong earnings growth profile, track-record of generating peer beating returns, rising India market weight and deep markets should attract incremental foreign flows. "The Indian markets saw USD 20 billion of equity flows in 2023, though it was not as high as compared to previous levels as a percentage of market cap," it added.





● Siri and Rashmi

● Srivani and Sandya

● Suma

● Kirthi and Jyothi

● Rashmi Gautam

Actress Rashmi Gautam, graced the inauguration of Siri Shopping Mall Silks & Jewelleries at Kothapet, which was graced by the owners Shanapati Ramesh and Chetan. Siri Shopping Mall offers its customers the best shopping experience with the latest fashion garments. Benares silk, Pure Soft Brocade, Soshiti Stone, Ikkat Saree, Designer Uppada Silk, Malay Silk, Designer Silk, and Kubera Silk.

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



● Meghna

● Brahmani

● Aswani

● Deepthi Reddy

● Rekha Reddy

A vibrant Ikebana exhibition titled "Ecobana," an environmentally aware Ikebana show, was inaugurated at Saptaparni, showcasing the artistic talents of about 30 children from the twin cities. Guided by Ohryu Rekha Reddy, Sub Grandmaster of the Ohara School of Ikebana, the exhibition opened its doors on Wednesday, following a week-long practice workshop. The event was graced by the presence of the Consul-General of Japan in Chennai, Taga Masayuki, as the Chief Guest.




With the divine presence of his Holiness Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji, the Prana Prathista Mahotsavam will be held on March 6 at Swarnagiri Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple, Yadadri Tirumala Devasthanam, in Manepalli Hills. Ahead of the mahotsavam, the calendar was launched at the devasthanam.








Haldiram's strengthened its presence in Hyderabad with the launch of its new Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) in the vibrant locale of Begumpet. The new restaurant marks a significant milestone for Haldiram's as it expands its footprint in Hyderabad, with a total of 10 QSRs in the city. Having unveiled its first QSR in the upscale neighborhood of Begumpet, Haldiram's has brought its diverse range of dishes, including the restaurant's standout offering - the South Indian Thali, closer to residents and office-goers in the area




ARCHIE






GARFIELD






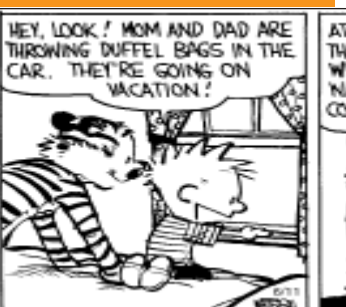
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS




CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

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

- A pain in your mouth
- Speed competitions
- Intoxicated
- Passenger's payment
- Plan
- Do again
- Bathroom powder
- Rub out
- Woolly animal
- A huge seabird

DOWN

- Happen
- Try out
- Drug-dependent person
- Residence
- Umpire

8 A bone where your leg bends

11 Take a photo with this

13 A gem from an oyster

15 Parts of countries or places

16 Consumer

SOLUTION 855

A	R	I	A	N	G	L	E
T	H	R	I	E	S	O	U
T	R	A	E	S	H	O	E
E	N	D	I	N	G	B	H
M	T	C	R	E			
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Rashi Singh: *Bhoothaddam Bhaskar Narayana* ended up helping my career

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Actress Rashi Singh, who is all set to woo the audience with her upcoming film *Bhoothaddam Bhaskar Narayana*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing insights about the film, her character, and more.

