







# Every mother, daughter form of ‘Shakti’ for me

PM Modi in response to Rahul Gandhi’s ‘shakti’ jibe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Asserting that for him every mother and daughter was a form of ‘Shakti’, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the upcoming polls will be a fight between those who want to destroy ‘Shakti’ and those who worship them.

Launching a counterattack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his ‘Shakti’ jibe against him, Modi said the nation dedicated ‘Chandrayaan’s’ success to ‘Shiv Shakti’ and the opposition parties are talking about destroying ‘Shakti’.

In his first rally here in Telangana after the announcement of the poll dates for the Lok Sabha, he also said the people of Telangana will script a new history on May 13 by voting for ‘Viksit (developed) Bharat’ in the elections and asserted that the Congress and BRS will be wiped out.

“On Sunday in Mumbai, there was an INDI alliance rally after the announcement of the



schedule for elections. They announced their manifesto at Mumbai’s Shivaji Park, and said their fight was against ‘Shakti’. For me, every mother and every daughter is a form of ‘Shakti’. Mothers and sisters, I worship you as ‘Shakti’. I am Bharat Maa’s pujari,” he asserted.

“INDI alliance in its manifesto announced to finish/destroy Shakti. I accept their challenge. I will sacrifice my life for the security of mothers and sisters,” he further said. Gandhi in his speech on Sunday said: ‘Our fight against Modi is not on a personal level. Modi is a mask’ who works for a ‘Shakti’ (power). He is a shallow man who doesn’t have a 56-inch chest.”

## ‘Polls to decide if nation will be run by ‘Asuri Shakti’ or ‘Daivik Shakti’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remark that the INDIA bloc’s manifesto talks about finishing ‘Shakti’, saying the elections will decide whether the country would be run by ‘Asuri Shakti’ (demonic power) or ‘Daivik Shakti’ (divine power).

A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, at a rally in Mumbai, commented that the ‘fight against Modi is not on a personal level since Modi is a mask’ who works for a ‘Shakti’ (power), the prime minister asserted that the fight is between those who want to destroy ‘Shakti’ and those who worship it.

Prime Minister Modi, referring to the opposition rally in Mumbai’s Shivaji

Park, said, “They announced their manifesto... and said their fight was against ‘Shakti’. For me, every mother and every daughter is a form of ‘Shakti’. Mothers and sisters, I worship you as ‘Shakti’. I am Bharat Maa’s pujari.”

In retaliation, the Congress likened the BJP to ‘Asuri Shakti’ and alleged that the nation has seen atrocities against women in the last 10 years and cited the rape cases in Unnao, Kathua and Hathras as well as the harassment of women wrestlers.

“The prime minister is upset and the entire BJP is talking baseless things after Rahul Gandhi attacked ‘Asuri Shakti’. This election is between ‘Asuri Shakti’ and ‘Daivik Shakti’,” Congress national spokesperson Pawan Khera said.

## BJP won’t topple or shield Cong Govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP will not topple the Revanth Reddy government but at the same time the BJP will not protect it if anyone topples it, the BJP’s Rajya Sabha Member Dr K. Laxman said. Addressing a public meeting in Jagtial on Monday, Laxman said that the way is being paved for a double-engine government in Telangana after the Parliament elections. He asked whether a Congress government is needed in Telangana as it is nowhere in the nation.



Recalling the statement of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy that the Congress had opened its gates, Laxman said, “The Chief Minister said that he has opened the gates. However, there is a chance that Congress MLAs may run away. Revanth

should protect them. Revanth is remembering KCR and has surpassed KCR in using words.” It may be recalled that Laxman has been saying that a double-engine government will be formed in Telangana after the Lok Sabha elections.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy countered Laxman saying that the BJP and the BRS are conspiring to topple the Congress government. He also made it clear that he will not remain silent if they conspire to topple his government and that he will show his political skills to the BRS and the BJP.

## Kejriwal skips ED summons in DJB case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday skipped the Enforcement Directorate summons in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board, with the Aam Aadmi Party terming the notice “illegal”.

The AAP accused the BJP government at the Centre of “using” the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to target Kejriwal and stop him from campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls.

