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Skill training provided for 3.6L people in two years

Employment provided for 1.81 lakh youth: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy revealed that through the state Skill Development and Training Corporation, 3.60 lakh youth have been trained in various fields in the years 2022-23 and 2023-24 and employment has been provided to 1.18 lakh people. The CS reviewed with the officials the various training programmes undertaken by the Skill Development and Training Institute and the employment opportunities provided to the unemployed youth so far at the Secretariat on Thursday.

On the occasion CS Jawahar Reddy launched a website //My Apsdc My Website, which is managed under the joint aus-



pices of AP Skill Training Institute and GUVI.

CS Jawahar Reddy stated that measures are being taken to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed youth in various organizations by organizing large-scale employment training programmes. The officials of the skill training institute were directed to conduct more training programmes in the coming

days and take steps to provide employment opportunities in large numbers. The CS also reviewed various issues related to skill training with the officials.

After that, CS Jawahar Reddy launched a website named //My Apsdc My Website, which is managed jointly by AP Skill Training Institute and GUVI. Skill Development Corporation Principal

Secretary S Suresh Kumar explained the various training programs undertaken by the skill training institute in the state and the employment opportunities provided to the youth through a power point presentation. He also briefed various training programmes conducted by signing MoUs with national and international universities as well as various training institutes.

Skill Development Corporation MD Dr Vinod Kumar, Babu A, MM Naik were present while Higher Education Department Principal Secretary J Shyamala Rao, Commissioner of Technical Education Department Ch Nagarani and others participated in this meeting virtually.

BJP seems....

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Keeping this in view the Reserve Bank has decided to shift its branch from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam when the Assembly elections are round the corner. The RBI writing to the State government to allot land in Visakhapatnam to set up its branch and searching of land to allot to the RBI are going on on a war-footing.

Without the direction from the Central government the RBI might not have taken the decision on its own about shifting its branch from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam. That means the BJP-led Central government is in favour of CM Jagan's proposal on three capitals issue. As a political party, BJP supports the TDP demand and as a government, it supports CM Jagan's proposal.

Another interesting point is there is speculation over the BJP and TDP alliance against the interest of the later shifting of RBI branch from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam. The political circles observe that the BJP has communicated its decision indirectly over the alliance with TDP with the decision of shifting the RBI branch from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam.

‘Jagan must be re-elected CM for good governance’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Highlighting Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's commitment to delivering democratic governance coupled with comprehensive welfare and development initiatives for the people of Andhra Pradesh, YSRCP national general secretary and Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy emphasised the need for Jagan to be re-elected as Chief Minister.

Inaugurating the Tadepalli YSRCP office alongside party leaders and supporters on Thursday, the MP underscored the significance of grassroots accessibility, stating that elected representatives should be readily available to the people of the constituencies. He criticised TDP leader Lokesh for his perceived disconnect with the people of Mangalagiri, pointing out that effective representation requires a deep-rooted connection to the community.



National general secretary of YSRCP, V Vijayasai Reddy, inaugurating the party office at Tadepalli on Thursday.

Expressing confidence in the YSRCP's prospects, Reddy highlighted Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's support for the party's candidates. Notably, he revealed the Chief Minister's decision to field a candidate from the handloom community in the Mangalagiri constituency.

Acknowledging the interim leadership of Constituency Coordinator Ganji Chiranjeevi during RK's absence, Reddy affirmed RK's

forthcoming involvement in party activities and candidate support. He assured constituents of improved infrastructure and employment opportunities, promising initiatives to address road maintenance, open drainage systems, and job creation.

As campaigning intensifies, the YSRCP aims to solidify its stronghold in Mangalagiri, reflecting a continued commitment to inclusive governance and community-driven progress.

Naidu, Pawan to...

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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.

Attchannaidu 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.

Nadendla Manohar, Chairman of JSP's Political Affairs Committee, emphasised the unity between the two parties for the upcoming elections, stating, "The JSP and TDP will contest the elections together and defeat the YSRCP." He expressed optimism regarding the February 28 joint public meeting, expecting it to invigorate the party workers.

"In our joint election manifesto, we will prioritise job creation, women's safety, and support for farmers through the Rythu Bharosa initiative," Manohar affirmed, condemning the attacks on media houses as an assault on democracy. He also cited surveys predicting the defeat of the YSRCP.

Congress calls for special Parl...

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. Subhakaran Singh (21), hailing from Bathinda district, died at Khanauri on the Sangrur-Jind border.

In a post in Hindi on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Farmers are the backbone of our coun-

try. It was only on the strength of the 'Annadaata' that we were able to bring about the green revolution and the white revolution. It was because of their hard work that India became self-reliant in the field of agriculture."

"Today, when the same farmers are demanding guarantee of MSP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving them 'guarantee of bullet'. Using tear gas shells and firing against farmers is the height of injustice. They are respecting 'donors' and insulting 'annadaatas'," Ramesh said. He said something similar was happening with the youth as when they demanded employment, they were allegedly beaten with sticks.

Hold TET, DSC...

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This year, a total of 10,52,221 students are expected to appear for intermediate examinations across 1559 examination centres statewide, marking an increase of 47,921 compared to last year. Minister Botsa instructed the enforcement of Section 144 restrictions within a 100-meter radius of examination centres and mandated the closure of Xerox shops in the vicinity, alongside a prohibition on mobile phones within examination premises.

About the Class 10th Exams, Minister Botsa announced that examinations for regular students will commence from March 18 to March 30 at 9:30 am. A total of 6,23,092 students, comprising 3,17,939 boys and 3,05,153 girls, will appear across 3473 examination centres statewide. Moreover, for Open School students, SSC and Intermediate examinations are scheduled from March 18 to 26, between 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm. Notably, 34,635 tenth-class students will sit for exams in 176 examination centres, while 76,572 intermediate students

will do so across 327 examination centres.

Regarding the AP TET, Minister Botsa revealed that 279,685 candidates are expected to participate across 120 centres. The examination will be conducted in Computer Based Test mode, with centres established in Bangalore, Barampuram, Chennai, Hyderabad, Khammam, and Kodad in neighbouring states, alongside Andhra Pradesh. The AP TET exams are scheduled from February 27 to March 6.

Key officials including Principal Secretary of School Education, Praveen Prakash; Commissioner of Intermediate Education and Secretary Saurabh Gaur; Commissioner of School Education S. Suresh Kumar; Director of School Education P. Parvathi; Samagra Shiksha ASDP Dr K.V. Srinivasulu Reddy; Director of SSC Examination Department Devananda Reddy; AP TET Joint Director Dr V. Mary Chandrika; Open School Director K. Nageswara Rao; and AP Model School Director MV Krishna Reddy, among others, actively participated in the conference.

Kodali Nani...

Continued from Page 1

Nani highlighted the contrast between the preparedness of YSRCP and the Jana Sena, stating that while the ruling party had already announced candidates in all 175 constituencies, Jana Sena merely introduced a new slogan for its cadre. "YSRCP is set to contest all 175 seats in Andhra Pradesh, hence our assertion of being 'Siddham' (ready). Where are your candidates?" Nani questioned, underscoring the apparent lack of tangible action from the opposition.

Further, Nani ridiculed the attempts of BJP, TDP, Jana Sena, Congress, and other parties, noting their failure to field candidates in all constituencies while engaging in such superficial endeavours. He also expressed doubts about the capability of other opposition parties, including the Left parties, Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), to field candidates comprehensively.

Ganta Srinivasa Rao rues being offered Cheepurupalli seat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ahead of the general elections, the dissent in the opposition leaders and cadre appears to be springing up slowly, partly due to the seat-sharing arrangement the TDP has with the Jana Sena Party. Expectedly, TDP is facing some resistance from its party leaders.

The TDP is making a few changes in the allocation of seats and asking the ticket aspirants to make room for the new candidates for the sake of alliance. TDP leadership's recent order to shift his political base from Visakhapatnam to Cheepurupalli has not gone down well with the party MLA and former minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao.

Srinivasa Rao was eyeing a



ticket from Visakhapatnam or Anakapalli segment. Now, the leadership's command has disappointed him. Visibly upset TDP MLA poured his heart out in front of the reporters in a press conference here on Thursday.

"I was planning to contest the Assembly elections from Visakhapatnam North

Assembly constituency. However, the party leadership asked me to fight the elections from Cheepurupalli assembly seat. I have not decided on this yet. As Cheepurupalli is far away from Visakh, so I am still contemplating this offer," said Srinivasa Rao.

The former minister further added that he would apprise the party leadership of his opinion on the assembly constituency. Contrary to media reports, the seat-sharing talks of the TDP-JanaSena combine have not been finalised yet. The alliance has finalised four MLA seats only, he emphasised.

Sources say that in many other Assembly constituencies too the dissent is visible within the party of both the alliance partners.

NREDCAP to provide solar power to all 'Sachivalayams'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Velpula Ravi Kumar, the newly appointed Chairman of the New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh Limited (NREDCAP) has unveiled an ambitious initiative by the state government to equip all Gram/Ward Sachivalayam centres with solar power systems. Kumar emphasized the government's commitment to leveraging solar energy and implementing measures to ensure its widespread utilization while safeguarding conventional energy sources.