Under the direction of debutant filmmaker Purushottam Raj and Co., the eagerly awaited mystery crime thriller *Bhoothaddam Bhaskar Narayana*, which stars Shiva Kandukuri as the lead detective, and Rashi Singh as the lead-

ing lady, we were even more thrilled to provide to you an additional exclusive interview featuring the lead actress from the soon-to-be released movie. Rashi Singh says candidly, "I blame my rapid rise in content consumption after the pandemic on being idle! Upon observing the millions of viewers captivated by the shows or movies, I noticed that the majority came from the thriller genre. It inspired me to be the lead in a movie like this! I have a lot of creative freedom with this specific character. I had almost minimal roles in any of the movies I had been in up to this point, but *Bhoothaddam Bhaskar Narayana* ended up helping my career." Prem Kumar fame doesn't stop there. "I am blazing brightly with my character in this movie, from the beginning to the very end. My face is completely devoid of makeup. I'm not portraying a sultry role here; instead, this movie has a really natural aesthetic." Before the filming started, Rashi remembered a very humorous incident: "I was listening to two scripts at the same time. Even though I wasn't supposed to go for the audition, *Bhoothaddam Bhaskar Narayana* succeeded where the last one failed. The producer just so happened to be free, and they had yet to lock their lead actress. With great assertiveness, the director warned me that Rashi shouldn't anticipate any glamour in this movie. In fact, I replied with the same

fervor, sir, adding that this is exactly what I desire at this point in my career. I had to tell him that I'm not only a beautiful face; I'm an actress." She elaborated on her thrilling experience in the movie, saying, "We didn't get the impression that Purushottam Raj was directing his first Telugu movie in any scene. Even I, as an actress, lacked the ten percent clarity that belonged to my director. I've witnessed a lot of filmmakers adopt ideas from their assistant directors, but this particular director refused to let the producer or the actor control him. He didn't need "extra gyaan" because he was clear in his own right. Instead, he offered me complete freedom to characterise the part however I see fit. Don't over prepare." The actress mumbles, "I haven't seen a film yet that has a touch of mythology, crime, and a murder mystery all at once," as an insider from the movie. "And the investigating procedure is really cutting edge! Secondly, we had to depict the part in a positive light since we couldn't have let the stakes get too high for us. We could not have created a negative narrative about mythology in any way because we are all aware of their spiritual connection to the Almighty." "My dream role is to play the character of Queen Padmavati—I have watched the film multiple times and still get goosebumps," the actress said in a generic closing statement. "Nobody is more adept at portraying these roles than Deepika Padukone! It's

also difficult to learn the South Indian language when you're from the North, where the language is scarcely known. There are still many lovely South languages that people are ignorant of. Some refer to it as Madras, which is a misleading phrase. That is an issue in our society! At the moment, I have erased all of my early obstacles in this field since I have overcome them all."



Chandini Chowdary in & as Jahnvi in *Gaami*

Vishwak Sen's upcoming film, *Gaami*, has sent ripples of excitement through the audience with its captivating first look poster. The poster offers a glimpse into the mystical world of the film, setting the stage for what promises to be a unique cinematic experience. Adding to the anticipation, the recently released teaser introduces a myriad of characters, culminating in Vishwak Sen's portrayal of a reclusive Aghori. The plot unfolds as Vishwak Sen's character, grappling with a rare human condition, embarking on a journey to an uncharted territory in search

of a cure. The teaser hints at a compelling narrative, and the inclusion of actress Chandini Chowdary adds an extra layer of intrigue. Chandini, seen in the teaser as a researcher, dons a simple yet classy look, carrying a bag and wearing glasses. Today, the unveiling of the first look poster for her character, Jahnvi, has only heightened the curiosity surrounding her role. After the success of *Colour Photo*, Chandini Chowdary's career trajectory faced some challenges with her subsequent projects. However, *Gaami* holds the potential to be a turning point

for her. The buzz surrounding the film suggests that it could be the vehicle that propels Chandini back into the limelight, opening doors to more diverse and engaging roles. As the countdown to the release continues, fans can mark their calendars for the unveiling of the *Gaami* trailer on February 29th. The film is scheduled to hit screens on March 8th, 2024, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri. With a promising storyline, a stellar cast, and an enticing teaser, *Gaami* is poised to make a significant impact in the realm of Telugu cinema.