## ‘Only ‘2BHK’ will be left in BRS’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Tweet posted on Monday on ‘X’ saying that only ‘2BHK’ would be left in the BRS by the end of this year has gone viral. The Tweet explained that ‘2B=Bap and Beta, H=Harish and K=Kavitha. The Tweet became an interesting one at a time when leaders are quitting the BRS. Several leaders including sitting MPs, MLAs and former MLAs and MPs have quit the BRS and have joined the Congress and the BJP.

On Sunday, BRS sitting MLA Danam Nagender and Chevela

sitting MP G. Ranjith Reddy joined the Congress.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy who is also the TPCC President said on Sunday that he had opened only one gate now and will keep the gate open till the BRS becomes empty.

The Chief Minister also warned that he will show his mettle in politics by defeating the conspiracies of the BRS and the BJP who had said that they would topple the Congress government.

The Congress tweet has raised eyebrows among political observers.

## BRS MLAs urge Speaker to disqualify Danam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLAs petitioned the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, that Khairatabad BRS MLA Danam Nagender should be disqualified as he had defected to the Congress.

The BRS MLAs who met the Speaker are Padi Kaushik Reddy, Kaleru Venkatesh, Mutha Gopal, Bandaru Lakshmareddy and some others.



Speaking on the occasion, Padi Kaushik Reddy asked the Speaker to take action against Danam Nagender who won on a BRS ticket and joined the Congress. It is said that the Speaker had said that action will be taken.

Recalling that Revanth Reddy had said that MLAs who win on a party ticket and later join another party should be stoned to death, Kaushik asked how he allowed defections from the BRS.

Former MP B. Vinod Kumar said, “BRS MLA Danam Nagender who joined the Congress will not be able to avoid disqualification. The possibility of the Speaker delaying our disqualification petition has disappeared after the recent SC judgment. The Supreme Court ordered the

Maharashtra Speaker to decide within three months in the case of the Eknath Shinde group MLAs who left the Shiv Sena. No more adjournments on the disqualification petition as courts have imposed a time limit on the Speaker. It is assumed that ‘Nagender’s membership in the Assembly was cancelled as soon as he covered himself with the Congress scarf. The Speaker should take a quick decision respecting the Constitution.”

“The Prevention of Defection Act was enacted in 1985 when the late Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister. Congress leaders should not encourage defections if they have any respect for Rajiv Gandhi,” Vinod said.

“Defections are not good for everyone. The BRS lost power only by a narrow margin. Being in the opposition is also good,” he added.

## Jithender & Ranjith joined Cong for monetary gains: Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior BJP leader M. Raghunandan Rao said that former MP, AP Jithender Reddy, and BRS MP, G. Ranjith Reddy, joined the Congress for monetary gains.

He asked Jithender who had claimed during the Munugode by-poll that no one can purchase him to reveal for how much he had sold himself to the Congress.

Addressing the media on Monday at the State BJP office,

Raghunandan criticised Jithender Reddy for speaking about ideology while quitting the BJP.

“Does Jithender Reddy have the competence to speak about ideology? There was ideology in the BJP when the party allotted tickets to his son during the Assembly elections. There was no in the BJP when a ticket was refused to Jithender Reddy,” he said.

Raghunandan warned that he will reveal the dark side of Jithender Reddy and Chevela

MP G. Ranjith Reddy soon.

He said that Jithender eddy and Ranjith have been saying that they changed party for the good of their region. However, that is a 100 per cent lie. Both Jithender and Ranjith joined the Congress for monetary gains, Raghunandan said.

Demanding the government to order a probe into Jithender’s two companies and illegal buildings, Raghunandan said that he will wage a legal fight against the illegal buildings of Jithender.

## Kavitha moves SC challenging...

Continued from page 1

A search was also conducted at the residence of Kavitha in Hyderabad on 15.03.2024.

The ED said that during the search, ED officials were blocked by the relatives and associates of K. Kavitha.

The ED investigation revealed that K. Kavitha along with others conspired with top AAP leaders including Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia for getting favours during the formulation of the Delhi excise policy and its implementation.