Assuming his role as Chairman at the NREDCAP office in Tadepalli near Vijayawada on Thursday, Kumar addressed the press, highlighting Chief Minister



YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's directive to NREDCAP to incentivise residential solar panel installations. He underscored the potential of solar power to alleviate the burden of escalating electricity costs on citizens.

Moreover, Kumar announced plans to extend concessions to farmers interested in adopting

solar technology, emphasising the department's commitment to conducting awareness campaigns to promote its adoption. He reiterated the environmental benefits of solar energy, emphasising its role in curbing pollution.

The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of several dignitaries including Government Whip Samineni Udaya Bhanu, MLC Dokka Manikya Vara Prasad, SC Commission Member K Pulla Rao, Grandhalaya Samstha Chairman M Seshagiri Rao, LidCap Chairman K Rajasekhar, NREDCAP VC and MD S Ramana Reddy, GMs G Yerram Reddy, K Srinivasulu, G Harinath Babu, Project Directors Nani Babu, Buchi Babu, EE K Srinivasa Rao, among others.

Sharmila detained for leading...

Continued from Page 1

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 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.

Following the demonstration, Sharmila Reddy and other Congress party members commenced their 'Chalo Secretariat' initiative via Eluru Road. However, their progress was impeded by the Vijayawada Police, leading to a prolonged standoff before Sharmila Reddy's detention.

Addressing the media following her arrest, Sharmila Reddy criticised Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for failing to fulfil his commitments over his five-year tenure and

questioned his designation as Dr. YSR's successor. She asserted that Congress party protests would persist until all government job vacancies were filled.

"I am appalled by the government's response, despite my intention being to submit a representation regarding escalating youth unemployment at the Secretariat. It is reprehensible how this government is treating a female political leader. As the daughter of Dr YS Rajashekara Reddy, I refuse to be intimidated and will continue to advocate," she declared outside the Mangalagiri Police Station where she was held.

Sharmila spent the entire night at the party office in anticipation of the protest march planned for the following day. Despite the police's attempts to confine her to her residence, she opted to stay at the Congress headquarters, Andhra Ratna Bhavan.

In the face of police encir-

clement on Thursday morning, Sharmila, accompanied by several Congress leaders and supporters, staged a sit-in and voiced their demands. She urged the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Government to fulfil its promise of filling 25,000 positions, emphasizing the need for genuine efforts to address unemployment.

"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," Sharmila Reddy remarked during the protest.

She condemned the YSRCP government and law enforcement for obstructing the right to protest, describing the measures taken as unconstitutional.

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. No matter how much the Prime Minister tries to eliminate

democracy from this country, it is protected by 140 crore Indians. They will save this democracy," she said on X.

Maken said the BJP-led Centre had "looted" about Rs 65 crore from its accounts through the Income tax department.

He said this is an attempt by the government to cripple the Congress party financially ahead of the Lok Sabha elections so that it is not able to fight polls.

The BJP government has started "financial terrorism" against the principal opposi-

tion party, he alleged.

There are five accounts from which this money has been withdrawn, he claimed.

Congress general secretary, organisation, Venugopal, said this action amounts to "attack on democratic principles and values".

"They (government) are trying to shut the voice of the Opposition. This type of low-level attack has never happened in history. We will fight it out," he said, adding that they will go to masses and expose the government's actions.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
TRIBAL WELFARE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

NT No. 213 to 217/2023-24/SE/TW/D.B Dated: 20-02-2024

Tenders have been invited for execution of five works in Visakhapatnam Tribal Welfare Engineering Circle with an estimated cost of Rs 1155.00 lakh. Tender schedules commence after 4.00 pm on 23-02-2024. For further details, contact www.apspcprocurement.gov.in or call Phone: 0891-2783210.

Sd/- The Superintending Engineer, Tribal Welfare, DIPIR.No.13141/CL/Advt/1/2021-22, Dt: 22-02-2024 Visakhapatnam

Purandeswari warns IAS, IPS officers against irregularities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President of the BJP in Andhra Pradesh, Daggubati Purandeswari, has addressed the suspension of senior officials implicated in irregularities during the Tirupati by-election. She admonished IAS and IPS officers, urging them to fulfil their duties diligently. However, Purandeswari emphasised that the BJP would not overlook the architects and principal actors behind the electoral malpractice.

Speaking to the press at the BJP office in Vijayawada on Thursday, Purandeswari stated that her party had formally raised concerns with the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding the issue of fraudulent voting. She urged party members and supporters to provide any information they have regarding counterfeit EPIC cards.



Furthermore, she accused the ruling YSRCP of attempting to manipulate the upcoming general elections through illicit voting practices. Purandeswari alleged that the ruling party was aware of potential defeats for its candidates by narrow margins, yet sought to gain an advantage through fraudulent means.

Addressing the people, she highlighted the significant financial allocation by the central government for various welfare initiatives in the state. During the party's 'Palleku Podam' campaign, BJP leaders engaged with citizens, elucidating on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives, she added.

Subsequently, Purandeswari remarked on the construction of the Rama Mandir in Ayodhya, portraying it as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. She praised the peaceful completion of the Ayodhya Sri Rama Mandir construction. She also outlined the BJP's 'Praja Puri Yatra' initiative aimed at district development.

Accusing the state government of reneging on pre-election promises, she called attention to unfulfilled assurances. When questioned about potential alliances with other political entities, Purandeswari stated that the BJP leadership would make a final decision.

In urging support for the BJP's electoral success, she appealed to the people to contribute to the state's development. She noted the ECI's directive for the removal of Volunteers from election duties by the state government.

Appointment of regular CEO to Waqf Board urged

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister's 15 Points Programme for the Welfare of Minorities implantation State committee member M Arshad Ayub Khan urged the Minority Welfare Department Secretary to appoint a regular CEO to the Waqf board.

In a letter to Minority Welfare Department Secretary A Md. Imtiaz here on Thursday, Arshad Ayub Khan appealed to him to appoint a regular Chief Executive Officer to the State Waqf Board.

He said in the letter that the onus of protecting the precious lands of Waqf lies on the government.

For the last two years, the Waqf has been managed by the in-charge CEO.

He recalled that the Central Waqf Council secretary asked the AP government to appoint a regular CEO to the state Waqf board.

Tribal farmers urged to strive for quality coffee production

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Deputy Director Samala Ramesh of the Central Coffee Board in Paderu has emphasised the pivotal role of tribal farmers in elevating the status of Araku coffee on the global stage.

During an awareness conference held at the local Coffee Board office here on Thursday, Ramesh underscored the need for tribal communities to strive for quality coffee production to meet international demand. Araku coffee, renowned for its distinct flavour, holds a significant position in the global market. However, Ramesh highlighted a concerning gap between the demand for Araku coffee and the products available from tribal farmers. He attributed this disparity to the failure of farmers to adhere to cultivation standards, resulting in low



Farmers fail to adhere to cultivation standards, resulting in low yields and compromised seed quality

yields and compromised seed quality. Statistics reveal that while tribal farmers in the Alluri Seetharamaraju district produced 12,000 metric tons of coffee products in 2022-23, this year witnessed an increase to 14,000 metric tons. Despite this, the yield falls short of the substantial demand from global traders.

Ramesh drew attention to the stark contrast in yields, with farmers in Kerala harvesting 300 kg per acre compared to tribal farmers' meagre 100 kg per acre. To address these disparities, Ramesh advocated for the adoption of modern management techniques and urged farmers to

leverage the resources provided by the Coffee Board. He encouraged tribal students to take a keen interest in coffee cultivation, highlighting initiatives such as scholarships aimed at supporting them in this endeavour. The conference saw the participation of key figures including In-charge ILO S. Pradeep Kumar, Degree College Principal Dr. Srinivasa Rao Patrudu, Vice Principal Dr. V. Ramana, APR College Principal GSSV Ramanamurthy, and Horticulture Officer Aruna Kumari, among others.

Ramesh's call to action underscores the potential for Araku coffee to thrive further, provided that tribal farmers harness the resources and guidance available to them through the Coffee Board.

Scouts and Guides celebrate 'World Thinking Day'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Secretary of the NTR District Scouts and Guides, P Murali, has emphasised the importance of patriotism and community service among volunteers. He stressed the need for them to contribute to sustainable development initiatives.

In commemoration of the birth anniversary of Scout Movement founder Lord Baden-Powell, an event was held at Koneru Basavaiah Chowdary Zilla Parishad High School in Patamata,

Vijayawada, on Thursday. Under the guidance of School Education Commissioner S. Suresh Kumar, 'World Thinking Day' was observed. The event commenced with an oath ceremony led by Murali for Scouts and Guides volunteers. Subsequently, Murali awarded certificates to participants.

The gathering included KA Prem Sagar, the Headmaster of the High School, along with Seetha Reddy, District Scouts Commissioner D. Prasad, Guides organizer B. Sunitha, and other dignitaries.



Urgent call for comprehensive elderly care

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to address the needs of India's rapidly growing elderly population, Dr. K.R. Gangadharan, chairman of the Heritage Foundation and former president of the International Federation on Ageing, underscored the imperative for holistic approaches. Speaking at a two-day national conference on elderly issues, organised by the regional resource centre of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Andaman Nicobar with the support of Sneha Sandhya Age Care Foundation, Dr. Gangadharan emphasised the critical need for comprehensive strategies to support the nation's aging demographic.