The hilarious trio is back as Bang Bros for the upcoming film directed by Sree Harsha Konuganti of *Husharu* fame. The Bang Bros- Sree Vishnu, Priyadarshi, and Rahul Ramakrishna are all set to offer a crazy fun ride. Titled *Om Bheem Bush*, this one is the new mantra for entertainment. V Celluloid and Sunil Balusu together bankroll the project, while UV Creations presents it. After grabbing attention with the pre-look glimpse, the makers came up with the first-look poster. The glimpse showed three

astronauts entering the Earth on a spaceship with detonating devices in their hands. The first look poster shows the trio Sree Vishnu, Priyadarshi, and Rahul Ramakrishna walking stylishly with some pamphlets in their hands in a rural area. They all dressed up in astronaut costumes. The first look creates mirth. Sree Vishnu is known for his unique comedy timing and the actor is riding high with the success of his last movie *Samajavaragamana*. So he is set to enthrall in another comical character now! Priyadarshi and Rahul Ramakrishna combo always offered comic relief. *Om Bheem Bush* is a mantra chanted in Tantric practices and there is also a fun side to it with kids chanting it while playing. The caption No Logic Only Magic prepares us to get entertained and not to think very much about logic. The presence of the hilarious combo alone hints at the kind of hilarity that is there in the movie. Sree Harsha Konuganti who proved his mettle in his directorial debut *Husharu* is readying a much crazier and hilarious film that is going to be entertaining from start to end. Each character is very crucial and is designed amusingly. Preethi Mukundhan and Ayesha Khan are the heroines in the movie where Srikanth Iyengar, Aditya Menon, and Racha Ravi will be seen in important roles. The shoot of *Om Bheem Bush* was already completed and the makers through the poster announced the release of the movie on March 22nd. So, get ready for the laugh riot in summer!

Sree Vishnu and Priyadarshi's film titled *Om Bheem Bush*

Ram Charan-Upasana is expecting their second baby

Upasana Konidela, recently surprised and delighted fans with the news that she and her husband are planning to have a second child. The announcement was made during a recent program where Upasana spoke about the importance of women's health and empowerment. Upasana and Ram Charan welcomed their first child, a daughter named Klinkara, in 2022 after 11 years of marriage.

The couple has been very private about their personal lives, but they have always expressed their desire to have more children. Upasana's decision to have a second child is a significant step for her and her family. It shows her commitment to motherhood and her belief in the importance of family. It is also a sign of her confidence in her ability to balance her career and personal life. Upasana's announcement has been met with positive reac-

tions from fans and well-wishers. Many have taken to social media to congratulate the couple and express their excitement at the prospect of another little one joining the Konidela family. The news of Upasana having a second child is sure to bring joy and happiness to the Konidela family and their fans. It is a testament to the couple's love for each other and their desire to build a happy and fulfilling life together.



Shaitaan promises an edge-of-the-seat supernatural thriller

The highly anticipated supernatural thriller starring Ajay Devgn, Jyotika and R Madhavan has captured the intrigue of moviegoers since its teaser release. The film brings together powerhouse talents and promises a thrilling experience like never before. To further pique audience excitement, team *Shaitaan* gathered in Mumbai to launch the much-awaited trailer of

the film. As expected, the trailer takes us on a roller-coaster ride of heart-thumping adrenaline moments, giving a glimpse into the world of *Shaitaan*. The film takes the audience on a journey with Kabir and his family as their fun weekend retreat takes a nightmarish turn when they let a friendly but mysterious stranger into their house. As the clock ticks, the family will

be forced to confront their worst fears in this gripping tale that deals with the sinister elements of Indian black magic. Presented by Jio Studios, Devgn Films and Panorama Studios, *Shaitaan* is produced by Ajay Devgn, Jyoti Deshpande, Kumar Mangat Pathak and Abhishek Pathak and directed by Vikas Bahl. It is set theatrically on March 8, 2024.