The ED said that in exchange for these favours Kavitha was involved in paying Rs 100 crore to AAP leaders.

The ED said through the acts of corruption and the conspiracy in formulating and implementing the Delhi Excise Policy of 2021-22, a continuous stream of illegal funds in the form of kickbacks from liquor wholesalers was generated for the AAP.

K. Kavitha and her associates used to recover the proceeds of crime paid in advance to AAP and also generated

profits from this conspiracy, the ED said.

The ED has so far searched 245 locations across the country in Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and some other places. Fifteen persons including Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Vijay Nair from AAP have been arrested in the case so far.

The ED has filed one prosecution complaint and five supplementary complaints in the case so far. Both the attachment orders have been confirmed by the Adjudicating Authority in New Delhi.

## BRS will return to power with full... Functioning...

Continued from page 1

May you all grow up as leaders by the next election.” He is learnt to have described the defectors as “aaya ram gaya ram.”

KCR spoke about Revanth Reddy’s abusive remarks. He said, “I also used to scold, but those were not derogatory and did not hurt. It was dur-

ing the Telangana movement. But this CM has been talking in a very abusive manner. Can a CM talk like this?”

The 2.5-hour speech was all about the Telangana movement and the need for bahu-jans to work along. Sources who attended the function said that KCR’s speech looked like he was making a pitch for ‘Bahujan’ Rashtra Samithi.

KCR said the BRS set up all the right systems, but after three months of coming to power why is the Congress not able to supply electricity or water?

“The people are already angry with three months of Congress rule. Still cannot understand why they are unable to give fresh water through Mission Bhagiratha,”

KCR said.

KCR said the BRS will conduct continuous training classes. “Let’s build a party. Let’s form committees,” he said.

ON RS Praveen he said, “Praveen is a dedicated man. He made residential educational institutions ideal for the country. I will soon announce RSP as the General Secretary

of the BRS. He will get a good post in future.”

KCR said that it was surprising to get the feedback that the Dalit Bandhu scheme had backfired. Such an idea is not right.

“Families who got Dalit Bandhu funds are doing better. Intellectuals should analyse why Dalits could not take it positively,” he said.

Continued from page 1

The ERC said that the Commission had stated in para (5) of its order dated 16.03.2024, “The electricity bill cannot be zero unless the government pays the distribution company the electricity charges payable by the consumers in advance.”

The ERC said directions were issued to distribution licensees (and not to GoTG as alleged) to “ensure the timely advance release of subsidy to beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi Scheme from GoTG and to issue zero bills accordingly.”

The ERC clarified that in all other schemes of GoTG run through reimbursement like providing free

power to SC/ST consumers (up to 101 units per month), hair-cutting salons, laundry shops and dobhigahats (up to 250 units per month), the GoTG has neither issued any directions to the ERC nor have the distribution licensees issuing zero electricity bills been deducting bills depending on the amount received through reimbursement from GoTG.

The ERC said that distribution licensees are levying a ‘Delayed Payment Surcharge (DPS)’ for late payment of charges.

It may be mentioned here that the CM told TSERC Chairman T. Sriranga Rao, “Tanneru remember, you won’t be in the chair for long.”

## Putin declared winner in...

Continued from page 1

Only three token candidates and no one who opposes his war in Ukraine were allowed to run against Putin as he sought another six years in power.

Putin has led Russia as president or prime minister since December 1999, a tenure marked by international military aggression and an increasing intolerance for dissent.

Russia’s Central Election Commission said Monday that with nearly 100 per cent of all precincts counted, Putin got 87.29 per cent of the vote. Central Election Commission chief Ella Pamilova said that nearly 76 million voters cast their ballots for Putin, his highest vote tally ever.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Sukla Paksha

Tithi:

Dashami:

Mar 18 10:49 PM to Mar 20 12:22 AM

Ekdashi:

Mar 20 12:22 AM to Mar 21 02:23 AM

Nakshatram:

Punarvasu:

Mar 18 06:10 PM to Mar 19 08:10 PM

Pushya:

Mar 19 08:10 PM to Mar 20 10:38 PM

Rahukalam:

3:23 PM to 4:53 PM

Yamagandam:

9:24 AM to 10:54 AM

Varjyam:

04:59 AM to 06:45 AM

Gulika:

12:23 PM to 1:53 PM

Amritakalam:

05:34 PM to 07:18 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:59 AM to 12:47 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 35°

Humidity: 43%

Sunrise: 6:21 AM

Sunset: 6:27 PM

Updated: March 18, 2024 5:00 PM

## Disclose complete details...

Continued from page 1

On Monday, the bench noted the submission of senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the SBI, that there is no reservation on the part of the bank in disclosing all the details of electoral bonds which are in its possession.