India has approximately 160 million individuals aged 60 or above, with a substantial portion surpassing the age of 80. Dr. Gangadharan highlighted the impact of improved healthcare access, enabling individuals to lead longer and more fulfilling lives. However, he



stressed that mere longevity is insufficient for a gratifying elderly life. Encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits such as regular walking, meditation, and yoga, he emphasised the significance of physical and mental well-being for maintaining independence and vitality in later years.

Moreover, fostering social connections and engaging in intergenerational activities were underscored as vital components for active aging, countering social isolation, and promoting mental acuity. Dr. Gangadharan outlined prevalent issues among seniors, including healthcare access, financial security, abuse pre-

vention, and productive engagement, calling for governmental support in health security, income security, and care.

Economic preparedness emerged as another crucial aspect of elderly well-being, with Dr. Gangadharan cautioning against elder abuse stemming from financial insecurity. He urged seniors to pursue financial independence and responsible management of personal finances. Additionally, he advised close monitoring of dietary habits and avoidance of harmful substances like alcohol and tobacco, emphasising the importance of preventive health measures in maintaining overall wellness.

Dr. N S Raju, Managing Trustee of Age Care Foundation, further elaborated on the care requirements of elderly individuals facing severe illnesses. While the primary goal remains the cure of the disease, the provision of care becomes paramount even when a cure is unattainable. Specialised skills are particularly necessary when attending to patients in the final stages of life. Dr. Raju also discussed recent rulings and guidelines from the Supreme Court concerning living wills and passive euthanasia.

The conference highlighted the urgency of adopting a multi-faceted approach to elderly care, recognising seniors as national assets and challenging the perception of ageing as a burden. With experts advocating for proactive governmental support and community engagement, the discourse signals a promising shift towards enhancing the quality of life for India's elderly population.



New office-bearers appointed for CII Vijayawada Zone

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

DV Ravindranath, Director, Siva Systems, is appointed as the chairman of CII Vijayawada Zone for the year 2024-25. Ravindranath earlier served as the vice chairman of Vijayawada Zone. He is the Director of Siva Systems, an SME unit established in 1987. Siva Systems pioneer in software development and data processing.

Dr V Nagalakshmi has been elected as the vice chairperson for CII Vijayawada Zone. She is the Managing Director of IMIS Pharmaceuticals Pvt Ltd, a company which has into manufacturing Ayurvedic medicines for over 90 years.

During the CII Vijayawada's annual meeting held here, Dr M Lakshmi Prasad, chairman, of CII Andhra Pradesh, announced the new office-bearers.

Two-day tech fest begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The VIT AP Technical Fest (V-TAPP 2024) began at the university on Thursday. The two-day extravaganza brings together students from various colleges, universities, and institutions. Dr. Buddha Chandrasekar, Chief Coordinating Officer, AICTE, Ministry of Education, Government of India, and Vithal Madyalkar, Director IBM Innovation Centre for Education, graced the occasion as chief guest and guest of honour, respectively.

Dr Buddha Chandrasekar said that the National Education Policy (NEP) promotes the globalisation of education, envisioning India as a prominent global knowl-

edge hub. Emphasising the infusion of technology into education, the NEP strives to enhance the teaching-learning process and expand access to high-quality education, particularly in remote areas. A noteworthy example of this commitment is the commendable effort by VIT-AP University through its tech fest, V-TAPP, which is anticipated to significantly augment the technical skills and knowledge of students.

Vithal Madyalkar said that in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, staying abreast of changing technologies has become imperative for students.

Dr SV Kota Reddy, Vice Chancellor of VIT AP University, said that V-TAPP

Tech Fest serves as a vibrant platform where students from various colleges, universities, and institutions converge to compete, interact, and expand their technological horizons. Under the inspiring motto 'Apply Knowledge, Improve Life', the fest is designed to provide students with unparalleled opportunities to showcase their technical proficiency and creativity.

Dr Jagadish Chandra, Registrar, said V-TAPP will witness a series of exhilarating tech events, including Robo Race, Shark Tank VIT-AP, Fight Robots, Robo Soccer, Lazer Ops, FrameX-Web Hack, Code Astra, Valorant, Lazer Show, FIFA X Jump Force, IPL Dathon and VR Cricket.

Mongolian Refinery team applauds MEIL for support

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Mongol Oil Refinery team has expressed their gratitude to Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd (MEIL) for its contribution towards supporting the Mongolian herders affected by the devastating dzud. Dr Altansetseg Dashdavva, CEO - MR, Mongolia said, "On behalf of my company, as well as the Mongolian herders who are suffering from harsh snow catastrophe, I want to express my deepest thankfulness for your generous contribution to our aid and help to Dornogovi nomads! May God be always with Megha Engineering and with India."



MEIL is constructing three critical segments in Mongolia's first Greenfield integrated Mongol Oil Refinery project that is coming up in the Dornogovi province, Mongolia. Within this refinery, MEIL is overseeing the construction of

a diesel hydrotreater unit (DHDt), hydrocracker Unit (HCU), visbreaker unit (VBU), hydrogen generation unit (HGU), sulphur block, LPG treating unit, hydrogen compression and distribution-matching, plant

buildings--- satellite rack rooms, sub-stations, open art units, utilities, offsites, and others. To ensure that they meet the deadlines and work is not hampered, MEIL is also constructing the biggest camp in the region for 2,400 workers.

The Dzud weather, characterised by extreme cold and harsh weather conditions, has caused widespread hardship and food insecurity for herder communities who rely heavily on their livestock for existence across Mongolia.

MEIL Hydrocarbons president P Rajesh Reddy said, "Our commitment for livestock support to the Dornogovi nomads during this challenging time reflects our values of empathy and solidarity that we all share. The aid from the MEIL family will mitigate the tragedy of livestock mortality and empower herder households to procure vital hay and fodder for their animals."

‘International City Parade’ lights up Vizag’s skyline

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The coastal city's iconic Ramakrishna Beach Road transformed into a vibrant spectacle as MILAN 2024's much-anticipated International City Parade took centre stage. The event was attended by S Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State for Defence, who served as the Chief Guest, adding a touch of prestige to the grand celebration.

The parade unfolded with a dazzling showcase of performances, featuring smart marching contingents from both Indian and foreign navies. Spectators were treated to a visual feast, with impressive air power demonstrations, gripping search & rescue simulations, exhilarating combat free falls, and a stunning fly-past featuring numerous aircraft from the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.

Beyond the military displays, cultural performances took centre stage, captivating the audience. The Sea Cadet Corps stole the spotlight with

a mesmerizing Horn Pipe Dance show, infusing the evening with an abundance of joy and vitality. The International City Parade became a symbol of cultural richness and camaraderie, uniting the Indian Navy, State and City Administration, and international friends in a spirit of celebration.

As night descended, the event reached its crescendo with the illumination of Indian Naval Ships, casting a radiant glow over the coastal waters. A captivating laser show and a breathtaking fireworks display painted the sky, creating a mesmerizing visual spectacle.

The gathering was graced by the presence of State Government Ministers, esteemed naval dignitaries, delegates from friendly foreign nations, and thousands of enthusiastic citizens from Vizag. Together, they embraced the spirit of unity and celebration, making the International City Parade a memorable and grand success for MILAN 2024.



Rotary Club of Vij donates Rs 65L to Andhra Hospitals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of community service, the Rotary Club of Vijayawada on Thursday donated Rs 65 lakh to Andhra Hospitals to provide free heart surgeries to poor children suffering from congenital heart diseases. The project Chairman Dr GV Mohan Prasad chaired the meeting while Rotary District Governor Subba Rao V Ravuri attended as the Chief Guest on behalf of the Rotary Club of Vijayawada.

Speaking to the media persons on Thursday, Subba Rao, appreciated Andhra Hospitals for performing operations for the poor children on their behalf. He said Andhra Hospitals has been doing an outstanding service in health to the poor communities and has come forward to undertake these operations for children at subsidized and low cost.

Project Committee Chair GV Mohan Prasad presented a Rotary mission to reach out to people with medical needs through Disease Prevention



and Treatment.

Dr PV Rama Rao said that we have been doing children's heart surgeries for the past 9 years and successfully performed more than 4000 surgeries and interventions till now, maximum in the state of Andhra Pradesh and we have been getting referrals from all over Andhra Pradesh, performed surgeries with nearly 100% result which also include very complex heart surgeries. He complimented Andhra Hospital's paediatric cardiac & intensive care team on this occasion for their contribution & success.

Rotary Club President Rtn.

Dr Kancharla Ravi Kumar and Secretary RNVV Rama Rao (Ramu), members of the Rotary Club of Vijayawada, pediatric doctors and nurses of Andhra Hospitals and others participated in the event.

Andhra Hospitals MD and Chief surgical gastroenterologist Dr PV Ramana Murthy, Dr Paturi Venkata Ramarao, Chief of Children's Services, Director Dr Dilip, Cardiac Surgeon, Dr Vikram Kudumula Paediatric Cardiologist, Dr Sreemannarayana, Chief cardiologist from the Andhra Hospitals were present and thanked Rotary Club of Vijayawada.