Geethanjali Malli Vachindhi teaser launch event will be held at Begumpet graveyard on Feb 24

Gorgeous beauty Anjali's *Geethanjali* was one of the big hits among small budget films way back in 2014. The film was not only a box-office success but also acted as a trendsetter for more films in the genre. Currently, the film's sequel titled *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*, is in the works and will be produced by Kona Venkat under Kona Films Corporation in association with MVV Cinemas. Heroine Anjali will be playing the lead role, and it's a milestone 50th film in her career. Needless to say, the sequel will follow in the same horror-comedy genre. The makers are producing *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi* as a huge budget movie in the horror comedy genre. And, the recently released striking first look raises expectations on this horror thriller. A never before event is planned to launch the teaser of the much awaited film. This Saturday, makers are unveiling the stunning teaser at Begumpet



graveyard at 7PM. As the film is connected to horror, the team planned to launch the teaser in a unique way at the graveyard. This is going to be one of a kind events in Indian cinema. The sequel will start from where the movie *Geethanjali* ended. The film will be released Pan India wide in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam languages in early 2024. Along with Anjali, Srinivas Reddy, Satyam Rajesh, Shakalaka Shankar, Satya, Sunil, Ravi Shankar, Srikanth Iyyengar are playing the lead roles in this sequel. The makers roped in popular actor Rahul Madhav from the Malayalam film industry too. This is his Telugu debut. Makers are confident that this sequel will surpass all horror comedy genre films. The plot of this movie will take place in Hyderabad and Ooty.

INDIA EYE 17TH SERIES WIN ON TROT AT HOME

PTI ■ RANCHI

Peace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's absence is a concern but an assertive and adaptive India will have the edge against England's seemingly depth-less 'Bazball' approach when the two sides clash in the potentially series-deciding fourth Test beginning here on Friday.

From the dry heat of Rajkot to the much cooler confines of Ranchi, the temperature shift would be the only soothing factor for the Englishmen who have let it slip against the resilient hosts and are trailing 1-2.

Eyeing a 17th series win on the trot at home, India have been near invincible since the shock defeat to Alastair Cook's England in 2012. After that, India have won a staggering 38 out of 47 Tests, and have lost just thrice (two each versus Australia and England) when challenges on home turf.

Captaining a depleted batting line-up in the absence of Virat Kohli, KL Rahul and an out-of-form Shreyas Iyer, Rohit Sharma has found answers from the young guns, whose performance has been the biggest takeaway from the series so far.

Whether it is Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has maintained an impressive average of 109 with a total of 545 runs, or Sarfaraz Khan, who ended his prolonged wait for a Test debut with a blazing 66-ball 62 in Rajkot, or Shubman Gill, gradually settling in at No.3, India's next generation of batters are showcasing how a seamless transition happens.

As for replacing Bumrah, who has been the top wicket-taker (17) of the series which was expected to be dominated by spinners, it could well be India's Achilles' heel in Ranchi. Bumrah has been rested after bowling a little more than 80 overs in the three gone-by Tests.

His reverse-swing mastery on day two of the Vizag Test during a six-wicket burst, was the biggest contributing factor in the 106-run win that levelled the series 1-1.

On a docile Rajkot wicket too, Bumrah made in-roads giving India crucial breakthroughs. Keeping in mind the seaming conditions in Dharamsala for the fifth Test and the hectic IPL season ahead, Bumrah has been given a break, making Mohammed Siraj the sole experienced pacer in the line-up. It will be a toss-up between

ENGLAND AIM FOR REDEMPTION IN 4TH TEST



Bengal duo of Mukesh Kumar and an uncapped Akash Deep for the second pacer's slot in Ranchi.

Fresh from his career-best 10-wicket haul in Ranji Trophy, Mukesh is not only more experienced but also partnered Bumrah in the Vizag Test. He, however, bowled just 12 overs taking one wicket across both

innings. It remains to be seen whether the Indian think-tank will take the gamble of giving another debut cap or persist with Mukesh, who has been average at best.

History suggests that the JSCA Stadium pitch will suit a plan featuring two seamers and three spinners. But England's assessment of

the conditions has been that four spinners and one seamer attack would be ideal.

"It's an interesting pitch...There are a few cracks, very platy and looked a bit crusty, the top layer, One half is good, and the other has a lot of platy cracks," England vice-captain Ollie Pope had said after the team checked in here on Thursday.