“In order to fully effectuate the order and to obviate any controversy in the future, the chairman and managing director of SBI shall file an affidavit on or before 5 pm on Thursday (March 21) indicating that SBI has disclosed all details of the electoral bonds which were in its possession and custody and that no details have been withheld,” the bench said.

During the hearing, the bench asked the SBI to disclose all conceivable information on electoral bonds, including

bond numbers.

“We had asked all details to be disclosed by the SBI which includes electoral bond numbers as well. Let SBI not be selective in disclosure,” the bench mentioned orally.

It said the apex court had, in its verdict in the electoral bonds case, asked the bank to disclose all the details of the bonds and it should not wait for further orders on this aspect. The bench refused a hearing on unlisted pleas of industry bodies, Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in the case. The industry bodies, through senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, wanted an urgent hearing on their interim application against the disclosure of bond details.

Salve told the bench it should not seem that the bank is “playing with” the court as they have no difficulty in disclosing the details of electoral bonds.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner NGO in the case, claimed that major political parties have not given the donor details and only some parties have given it.

“There is enough assistance by public-spirited citizens,” Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said, claiming that these sponsored NGOs are “fudging figures”. The apex court also refused to take note of a letter by senior advocate Adish C Aggarwal, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), seeking a suo motu review of the judgment on disclosure of electoral bond details.

## Revanth holds talks with...

Continued from page 1

The Chief Minister will attend the CEC meeting along with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and Deepa Das Munshi.

The meeting will be held under the supervision of AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge and it will discuss the political developments in the country and the party’s election manifesto. The meeting would also finalise LS candidates and authorise tie-ups with other political parties in various states.

The Congress has announced only four LS candidates in Telangana and has to announce 13 more candidates.

Continued from page 1

“Serving this wonderful state has given me happiness. Above all, I was impressed by the warmth of my brothers and sisters here in Telangana,” she said.

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, who is reportedly looking at an active political role contesting in the Lok Sabha elections, stated that ever since she took up the responsibilities of the Governor, the people of

## Guv Tamilisai...

Telangana treated her as their sister. It appears that she may be contesting Lok Sabha election from Tamil Nadu.

“I can’t fully express how much your unwavering support, love and affection touched me,” she said in an open letter to the people.

Dr Tamilisai said that every moment she shared with the people of TG left an indelible impression on her.

“We worked together for

Telangana. We celebrated Bonalu, Bathukamma and other festivals together. Your unwavering support was a constant inspiration for me,” she said.

“As I bid farewell as Governor, I express my deepest gratitude to each one of you. Thank you for your unwavering support and for treating me like your sister,” she said, adding that her love for the people of Telangana is eternal.

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# Telangana likely to receive heavy rains till March 21

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Meteorological Department -Hyderabad (IMD-H) on Monday predicted heavy rains across Telangana till March 21.

As per the report, light to moderate rain was received at isolated places in Telangana on March 18; districts including Vikarabad, Kamareddy, Sangareddy, Medak and Narayanpet are likely to experience hailstorm on March 19. Thunderstorms are expected in districts, including Jayashankar Bhupapally, Mulugu, Peddapalli, Khammam, Nalgonda, Bhadadri Kothgudem and Rangareddy.

On March 20, light to moderate rainfall is expected at isolated places in Telangana. The aforementioned districts along with Rajanna Sircilla are likely to experience hailstorms.



Districts, including Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Adilabad, Medak, Macherial, Karimnagar are likely to experience thunderstorms accompanied with lightning.