Arrangements for CM's programme inspected

PNS ■ ONGOLE

All arrangements have been made for Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's programme to be held here on Friday. The Chief Minister will distribute the house sites for the eligible poor in the programme and later address a huge public meeting to be organized at N Agraharam near here on Friday.

Collector AS Dinesh Kumar, SP P Parameswar Reddy, MLA and former Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy and Mayor Gangada Sujata inspected the arrangements for the Chief Minister's programme here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the Chief Minister would distribute house sites to over 21,000 poor. This is the first time in the district distributing house sites in such a large number, the Collector stated. He said that a school, Anganvadi centre, a burial ground and a health centre would be constructed in the



new township.

Balineni Srinivasa Reddy said that the long-awaited dream of distributing house sites to the poor is coming true tomorrow. Over 21,000 eligible poor would be given house sites by the Chief Minister tomorrow at a programme, he stated.

"The government has purchased land for the distribution of house sites by spending Rs 230 crore. The registration process for the same has been completed by 70 per cent. All

eligible poor will be given a house site and no need to worry," Balineni asserted, adding that all welfare schemes are being implemented transparently.

The needed basic amenities would also be provided to the new town shop, he promised. The government would spend Rs 335 crore to provide infrastructure and basic amenities, Balineni informed.

Balineni Srinivasa Reddy said: "The Chief Minister will also lay the foundation stone

for the drinking water scheme tomorrow."

SP Parameswar Reddy said that elaborate security arrangements were made to the Chief Minister's programme and steps were taken to regulate the vehicular traffic.

SEPP CEO A Md. Imtiaz, Chief Minister programme coordinator and MLA Talasila Raghuram, Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna and sub-collector Rahul Meena were among those who were present.



NABARD's FPO/OFPO Mela 'Tarang'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development (NABARD) Andhra Pradesh Regional Office is hosting the FPO/OFPO Mela - 'Tarang,' a celebration of collectivisation, from February 22 to 24 at the St Maris Stella Indoor Stadium in Vijayawada. Inaugurating the two-day event, NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, alongside NABARD General Manager KVS Prasad, marked the commencement of the Mela on Thursday. The event, organized in collaboration with the Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), aims to foster agricultural development and empower rural communities.

PM Modi to inaugurate ESI Hospital virtually on Feb 25

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate virtually the newly constructed ESI hospital on February 25. The MP along with MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy and the officials inspected the ESI hospital building and saw the operation theatres and general wards of the hospitals on Thursday.

Informing this to the media here on Thursday, MP Vanga Geetha said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would virtually inaugurate the ESI hospital which was constructed at Sambamurthy Nagar near here at a cost of Rs 114 crore.

The MP said that this 100-bed ESI hospital, will benefit about 65,000 workers and two lakh family members of the workers.

When at a time proposals were made to shift the ESI hospital from Kakinada to some other place, Union Minister Gangwar was explained by the MP on the necessity of establishing the ESI Hospital in the area, the MP claimed.

The Union Minister responded favourably to her request and sanctioned Rs 100 crore for the



Kakinada MP Vanga Geeta, flanked by MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy, addressing a press conference in Kakinada on Thursday.

construction of the ESI hospital here, she stated. The foundation stone was laid in 2002 for the construction of the ESI hospital here.

Overcoming the Coronavirus pandemic and heavy rains, the construction of the ESI hospital building was carried out expeditiously, MP Vanga Geeta made it clear. The quarters for doctors and para-medical staff were also constructed on the same premises, she said.

MLA Dwaramapudi Chandrasekhar Reddy said that MP Vanga Geeta had striven hard for the ESI hospital to be constructed in Kakinada. The ESI hospital would be a

boon to the people of the area, the MLA hailed.

The newly constructed ESI hospital has come up in six acres of land and is located in a 1.50 lakh square feet of sprawling area.

The ESI hospital would be very much helpful to the Kakinada sea port workers, the MLA said and thanked the Prime Minister and the MP for the construction of ESI hospital here.

Hospital in-charge Superintendent Dr K Srinivasa Rao, SE P Satyakumari, Central Public Works division DE D Lakshmaiaay and MHO Prudvicharan were among those who were present.

Minor girl raped, impregnated by grandfather

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

A 14-year-old girl has been allegedly raped over four months and impregnated by her grandfather at a village in Krishna district, police said on Thursday.

According to Avanigadda DSP Muralidhar, the minor girl is studying in class 9 in Zilla Parishad school in Mopidevi village and her parents are working as daily wage labourers.

The matter came to light when the girl complained of stomach pain on Tuesday and was rushed to a local hospital, where doctors examined her and found that she was pregnant. Based on a complaint from the victim's parents, police registered a case and are on the lookout for the accused, who is absconding.

Vizag Zoo unveils battery-operated bicycles for visitors

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam on Thursday unveiled a fleet of battery-operated bicycles, giving visitors an environment-friendly mode of transport to use for touring the zoo.

Available on rent at Rs 70 per hour, the battery-operated bicycles were introduced in collaboration with a private vendor. "These advanced technology bicycles are designed to offer a seamless and environmentally friendly way for visitors to explore the vast area of the zoo," Indira Gandhi Zoological Park curator Nandani Salaria said in a press release. Vizag Zoo has taken up this initiative as part of its commitment to sustainable tourism and environmental conservation, she added.

Officials directed to identify sensitive polling stations

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector Sumit Kumar Gandhi has directed the officials to identify problematic and most problematic polling stations in the district and submit a report.

The Collector held a video conference with the election and police officials here on Thursday and reviewed the arrangements to conduct the ensuing elections.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Sumit Kumar Gandhi said that all measures are being taken to conduct the elections peacefully in the district. He ordered the Tahsildars and Sector Officers to identify the district's problematic and extremely problematic areas and polling stations. The Collector told the officials



West Godavari District Collector Sumit Kumar Gandhi at a review with the officials at Bhimavaram on Thursday.

to submit the report by February 28th. He said that there are 1,461 polling stations in the district, out of which 184 polling stations are under vulnerability and 215 polling stations have been identified as critical.

Sumit Kumar Gandhi ordered the officials to conduct a field inspection in all the polling stations of the district and submit actual reports. He said on the occasion that elections will be conducted under the supervision of micro

observers in the critical police station area.

District Additional SP V Bhima Rao explained the difference between vulnerability and critical polling stations in detail. He said that three Special Forces were used in the last election and according to the current reports, additional forces have been requested. The actual conditions of the polling station areas should be assessed once again and reports submitted.

Expedite Bhogapuram Airport works: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Dr. KS. Jawahar Reddy convened a comprehensive review meeting at the state secretariat in Velagapudi on Thursday. The focus of the meeting was to assess the progress of the works on the Bhogapuram International Airport and various ports currently under construction across the State.

During the meeting, Dr. KS. Jawahar Reddy directed officials from pertinent departments to expedite the construction of the Bhogapuram International Airport. Emphasising the urgency, he urged the airport construction company and officials to accelerate the pace of work to ensure operational readiness by the end of the year, regardless of any challenges that may arise. Following the discussion on the airport, Dr. Jawahar Reddy shifted his attention to review the advancement of



construction projects at Ramayapatnam, Machilipatnam, and Moolapet ports, along with the progress of several fishing harbors.

Dr. N. Yuvraj, secretary of the State Industries and Investments Department, presented a detailed overview of the Bhogapuram International Airport's progress through a comprehensive PowerPoint

presentation. He elaborated on the status of various components including Air Traffic Control (ATC), administration buildings, and passenger terminals. Additionally, Dr. Yuvraj provided insights into the development of new ports, highlighting that 45 percent of the works related to the Ramayapatnam port have been completed thus far. He assured

the Chief Secretary that efforts are underway to ensure timely coordination with central government departments.

Furthermore, Dr. Yuvraj informed the meeting that the construction of Juvvaladinne, Nizampatnam, Machilipatnam, and Uppada fishing harbours, undertaken in the initial phase, is nearing completion, with approximately 86 percent progress achieved. He assured that all pending works will be expedited to facilitate their commencement next month.

The meeting witnessed the participation of key officials including AP Maritime Board CEO Praveen Kumar, and Managing Directors of Machilipatnam, Moolpet, and Ramayapatnam ports - M. Dayasagar, CH Baburao, and P. Pratap respectively. AP MBP CGM R Manoj Kumar and other officials actively contributed to the discussions.

30 students of YV University take ill after having dinner

PNS ■ KADAPA

As many as 30 students of Yogi Vemana University fell ill after having dinner on Wednesday night.

The students were staying in the University hostel. Some of them were admitted to the GGH. As the condition of some of the students deteriorated, they were shifted to a private hospital for better



Students of Yogi Vemana University, who fell ill after having dinner in their hostel, undergoing treatment at a hospital in Kadapa on Thursday.

treatment. Though the incident took place on the night of Wednesday it came to light on Thursday only.

According to the students, they had dinner with brinjal curry and rasam on the night of Wednesday. Later they developed vomiting and motions. Food poisoning is suspected for this reason. Student union leaders visited the students in the hospital.