That may bring Shoaib Bashir into the picture to go alongside Tom Hartley, Rehan Ahmed and part-timer Joe Root. Root has more overs (107) under his belt than runs (77) in this series.

India, on the other hand, have preferred the conventional two-pacer-three-spinner combination and it's unlikely

that Axar Patel would be recalled. The team is expected to stick to Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja.

Historically, the Ranchi pitch has proven deceptive for the visiting teams.

In the last Test here in 2019, South Africa were blown away by the duo of Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav, who shared 10 wickets between them, as against the eight by the spin trio of Ashwin, Jadeja and Shahbaz Nadeem.

"It has never been a rank-turner. The pitch would be beautiful for batting for first two days and would assist spin from day three. History should repeat itself," the local groundsman told PTI.

For the 'Bazball' inspired England, the win in Hyderabad has become a distant memory and a repeat of 2021 looks likely when India bounced back to win the four-Test series 3-1.

The record 434-run thrashing in Rajkot has triggered criticism of England's so-called aggressive 'Bazball' approach. It seems to have found a match in India after tasting success against New Zealand, South Africa and Pakistan and Australia to an extent.

The go-for-strokes style might have helped the likes of Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett, who swung his bat around for a stunning 153 in Rajkot, but it has also doomed the likes of Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow. Root was seen as their main batter to cope with the spin challenge but the way he reverse scooped to Bumrah at Rajkot summed up the disarray he is in.

The desperation to find a way out can be judged from skipper Ben Stokes expediting his rehab from a knee injury by opting to bowl at the nets ahead of the fourth Test.

SQUADS:

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Devdutt Padikkal, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep.

ENGLAND: Ben Stokes (C), Rehan Ahmed, James Anderson, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Shoaib Bashir, Harry Brook, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ben Foakes, Tom Hartley, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Joe Root, Mark Wood.



Rathour praises Indian young guns

PTI ■ RANCHI

The astonishing, inspiring and quick success of youngsters like Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sarfaraz Khan at the highest level is a good advertisement for the country's robust domestic circuit which has made them "cricket smart" who can handle Test match pressure, reckons India's batting coach Vikram Rathour.

Jaiswal is just six-Test old but the 22-year-old Mumbaier already has two double hundreds under his belt. His expressive and fearless batting against a strong England side has earned him praise from the pundits of the game and fans alike.

His Ranji teammate Sarfaraz too has made a confident start to his Test career, scoring pacy half-centuries in both his innings in Rajkot on debut.

Sarfaraz had scored a monumental 439-run knock as a 12-year-old in a 2009 Harris Shield match, hinting at a bright future.

"It is good for the team but it's better for them. Once you get to this level and start playing Test cricket, everything said and done, there are nerves, there is some pressure, but if

you get a good start, nothing better than that," Rathour said on the eve of the fourth Test against England.

"And the young players who have come in the team have got a good start and it feels good. They have cricket intelligence in them, which is again a great sign. It's a great message, coming from Indian domestic cricket, that the new players are cricket smart."

Their performances have come at a time when Virat Kohli is not part of the gruelling five-match home series, KL Rahul could play only one game and Shreyas Iyer has been dropped for lack of form.

"It is tough to miss key players, it's better for the team if everyone is available but a series like this is a good opportunity for the young players, who have played on these wickets to establish themselves.

"There is always belief that our domestic cricket is so strong, you are pretty assured that whoever comes has come through after doing good. We don't know what is going to happen when KL Rahul, Virat Kohli come back in. That is not a concern at the moment."

I think it's maybe, maybe not: Stokes on availability as bowler

PTI ■ RANCHI

Bowling full tilt at nets raised hopes of Ben Stokes rolling his arms over in the fourth Test against India but the England captain on Thursday preferred to keep the suspense over his availability as a bowler here.

Due to issues with his knee, Stokes has been playing only as a batter since the second Ashes Test last June. However, he was seen bowling extensively at the nets on the eve of the fourth Test.

Asked about the possibility of him bowling in the match, Stokes said, "Nah, I think it's maybe, maybe not."