On March 21, heavy rains are expected in Khammam, Mulugu, Jayashankar Bhupapally and Bhadradi

Kothagudem. The aforementioned districts along with Mahbubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Mahabubnagar are expected to have thunderstorms.

The Telangana State Planning and Development Society predicted that areas under the Greater Hyderabad

Municipal Corporation will experience light to moderate rainfall in isolated places.

The maximum temperature is expected to range between 34-36 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature is expected to remain between 22-24 degrees Celsius.



## Telangana govt announces holiday for Holi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has announced a holiday for Holi, a Hindu festival celebrated not only in India but also in various parts of the world.

According to the Telangana calendar, the holiday for the festival will be observed on Monday, March 25. Schools in the State will also observe a holiday on the Holi festival.

In the current month, there are two more holidays. One of them is a general holiday and the other is optional. March 29 is a general holiday due to Good Friday, and March 31 is an optional holiday due to Shahadat Hazrat Ali.

# Last date for home voters to submit applications is April 22

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the Lok Sabha elections are round the corner, Telangana State Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj outlined the procedures for eligible voters who wish to cast their ballots from home and emphasised that they should submit their applications by April 22, during a press conference held at BRKR Bhavan on Monday. The Lok Sabha elections will be held in Telangana on May 13.

He said that Telangana has 3.30 crore voters, including over 1.94 lakh senior citizens above 85 years of age. About 5.26 lakh electors are physically handicapped (Divyanja) individuals. Following the State Assembly elections conducted in November last year, nearly 12.50 lakh new voters have been enrolled while 8.58 lakh names were deleted. The net addition of voters stands at four lakh.

Highlighting the significant utilisation of postal and home



**Telangana has 3.30 crore voters, including over 1.94 lakh senior citizens above 85 years of age**

voting during the previous Assembly elections, the CEO informed that EVM ballot papers would be printed near Chanchalguda.

He directed the officials concerned to facilitate the distribution of Form-D and ensure the availability of postal ballot printing services

through Returning Officer (RO)

Moreover, he said that over 60,000 police personnel besides 145 companies of Central Armed Police Forces will be deployed for the smooth conduct of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Telangana.

## ACB nabs two, including govt official for a bribe worth Rs 1.5 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday arrested a Town Planning Officer and a private employee for accepting a bribe worth Rs 1,50,000.

The accused were identified as M Srinivas Rao, an officer of the Nizampet Municipal Corporation, and Ramulu. The complainant identified as Gottipati Srinivasulu Naidu alleged that the official took the bribe and did not remove the Tea Point container and the advertising board which read "Chennapatnam Cheeralu" which were illegally placed on the complainant's property.

Based on the complaint, the ACB officials conducted tests on the accused and recovered the cash from them. The two accused were arrested and produced in the special court for ACB cases.



# SSC board exams begin on smooth note

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first day of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Board exams have commenced on a smooth note in the city. Bearing the scorching heat, large groups of students, along with their parents, were waiting outside the exam centres on Monday.

A total of 99.70 per cent out of 4,93,417 regular students attended the first language exam at 2,676 centres across the State. Likewise, 1,261 private candidates registered and 883 students took the exam.

The Principal of Zilla Parishad High School, Hayathnagar, said that there are no latecomers. Students came on time. The exams went peacefully.

Meanwhile, three cases were booked against the squads in the district. As planned by the Board of Secondary Education, strict action was implemented against violators. In regards to this, one invigilator from

Khammam and two from Asifabad were relieved from their duties.

Suresh, who took the exam at Government High School, Jeedimetla, said, "First language paper that is Telugu was easy but as paper I and paper II are being clubbed, I could not complete the paper on time."

Renuka said, "This is my first public examination; was a little nervous about how the questions would be. We had Second language paper -I; the question paper was effortless; could answer all questions in the first language paper -I was hoping for very good marks."

Vinneth, Zilla Parishad High School, Hayathnagar said, "The first language paper came easy and all the facilities are arranged in the exam centres."

Priyanka, Zilla Parishad High School, Turkayamjal, said, "The exam is easy and I think I will score good marks."