In a poignant address at the Indian Maritime Seminar (MILAN 2024) organised by the Indian Navy in Visakhapatnam here on Thursday, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar warned against unilateral actions and the disregard for international law at sea, emphasising the potential far-reaching consequences. He cautioned that such actions could jeopardise the stability and security of the entire region and, if not contained promptly, may escalate beyond regional disputes.

Addressing the gathering, Vice-President Dhankhar highlighted the current peak chal-

lenge to the rule-based order and deemed its resolution an unavoidable necessity. He expressed concern over the formidable security challenges in the maritime domain, which have taken on menacing dimensions in recent years, posing a threat to peace and unsettling global supply chains.

Dhankhar emphasised the global dependence on seas for trade and commerce, labeling the observance of maritime order as quintessential for regional peace, harmony, and the maintenance of supply chains and economic growth. He stressed the global importance of protecting supply chains, avoiding regional ten-



sions, and addressing concerns related to the exploitation of the blue economy.

The Vice-President reiterated India's commitment to respecting boundaries and fostering a rule-based maritime order, asserting that unscrupulous adherence to international law, including the United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), is imperative for peaceful coexistence and sustainable use of maritime resources. He expressed concern that this aspect is currently strained and compromised.

Referring to the theme of MILAN 2024, 'Partners Across Oceans: Collaboration, Synergy, Growth', Dhankhar underlined the need for nations to come together, share experiences, and develop collaborative strategies to ensure the safety, security, and sustainability of oceans. He described oceans as historical pathways connecting nations, playing a crucial role in India's history since the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

Highlighting the cultural significance, Dhankhar referred to the great Indian epic of Ramayana, emphasising that the shared past holds immense value in establishing and furthering diplomatic dialogue even today. Praising the Indian Navy for its professionalism and maritime excellence, he stated that India's maritime strength will play a critical role in achieving the nation's development goals by 2047. He acknowledged the Navy's dedication to upholding the principles of freedom of navigation, promoting regional stability, and responding to emerging challenges in the maritime domain.

ATTACK ON SCRIBES Naidu urges police to arrest accused

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has written to Andhra Pradesh Director General of Police K V Rajendranath Reddy, imploring him to immediately arrest those who allegedly attacked a few journalists and a newspaper office recently.

Citing a few recent cases of attacks on journalists, the former chief minister alleged that the YSRCP has unleashed a series of attacks against the media.

"I request you to nab the culprits and take immediate steps to punish them and the conspirators behind this heinous crime," said Naidu in his letter on Wednesday. According to the TDP

chief, one T Parameswar Rao, a contributor to 'News Today' was allegedly attacked on February 14 in Amaravati mandal, Palnadu district for exposing "sand mafia led by the ruling YSRCP leaders".

He noted that Telugu media house Andhrajothi photographer Sri Krishna was brutally attacked by a mob during the recent YSRCP Raptadu Siddham meeting, while media house Eenadu's Kurnool office was attacked on Tuesday. Naidu called on the police to initiate action against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for allegedly making false statements to provoke hatred and enmity between groups and instigate violence.

No such thing as National Festival status for Medaram Jathara: Kishan

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 jaggaery.

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 Medaram in the coming days. The Centre sanctioned Rs 3.14 crore this year to the state government 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.



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



ROFR pattas distributed to eight tribal beneficiaries

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has stated that the district administration is taking steps to help tribal beneficiaries by implementing the Forest Rights Act (ROFR). He distributed ROFR pattas to the tribal beneficiaries at the camp office in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Dilli Rao said that as many as eight tribal people of Anneraopet of Reddigudem mandal have been occupying 11.44 acres of forest land for the past 20 years. These fam-

ilies receive income from mango trees every year, he said.

As per the Recognition of Forest Rights (ROFR) Act, the government has sanctioned pattas to these eight people, the Collector said. After verifying guidelines by the Sub Division Level Committee which comprises Tribal Welfare, Horticulture, Revenue and Forest departments, the Collector gave sanction for ROFR pattas for the beneficiaries.

NTR District Tribal Welfare Department Officer / Sunitha and others were present.

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 PTI

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.

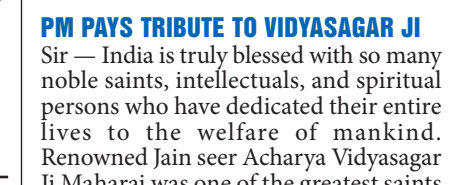
At the heart of Ayurveda lies the belief that health is a state of equilibrium between the three doshas - Vata (air and space), Pitta (fire and water), and Kapha (earth and matter). According to Ayurvedic principles, imbalances in these doshas lead to physical, mental, and emotional disturbances, paving 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

rhythms. By promoting sustainable living practices and environmental awareness, Ayurveda not only fosters personal health but also contributes to the well-being of the planet as a whole. Ayurveda expert Vicram Sharma, Director of Shree Baidyanath Ayurved Bhawan emphasises the importance of maintaining balance among the three elements - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha - to ensure fitness. "Imbalances in these elements lead to diseases and advocated for Ayurveda's ancient wellness system, particularly pertinent in today's times when unhealthy dietary choices, lifestyle habits, and indulgence in alcohol and smoking disrupt this equilibrium." He said this in his address at Gurugram's Wellness Carnival. It was organised to create awareness about the importance of health and wellness. A wellness carnival was recently organised at Cybercity Gurugram. In the face of modern challenges such as chronic stress, pollution, and sedentary lifestyles, Ayurveda offers invaluable insights into

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

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. Jayalalithaa 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)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

DANGERS OF PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

Sir — The British Medical Journal has recently given information about the dangers of video games, especially in this research, in which scientists from the World Health Organisation were also involved. A total of 50,000 people were surveyed in video games using headphones, earbuds, and headphones. Also, the music venue has a definite effect on

Sandeshkhali crisis



The recent upheaval in Sandeshkhali, West Bengal, marked by allegations of sexual assault, land grabs, and political clashes, demands immediate attention. The state government's tendency to dismiss these accusations as political manoeuvres must give way to a genuine commitment to justice. While some

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

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FIRST COLUMN

GREEK PM'S VISIT BOLSTERS HISTORIC TIES

India and Greece are poised to deepen their ties across various sectors



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The visit of Greek (Hellenic Republic (Greece)) Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis this week marks an important chapter in Indo-Greek relations, an ancient bilateral relationship that often gets shadowed in the wider European context. Legend has it that the mighty Greek conqueror Alexander reached the northwestern frontier of the Indian sub-continent some 2500 years ago, fought two mighty kings, but didn't cross the Indus to enter India. However, a diplomatic relationship was established some years down the line, under the Mauryan rule (whose ruler Chandragupta Maurya had a Greek ambassador in his court named Meghashthanes). Cut to contemporary times, Greece established its embassy in India in 1950, however, India took 28 years to start an embassy in Athens. Now a European country, just two and half hours behind Indian standard time, during summer, often featured in many Bollywood films, wasn't still an important ally until last year. During a state visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023, the bilateral relationship was elevated to a strategic partnership. The joint statement released in August 2023 highlighted: "Appreciating the increase in bilateral trade and economic engagement in recent years, the leaders also directed that both sides work to double bilateral trade by 2030. Both leaders reiterated the need for further broadening and deepening bilateral engagements in the fields of defence, shipping, science and technology, cyberspace, education, culture, tourism and agriculture. They took note of the signing of the MOU on Cooperation in the field of Agriculture... Both leaders directed their senior officials to ensure regular dialogue in the areas including political, economic, defence, security and public diplomacy. They also agreed to encourage direct flights between Greece and India."



This week's visit by the Greek PM has put the relationship under ample spotlight it deserves. When some of Greece's neighbours in Europe had made not-so-friendly statements on some of the most recent policy developments in India such as the "Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)/National Register of Citizenship (NRC), Abrogation of Article 370, Reorganisation of the new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, and Judgement on Ram Janam Bhoomi, etc. Greece had officially stated that it is an internal affairs matter of India. Greece and India have reciprocally supported each other for a reformed UN reflecting the current realities with a permanent seat for each other in the UN security council. As per a Ministry of External Affairs booklet released in 2023, just ahead of the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Athens, Greece, "voted for India's candidature to UNSC for 2021-22. It supported India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008, and 2016, MTCR, WASSENAR arrangements, and Australia Group. Greece supported India's candidature for ICJ, ITLOS, IMO, Postal Operations Council (POC), World Heritage Committee and the position of External Auditor of the IAEA for the term 2022-27 and various other international bodies." Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, internal security concerns particularly arising out of state-funded terrorist activities, Greece has been on India's side. Greece supports many of India's concerns in the larger European Union bilateral. India interestingly has held several rounds of discussions with the EU trade representatives, to hammer out a free trade agreement. Although with elections in India around the corner, a complicated, trade agreement with the EU with several moving parts looks difficult. However, to have preferential voices in the EU, with member nations like France and Greece, Italy, looking at India favourably, is always welcome. Some of the unfavourable comments India received from EU member countries, post former, not taking a Western approach towards long-standing ally Russia, are likely to fade away with India developing closer bilateral partnerships in the region. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

A saga of resilience and adaptation



BKP SINHA

Trees, nature's silent guardians, witness the ebb and flow of civilisations, endure natural calamities and adapt to the relentless march of time

Embark on a journey through a mystical forest, where trees, the ancient storytellers, whisper tales of survival against the backdrop of ever-evolving landscapes. These silent guardians of nature stand tall and firm, their leaves rustling with tales of time. They bear witness to the rise and fall of civilizations, endure natural calamities, and adapt to our planet's shifting climate. Indeed, trees are nature's superheroes, their power lies in their remarkable adaptability. Like shapeshifters, they ingeniously tweak their structure, physiology, and even their regeneration mechanisms to thrive in varied habitats.