Stokes said going in with two pacers is the best option for England, forcing them to include the tall Ollie Robinson in the playing XI, even though the Ranchi track is likely to

assist the spinners.

"Bringing Robbo (Robinson) in gives us good options, especially looking at this wicket," Stokes said at the pre-match media interaction.

"I feel like the spin will be assisted, but I also feel having two seamers gives us a good chance purely because of Ollie Robinson's release height and his relentless with his areas."

The 30-year-old Robinson, who last played in the Ashes, has come at the expense of Mark Wood, while Shoaib Bashir replaced leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed. "You look at the player Mark is, especially with the ball, you want someone like that operating at 100 per cent."

"His number one skill is how fast he bowls and the effort he put in last week was monumental. You want to be able to keep players like that on the



field operating at that level. "We do like to look at the pitch two days out and one day out, because that's how we like to pick our XIs. You want to give yourself some idea or some indication about what XI you think is going to give you the best chance."

"Looking at that, I think there is going to be assistance for spin, but I think also it looks like someone like Bash (Bashir), who releases the ball from such a high release point, the extra bounce that he gets, we feel, is going to bring us more into the game."

'DON'T PREJUDGE THE PITCH TOO MUCH': Stokes added spice to the talks on Ranchi pitch, saying he has not seen anything remotely like the 22-yard strip here in the past. But he also stated that it's not fair to have "preconceived ideas" about the pitch.

"We get asked about the pitch and we

give our opinion, but that doesn't mean we are going in with too many preconceived ideas. The pitch could be as flat as a pancake, who knows. "If it is, we will adapt to that. If it does more than we think it will, we will adapt to that as well. We won't let those conversations seep into what we do."

England have retained old warhorse James Anderson who is seven shy of reaching the landmark 700 wickets and become the first pacer to achieve the feat.

The 41-year-old has bowled 73 overs in two matches in the series and taken six wickets.

"If you're a young fast bowler, Jimmy Anderson is the one person who you want as your role model. Not only the amount of wickets he's got but the fact that he can keep going at his age."

Focus on young Indian stars as WPL 2nd edition starts with Mumbai, Delhi face off

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The second edition of the Women's Premier League, beginning here on Friday with a high-profile match between defending champions Mumbai Indians and runners-up Delhi Capitals, will be optimistic about meeting its existential purpose of giving a wider platform to promising home-grown talents.

The foreign stars glittered brightly in the inaugural edition held in Mumbai, and the Indians will be hoping to hog some of the limelight this year as the tournament takes a multi-city format shape with New Delhi being the other host city.

While Capitals' skipper Meg Lanning, who has now retired from international cricket, took the Orange Cap last year for the highest run-getter, the Purple Cap went to Hayley Matthews of Mumbai for taking 16 wickets.

Amid this surge of overseas players, the Indian



cricketers generally struggled for consistency and impact in the previous year, but now some of the young domestic stars will eye this WPL with genuine hope.

Let's take Shreyanka Patil of Royal Challengers Bangalore as a case in point. During WPL 2023, she was a wide-eyed young cricketer who was awestruck to rub shoulders with some of the finest names in women's cricket.

She played seven matches, but the spotlight was understandably on players such as Smriti Mandhana or Ellyse Perry or Sophie Devine. But in the last 10 months or so, Patil has built a place of her own. She earned her maiden India cap in both Test and ODIs in December last year, besides making her mark in the Caribbean Premier League for the Guyana Amazon Warriors.

In this interim, the 21-year-old has also added more arrows to her quiver in the form of power-hitting at the death overs.

Shami ruled out of IPL, to undergo ankle surgery

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior pacer Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of next month's Indian Premier League owing to a left ankle injury, for which he will undergo a surgery in the UK, a BCCI source told PTI on Thursday.

The 33-year-old, who is not part of the ongoing Test series against England, last played for India in the ODI World Cup final against Australia in November.

"Shami was in London in last week of January to take special ankle injections and he was told that after three weeks, he can start light running and take it from thereon.

"But the injection hasn't worked and now the only option left is surgery. He will shortly leave for UK for



surgery. IPL seems out of question," a senior BCCI source said on the condition of anonymity.

Shami, who was one of the architects of India's stupendous World Cup campaign with 24 wickets, played through pain as he had problems with his landing but didn't let it affect his performance.

Shami, who was recently conferred with the Arjuna Award, has 229 Test, 195 ODI and 24 T20 wickets in his decade-long career.



Kaun hai tumhara bowler? Tendulkar plays gully cricket in Kashmir

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

He aptly called it a "match made in heaven" as Sachin Tendulkar pleasantly surprised a bunch of youngsters playing gully cricket in Uri, turning his bat upside down at one point just to give the boys a shot at dismissing him.

On his maiden trip to Jammu and Kashmir, Tendulkar got down from his SUV when he saw some young boys playing cricket on the road with a cardboard carton and an empty oil can as their stumps. "Cricket and Kashmir: Match made in heaven," posted Tendulkar on X along with a short video in which he can be seen facing nine balls, watched in awe by the locals.

His wife Anjali can also be seen smiling in the clip which starts with Tendulkar asking the boys, "Hum Khelein? (Shall we play?)"

"Kaun hai tumhara bowler (Who is your bowler?)" he probed further as he gripped a bat.

Dressed in a brown jacket Tendulkar, who retired from cricket in 2013, played nine deliveries, hitting straight drives and also a scoop shot. There was also an attempted paddle sweep before he turned the bat upside down and jokingly stated, "Ye out karna padega (you will have to dismiss me)."

But even with an upside down bat, Tendulkar was not to be dismissed as he signed off with a smooth drive, fetching a round of applause and several smiles.

Holders CSK to take on RCB in IPL opener on March 22

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defending champions Chennai Super Kings will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in the 2024 IPL season-opener in Chennai on March 22, the BCCI announced Thursday while unveiling the schedule for the first 17 days of the popular T20 league.

The roster for the remaining matches will be announced once the dates for the upcoming general elections are announced early next month.

During the period from March 22 to April 7, a total of 21 matches will be played across 10 cities, with each team playing a minimum of three matches and a maximum of five.

As in the past, the BCCI will work closely with government and security agencies, following all necessary protocols and advisories related to the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections in India, the apex cricket body said in a statement.

"Once the dates for the 18th Lok Sabha elections are announced, the Board will

review and address any issues pertaining to the schedule of the first two weeks.

"Subsequently, the BCCI will work in tandem with local authorities to finalise the schedule for the remainder of the season, taking into account the polling dates," the BCCI said.

The general elections are expected to be held in April-May.

Only in 2009, the IPL, in its entirety, was held overseas (South Africa) while the 2014 edition was partially held in the UAE due to the general elections.

However, in 2019, the tournament was held in India despite the elections.

The first weekend will feature two double headers, beginning with the Punjab Kings hosting the Delhi Capitals on March 23, followed by the Kolkata Knight Riders hosting the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the day's second game.

On March 24, the action will shift to Jaipur, where the home team Rajasthan Royals will face the Lucknow Super Giants. Sunday evening will witness the home team Gujarat Titans, the 2022 champions



and finalists of the last season going head-to-head with five-time winners Mumbai Indians. Having chosen to play their first two home matches in Visakhapatnam, the Delhi Capitals will host the Chennai Super Kings on March 31 in the port city and will then face the Kolkata Knight Riders at the same venue on April 3.

As per the format, 10 teams are divided into two groups of five. In the group stage, each team plays 14 games facing the other four sides in their group two times each (home and away basis, four teams in the other group once, and the remaining team two times.

Hardik Pandya will be leading Mumbai Indians for the first time, having replaced Team India's all-format skipper Rohit Sharma.

New Zealand's young sensation Rachin Ravindra will be participating in his maiden IPL following his grand success in the ODI World Cup last year.

CSK talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who has led his team to five IPL titles, has not played any competitive cricket since their triumphant campaign last year.