India, with its diverse climates and landscapes, is home to a spectacular array of tree species. Each species, intricately woven into its habitat, embodies a unique journey of evolution and survival. Among these, Conifers stand out, particularly in the cool, windswept mountain regions. Unlike their deciduous counterparts, who shed their leaves with the changing seasons, Conifers wear their emerald attire year-round. Their foliage retains vital nutrients, helping them thrive in nutrient-deficient mountains.

As winter swathes the land in the snow, Conifers with their needle-like leaves stand poised to seize any fleeting warmth and bask in the sun's shy smile. Their ability to adjust their metabolism and lower their energy needs enables them to survive extended periods without photosynthesis. Conifers, with their evergreen nature, play a pivotal role in combating climate change. Even during the cold months when many trees stand bare, Conifers continue their silent vigil, actively absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Unfazed by winter's chill, they tirelessly continue to purify the air, showcasing their importance in our ecosystems.

As spring arrives with its warmth, Conifers are ready to immediately kickstart photosynthesis, thereby facilitating their growth and in times of intense heat, they close their stomata, thereby preserving water and enduring severe droughts. In contrast, broadleaf trees require time to sprout leaves, which delays their photosynthetic activity. This gives conifers an edge in regions with cold winters and dry summers while posing challenges for leafless deciduous trees with limited water supply. Conifers, with their long, thin needles, have adapted remarkably to their often challenging habitats. The needles' minimised surface area, coupled with fewer stomata, smartly reduces water loss. Interestingly, the stomata located deep within the needle structure create air pockets, resulting in less transpiration compared to exposure to moving air.

Their slender shape also prevents snow accumulation, protecting the branches from breakage. The needles' outermost layer, a thick, waxy cuticle, serves as nature's exquisite raincoat, masterfully locking in moisture to ensure the tree's hydration even in the icy grip of winter. This same layer, inclusive of the cuticle, epidermis, and occasionally the hypodermis, also shields the tree from harmful ultraviolet-B radiation. In foggy regions, these needles efficiently condense airborne moisture into droplets. These droplets then merge and fall onto the forest floor, hydrating the trees. Inversely, deciduous trees with their broad leaves hold tiny droplets that evaporate. This gives Conifers a distinct advantage in areas prone to advection fog, where rainfall is scarce.



THE SAGA OF TREE ENDURANCE IS MORE THAN A MERE SHOWDOWN WITH THE WEATHER. IT'S A BATTLE AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND HUMAN-INDUCED SCARS. WHILE SOME SPECIES MAY SUCCUMB TO RESILIENT WARRIORS, PIONEER SPECIES EMERGE

Under their bark, Conifers harbour a complex network of tissues, including the xylem and phloem, which transport water, nutrients, and sugars throughout the tree. However, during harsh winters, the sap, a life-sustaining fluid, faces the threat of freezing, which could severely damage the cell walls. But nature, in its infinite wisdom, has equipped these trees with a remarkable defence mechanism. Both deciduous and evergreen trees can osmotically move water out of their living cells into their intercellular (non-living) spaces. This strategic relocation of water confines the freezing process to these non-living zones. Also, the sap due to its higher sugar concentration transforms into a thick syrup that acts as an antifreeze. This transformation reduces the internal freezing point of each cell and enhances its resistance to freezing. Thus, by employing these strategies, Conifers protect their living cells from ice rupture, ensuring the tree's survival through the harshest winters.

Conifers, particularly those in the Pinaceae family, are in a constant battle against formidable adversaries like bark beetles and their symbiotic microorganisms. Their defence mechanism is a sticky resin that seeps from their bark, serving both as a shield and a sword in their fight for survival. This resin forms a barrier that slows the movement of freezing air molecules, a feature that is especially beneficial in dry climates or during droughts as it helps preserve the tree's vital moisture. Moreover, the stickiness of the resin traps infiltrating insects, while its chemical composition deters or even exterminates these invaders, thereby ensuring the tree's continued growth and survival. However, climate change and invasive species are disrupting this balance, posing new challenges for these tenacious trees.

Unlike broadleaf trees with large

vascular conduits that foster high growth rates and rapid leaf turnover, conifers possess narrow tracheids in their vascular system. The slender shape of these tracheids only allows tiny bubbles to form, which quickly dissolve back into solution, effectively averting freeze-thaw embolisms. Such embolisms occur after a long, cold winter when the vascular system thaws and air bubbles form. In broadleaf trees, these bubbles can grow large and struggle to dissolve back into solution, leading to an embolism. However, Conifers' narrow tracheids prevent this from happening, making them mountain marvels.

As we descend from the high altitudes towards the equator, we witness a captivating shift in the botanical world. The reign of conifers gracefully passes the baton to the broadleaf trees. These trees, preferring warm and moist climates, become the stars of tropical and subtropical regions, thriving in valleys blessed with fertile and humid soils.

Broadleaf trees, unlike conifers with exposed seeds on cone-like structures, protect their seeds within fruits. This strategy shields the seeds from harsh weather and predators, thereby improving the likelihood of successful germination and ensuring the continuation of the broadleaf lineage. During the dry season, these trees shed their leaves to conserve water and energy, a survival strategy akin to an investor offloading costly assets in times of scarcity. This process, known as abscission, involves specialised cells at the stem base acting like microscopic scissors, severing the leaf connection. However, before the leaves fall, the tree reclaims vital nutrients, storing them in the branches. When spring arrives, these stored nutrients fuel new leaf growth, transforming the landscape into a vibrant green canvas. While the botanical narrative often portrays conifers as inhab-

itants of frigid heights, they also demonstrate resilience in unexpected environments. Consider regions with high rainfall and poor water retention due to sandy or rocky soils. These challenging environments might seem inhospitable for most vegetation. Yet, in these very landscapes, Conifers, equipped with needle-like foliage and a waxy coating, defy expectations and adapt to thrive in water-deficient soils. Their presence attests to life's remarkable adaptability, reminding us that nature's stories are often far more surprising and nuanced than we initially imagined.

The saga of tree endurance is more than a mere showdown with the weather; it's a battle against environmental challenges and human-induced scars. While some species may succumb, resilient warriors, the pioneer species emerge. These trailblazers, including Albizia, Dalbergia, and the hardy duo of Willows and Birches in temperate climes, act as nature's first responder. They rejuvenate once the chaos subsides, splashing vibrant hues onto landscapes left barren and desolate. However, as the environment stabilises and resources become abundant, climax vegetation, the slower-growing, shade-tolerant species, begins their steady march. Their endurance enables them to replace the swift pioneers, asserting their dominance in the landscape. This transition paints a dynamic picture of movement, upheaval, and significant transformation in the landscape, illustrating the timeless wisdom of the tortoise and the hare: it's not always about the speed, but the resilience and persistence that truly counts in the race for survival. This is nature's beautiful way of reminding us that every player, swift or steady, has a crucial role in the intricate tapestry of life.

(The writer is a former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP; views are personal)

Upholding the essence of agriculture amidst market pressures

The ongoing farmers' protest underscores the clash between economic and social objectives, particularly regarding the legal guarantee of minimum support prices

The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways, said John F. Kennedy. Agriculture is the mother of all human cultures and all modes of man-made production. Agricultural production and its consumption are primarily guided by values of human existence, health and welfare; the values of the market are superimposed on it. Agriculture, thus, is not only a source of income and livelihood for many farmers but also a way of life and identity.

Agriculture is a springboard to food security, rural development, cultural heritage and landscape preservation and, thus, requires mechanisms to



SUKHDEV SINGH

safeguard it from the post-industrial market economy founded on the principles of profit rather than the exchange of goodwill and well-being. The market creates a conflict between the economic and social objectives of agriculture. It is for the social objective of 'food security' and the livelihood of farmers that justify the Indian farmers' protest for a legal guarantee on minimum sup-

port price. The system of minimum support price introduced in 1966 to help India fight the food deficit has been a productive driver for development and food safety for the Indian population; a system to determine minimum support price has evolved through the years which yet needs improvement and support.

At present, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), Government of India calculates the paid-out costs on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired human and machine labour, and leased-in land rent etc (A2) and the imputed value of unpaid family labour (FL), and adds 50% of its total to recommend minimum support price (MSP) for Cereals (Paddy,

Wheat, Barley, Jowar, Bajra, Maize and Ragi), pulses (Gram, Arhar/Tur, Moong, Urad and Lentil), oilseeds (Groundnut, Rapeseed/Mustard, Toria, Soybean, Sunflower Seed, Sesamum, Safflower Seed and Nigerseed), Copra, De-Husked Coconut, Raw Cotton, Raw Jute and Sugarcane every year. Then, keeping in view the production costs, fair remuneration for farmers affordability for consumers and the market conditions, the CACP recommendation is approved by the parliament of India to notify the MSP before the sowing season. In its recommendation, the CACP does not consider the 'Swaminathan National Commission for Farmers' rec-

ommendation fully to include capital assets and the rentals and interest forgone on owned land which the protesting farmers demand. Another cause for farmers' protest is the demand for legislation providing farmers 'the Right to Sell at MSP' which the CACP itself had suggested in its price policy report 2018-19.

The farmers are demanding the same legal entitlement for their produce insulating it against the market pressures of 'demand and supply' as the markets can be subject to manipulation by the private traders and corporations, a concern shared by the CACP in its 2018-19 report.

The crops are unlike industrial production that can be controlled with resilience to

market pressures; the cropping patterns are not so easy to shift. The biological nature of agricultural produce makes it vulnerable to unpredictable and uncontrollable weather conditions, pests and diseases on the one hand, and its 'all at once' yield makes it vulnerable to the market players if left for itself to guard. To enhance its resilience to the negative market pressures, a legal guarantee for MSP is required.

Unlike the corporate, the small farmers can not store and service 'value addition'; they have to sell the entire yield immediately. So, it is reasonable for the farmers to expect a guaranteed MSP announced by the government.

The legal guarantee for MSP is not about the procurement

of the entire crop by the government but about its purchase at a price not less than the minimum remunerative price declared by the government itself. In the absence of a legal guarantee, the traders purchase the agricultural produce at prices lower than the MSP, yet they sell it to the consumers at prices much higher than the MSP without passing on the benefit to the consumers.

Agriculture produce is for survival while all other industrial or service products are for additional comfort. To keep the farmers growing sufficient for the people to survive, it is well within the reasonable sense for the government to compensate the gaps in case 'demand and supply' forces the sale of crops at

prices lower than the MSP following the principle it employs in its intervention to support the corporate failures. The legal guarantee for all crops in all states can act as an instrument for organic farming and diversification, as the farmers will have no insecurity about price fluctuations. If left unguarded and subject to the 'demand-supply' principle, it may lead to food insecurity and compromise social values inherent in agriculture. Leaving agriculture on the market is neither desirable nor pro-national; it is only pro-corporate and anti-national.

(The writer is a retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and a member of the governing council of INTACH, New Delhi; views are personal)

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 3 million production milestone

Hinduja 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 Raveendran 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 Raveendran'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. Raveendran 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 Raveendran, 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."

As of the end of third quarter, the Mumbai-based drug firm has signed marketing applications for Ryaltris in more than 70 markets.

Product has been commercialised in 31 markets so far.

‘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.

Religious tourism to create up to 2L job opportunities in India: NLB Services

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Religious tourism is expected to create up to 2 lakh job opportunities in the next 4-5 years, global technology and digital talent solutions provider NLB Services CEO Sachin Alug said.

Religious tourism has been gaining momentum in India and is expected to grow annually at over 16 per cent between 2023 and 2030, Alug said.


According to him, the segment accounts for 60 per cent of domestic tourism.

"In the next 4-5 years, religious tourism is anticipated to create up to two lakh job opportunities. With a projected revenue of USD

60 billion by 2028, religious tourism will open employment avenues for both temporary and permanent workers," Alug said. According to industry reports, the number of overnight journeys for pilgrimages went up post-Covid and there was a 14 per cent rise in donations in 2021-2022, he said.

The recent inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya could further boost religious tourism, he said. "The inauguration of Ram Mandir alone is expected to add nearly 25,000 jobs across multiple roles, such as chef, front desk manager, house-keeping, and tour guide," Alug said.





Alaya F is slated to light up the screen as Tiger Shroff's romantic interest in *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*

The announcement of *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* has indeed grabbed everyone's eyeballs to witness the two biggest action heroes of Bollywood, Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff, coming together for the first time. While this has piqued our excitement to know more about the film, we have now heard that the talented Alaya F will be joining the cast as the love interest of Tiger Shroff in the film.

As per the source close to the project, "Alaya is all set to play Tiger Shroff's love interest in the most awaited *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*." Renowned for his action-packed performances and dance prowess, Tiger Shroff will be seen teaming up with the charismatic Alaya F for the first time. The prospect of witnessing their on-screen chemistry is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the film. Alaya made a stunning debut in Bollywood with the 2020 film *Jawaani Jaaneman*, where she showcased her acting skills and garnered acclaim for her performance. The actress continued to impress audiences with her roles in *Freddy* and *U Turn*, showcasing versatility and a keen ability to take on diverse roles. Now, with *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, Alaya is all set to embark on a new journey.

Apart from *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, Alaya is set to expand her on-screen collaborations as she joins forces with versatile actor Rajkummar Rao for the first time along with the veteran actress Jyothika in 'Sri', a Shrikant Bolla's biopic.



Greta Gerwig speaks out about not getting an Oscar

In a recent interview, Greta Gerwig discusses her much-discussed Oscar rejection for directing *Barbie*. The 40-year-old director and her spouse, Noah Baumbach, were both nominated for an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay. Though Margot Robbie received a nomination for Best Picture as one of the film's producers, many fans were disappointed that she was not considered for Best Director and that she was not considered for Best Actress.

In a recent interview with Time, the director finally discussed the rejection and told a tale. "I can't believe you weren't nominated," a friend's mother told me, laughed Gerwig. "But I did," I replied. "I received a nomination for an Oscar." "Oh, that's wonderful for you," she exclaimed. I exclaimed, "I know!" Gerwig continued. "Of course I wanted it for Margot," she went on. However, "I'm just grateful that we can all be there together."

With a reported \$145 million budget, *Barbie* became the highest grossing film of the year, earning \$636.2 million domestically and \$1.445 billion globally.


Joaquin Phoenix receives a 344% increase in pay to reprise his role in *Joker 2*

Recently, filmmaker Todd Phillips released new images of Lady Gaga and Joaquin Phoenix from *Joker: Folie à Deux*, also known as *Joker 2*, and they quickly went viral on social media. The movie is currently making headlines once more, and this time it's because of its large budget and the exorbitant wages of its two main stars.

The filmmakers are apparently spending a staggering amount to make the picture, and they are doing everything they can to meet the astronomical expectations.

The Variety story states that *Joker 2*'s budget has increased to \$200 million. This is more than three times the budget of phase 1, which was allocated \$60 million. It guarantees that the movie will be produced on a massive scale and with good technical quality.

According to the story, Joaquin Phoenix, also known as the clown prince of crime, will receive an incredible \$20 million in pay to play the title role in which he won an Oscar. Based on reports, the actor received \$4.5 million for part 1, which translates to a 344.44% increase. Speaking of Lady Gaga, it has been rumoured that she received an incredible \$12 million to play Harley Quinn.



Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya star Kriti Sanon on taking on the robotic role of SIFRA

National Award winner Kriti Sanon is undoubtedly one of the most loved actresses in Indian cinema. The beautiful actress has always impressed the audience with her charm and appearance. Besides being an appealing beauty, she has made headlines for her performances in films like *Mimi*, *Bhediyaa*, and *Bareilly Ki Barfi*.

Continuing her cinematic journey in Indian cinema, the leading actress won hearts with her performance in the recently released superhit film *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya*.


In the character of Super Intelligent Female Robot SIFRA, she has made headlines for giving a constructive performance and has also balanced the beauty and performance perfectly in the film. Although the character was challenging, Kriti Sanon played her part effortlessly and gave a winning performance. Recently, she was asked about how she portrayed the character in the film, and in response to the same, Kriti said, "I always felt that people equated good performances with intense scenes and emotions. This character lacked emotions, so I didn't expect the response to be this overwhelming. To convince the audience that I am a machine in the film was extremely tricky. I knew it was a challenging role, which is what made it easy for me to take it up."

It can't be denied that Kriti Sanon breathed life with her remarkable performance in the character of SIFRA. The love she is receiving from the audience is testimony to the fact that she can nail any character given to her.

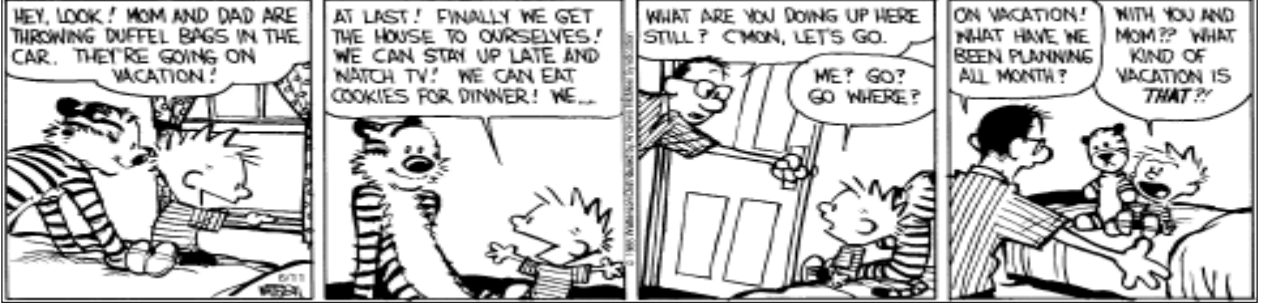
Meanwhile, on the work front, Kriti Sanon will be seen in the soon-to-release *The Crew*, also starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Tabu, and besides this, she will be headlining the first film, 'Do Patti'. The film is the first to be made under Kriti Sanon's production house, Blue Butterfly Films.




ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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Yesterday's solution

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Rules

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

ACROSS

- 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

SOLUTION 855

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Pavail Gulati is ‘glad’ his trip to Kerala ‘didn’t get cancelled’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Actor Pavail Gulati, well known for playing Taapsee Pannu's co-star in *Thappad*, was recently sighted exploring the Malabar coast. He convinced us that he



felt more like he was in paradise throughout our talk about the travel features! Idling around the beaches or the backwaters, he relished every second he spent in Kerala.

He said, "Unfortunately, the music festival I was scheduled to attend in Kerala was canceled. I had never been to Kerala before, so we all agreed not to postpone the trip! I was enamoured with the spotless beaches. What I always search for is a lovely beach with fewer people."

He was struck by how kind the people of Kerala were to him and said, "I visit some heritage hotels in Kochi; the architecture is remarkable. Types that should not be overlooked! I would encourage my followers to try 'Nadan Chicken Curry' since I enjoyed it so much that I continued to eat it for every meal of the day. Additionally, each restaurant's rendition varied."

Giving us additional insight into tourism, the *Dobaraa* fame persists, "I started surfing. I tried surfing for the second time, and although I was definitely tired and sunburned after, it was a lot of fun. I attended a one-and-a-half-hour class in the afternoon to get ready for it. Plus, it hurt my back. I believe I have a strong desire to attempt surfing again, therefore I

might be seen in the backwaters. I kayaked in the backwaters as well. Although quite exhausting, it was worthwhile to see the sunset! I'd never seen water this beautiful, and I could see the sun setting in its mirror reflection. I forgot for a little second that I was in India! I'm very glad the trip didn't get canceled."

He thought it would be enjoyable to vacation in a niche holiday destination. The leading man from *Yudh* said, "Varkala Beach was fantastic, such a gorgeous place. I frequently visit Goa and have been to many of its beaches, but the beach in Kerala was completely different. That beach looked as though it was straight out of a painting. It was wonderful to swim in the water since it was so warm."

He went on, "I always leave it up to my buddies to book and create the itinerary for all of us because I am the worst at organizing vacations. I'm the kind of person that would rather go there and enjoy myself! They reserved a property in Thiruvananthapuram close to the Varkala beach. It was right next to the sea! And I was staring out to sea while sipping my coffee. In Kochi, even the Trident Hotel was enjoyable. Sadly, all of the historic hotels were booked up!"

In a general sense, the *Faadu* star states, "I immediately go to my mom's house in Delhi whenever I am under a lot of stress after finishing a demanding film schedule. I take time to spend with my pet and family. That is the one location where I truly feel loved and safe. Being a Mamma's boy makes me happy. And since I already know Anurag Kashyap is an avid traveler and foodie, I would really love to go on a trip with him sometime. He shares all of his travel experiences with me, so why not invite him along on my industry travels?"



Actor Pavail Gulati, who was recently exploring the malabar coast and relishing every second of his trip in Kerala, takes *The Pioneer*, through an exclusive virtual trip sharing his experience from the voyage.



‘I feel very nice when I get trolled because if you’re getting trolled, it means people know you’

TEJAL SINHA

Every actor has that one character in their journey, and the audience will remember them forever. The same has it been for Mohammad Nazim Khilji. If you actually wonder who it is, then he is none other than Ahem Modi aka Ahem Ji from the popularly watched show *Saath Nibhana Saathiya*. Though, it's not a big thing for him, however, he feels good knowing that people recognise him as Ahem Modi. In fact, they even Google to find out his real name, Mohammad Nazim.

"I've learned a lot from my character, Ahem," begins the *Saath Nibhana Saathiya* fame. "He's close to his family, a real 'Mumma's Boy,' and I'm the same. I'm very close to my family. The most important lesson I've learned is that no matter who you are, you must always be there for your family and support them. Having your family with you is invaluable."

Basically, he had never thought about typecasting issues when he was doing the show *Saath Nibhana Saathiya*. "I felt like this was one of the best characters made specifically for me. I believe there's

something made for everyone, something they deserve. After *Saath Nibhana Saathiya*, I've played negative characters, done main leads, and taken on lots of roles. But I do wish I could play more characters like Ahem Modi. If I were to get something like that, I would be very happy."

Though post-*Saath Nibhana Saathiya* he has starred in multiple other projects like *Laal Ishq*, *Udaan Sapnon Ki*, *Bahu Begun*, *Tera Mera Saath Rahe*, and even in Punjabi Films, there has been a constant recognition or let's say tag of Ahem ji. So, "There are so many serials and many actors who play lead roles, but they still have to introduce themselves. However, I'm happy that people recognise me as Ahem. I've been working in the industry for 14-15 years, and many people know who I am. There's a character that people love to watch. I still receive many messages from my fans; they still love the show. Like Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan, who are also known for their famous movie characters, our show is also receiving a lot of love."

Now, the actor is all set to play the character of a cop in Alt Balaji's upcoming series *Backroad*. He is all set to give viewers a thrilling and memorable experience with his new character. So taking us through how it all happened, he says, "I had given the test, and at that time, my hair was short. They said the cop character suited me perfectly. The role was very powerful and bold, even though it was very different from what I had done before. It was challenging for me as well. I wondered how my fans would react to seeing me in a totally different avatar."

Actor Mohammad Nazim Khilji, who is popularly known for his character Ahem Modi, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about being recognised as the character to date, his upcoming series, and more.

Would they like it or not? But they are loving it!"

He further adds, "The show is bold, and it's all about this generation and how they operate. If they want something, they'll do whatever it takes to get it done. There's an awareness of drugs, and the story revolves around college-going students and how they live their lives. But in the end, work is work, and we have to do it."

Recently, many of his Instagram reel videos have gone viral and netizens have trolled him miserably saying *Rehem ji*, *Vehem ji*, *Gopi Bahu inka phone bhi dho do*, etc., but he dealt them in a different way: "It's not a big thing; you should expect to get trolled. I feel very nice when I get trolled because if you're getting trolled, it means people know you. It's good. I don't pay attention to those trolls."

"If there is any action involved, I focus on my fitness. If it's a comedy character, I create myself to fit that role. I have a jolly nature, but often people perceive me as serious or rude until they meet me and realize otherwise. Whenever I'm offered a character, my criteria is whether I'll suit the role. We have to mold ourselves into the character. Whenever I get a project as an artist, I prepare myself thoroughly for the role before working in front of the camera," shared the trending man on the internet right now.

Get the inside scoop before you plan your cosmetic surgery

With a \$9 billion market, India ranks as the tenth-largest medical tourism hub worldwide at the moment. These days, a large portion of it is being increased by people travelling for cosmetic surgery. According to a research by Mordor Intelligence, the Indian cosmetics market is anticipated to increase at a cumulative yearly growth rate, or CAGR, of 4.23 percent between 2022 and 2023. Cosmetic surgery involves procedures aimed at enhancing one's appearance. While these surgeries can offer significant benefits, it's essential to carefully weigh the pros and cons before making a decision. Understanding the risks, benefits, and necessary precautions is crucial for individuals considering cosmetic procedures. Here, we'll explore the pros and cons of cosmetic surgery, along with important tips to consider.

PROS OF COSMETIC SURGERY:

- Enhanced self-esteem** : It can improve self-esteem and mental well-being by enhancing one's appearance.
- Correction of physical abnormalities** : The procedures can fix physical deformities, improving both looks and function.
- Rejuvenation effects** : It can reverse signs of ageing for a younger look.
- Improved body proportions** : Breast augmentation or liposuction can improve body symmetry and proportions.

CONS OF COSMETIC SURGERY:

- Risks and complications**: It has risks like

infection, scarring, complications from anaesthesia, and dissatisfaction with results.

2. Financial burden: Cosmetic surgeries are costly and often not covered by insurance, limiting accessibility.

3. Unrealistic expectations: Cosmetic surgery patients may have unrealistic expectations, leading to disappointment if results fall short.

4. Recovery time and discomfort: Cosmetic surgery recovery can involve downtime and discomfort, affecting daily activities and lifestyle temporarily.

TIPS BEFORE PLANNING COSMETIC SURGERY:

- Research thoroughly**: Before undergoing any procedure, it's important to educate yourself about the potential risks, benefits, and outcomes.
- Choose a qualified surgeon**: Check if your surgeon is board-certified, experienced, and has a good reputation.
- Have realistic expectations**: Discuss your goals and expectations with your surgeon to ensure they are achievable and realistic.
- Understand the recovery process**: Follow your surgeon's post-operative instructions carefully for a smooth recovery.

(The author, Dr. Shireen Furtado, is a Sr. Consultant - Medical and Cosmetic Dermatology at Aster CMI Hospital.)



INDIA EYE 17TH SERIES WIN ON TROT AT HOME

PTI ■ RANCHI

pace 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 Shabbaz 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 Mumbaiaiker 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."

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 relentlessness 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.

Holden 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.



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 Iyyengar, 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.