## No funds allocated for Ramzan this yr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Right to Information petition filed by activist Kareem Ansari revealed that no funds have been allocated for the holy month of Ramzan by the Telangana government in 2024.

In its response to the RTI, the Minorities Welfare department said, "Adverting to the above reference cited, the information received from the concerned section of this office it is submitted that as on date March 12, 2024 'no funds' were allocated for the Holy Month of Ramzan, 2024 by the Government of Telangana."

Ansari took to X (formerly Twitter) and said, "Champions of Minorities @TelanganaCMO has not allocated funds to the Minority department for the holy month of Ramzan this year.

I believe @revanth\_anumula continues the same trend for the coming other religious festivals also. @asad-owaisi @INCNTelangana."

Addressing the issue, the RTI activist said, "Every year there is a special fund released for the month of Ramzan.

# Two-week training for media professionals from Vietnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Marri Chenna Reddy Human Resource Development (MCR-HRD) Institute has launched a two-week training programme on Journalism and Public Relations for media professionals from Vietnam sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme on Monday.

Dr Shashank Goel, Director General of the Institute and Spl Chief Secretary to Government of Telangana, who was the chief guest, said that Journalism and Public Relations have a profound impact on shaping the society and driving global discourse. They serve as the voice of people, holding power to account and facilitate informed decision-making.

He said, "In the context of Vietnam, known for its colourful cultural heritage, exciting journey of economic development and rich democratic traditions, the importance of further diversifying and enriching the skills of its media professionals assumes great impor-



tant. Journalism and public relations are not merely professions, they are indispensable pillars of any democratic society and thereby serve as the voice of people, holding power to account and facilitating informed decision-making."

Dr Shashank Goel stated that in the past, traditional media, that is, newspapers, radio and television, from across the globe, have been holding significant sway in public communications. These channels have been keeping the citizens well informed about societal issues and empowering them to contribute to positive change and inclusive development. However, the emergence of social media platforms that is Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc. brought about a

profound transformation in the world of media with their speed and unprecedented access to global audiences. "It is not just a shift; it is a revolution, driven by new tools and techniques, including Artificial Intelligence", he added.

Furthermore he said, "With these advancements come significant challenges. The proliferation of misinformation and fake news poses a grave threat to the integrity of journalism and the trust of the public. It is incumbent upon media professionals to uphold the principles of accuracy, impartiality, and ethical conduct in their pursuit of truth. In this rapidly evolving landscape, the role of Media and Public Relations Officers is more critical than ever. You are not mere messengers of news; you are facilitators of unbiased and public-interest dialogue."

## Students of Malla Reddy College protest against detainment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the detainment for 60 students of BSc Agriculture by the Malla Reddy University officials, the students of the School of Agricultural Sciences of the varsity staged a protest on the premises by burning effigies of MLA Malla Reddy on Monday.

In all, 60 students of BSC Agriculture were detained on scoring low in their exams. The students were raised slogans - "We want justice" and demanded a revaluation of the answer sheets of the detained students. The students' protests went viral on social media platforms.

Congress leader Mynampally Hanumanth Rao, who was present during protest, assured the students that the State government would support the students.

One of the agitating students said, "We do not have proper faculty and the faculty intentionally detained us. Also, we face several issues due to lack of basic facilities in the varsity. We will continue our protest till they take back our detention."

# Steps to educate staff at all levels on poll rules

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi, Rachakonda DCPs, Additional DCPs, ACPs and other officials conducted a video review on Monday regarding the security arrangements and precautions to be taken at the field level.

The Commissioner said that in the wake of the release of the notification for the Lok Sabha elections, everyone should do their best to conduct the elections in a fair manner. It is advised to set up check posts at all necessary places in Rachakonda and conduct armed inspections.

He suggested that more



check posts should be set up at necessary places to catch the money being smuggled. They should provide specific instructions related to election duties to their lower level staff and arrange meetings with the staff to provide an understanding on the election rules. Visible policing should be given high priority.

Officers and staff are advised to have thorough knowledge of every aspect related to election

rules. The officials are advised to be fully aware of the polling centres under the respective police station and take action. The concerned personnel should keep abreast of the situation at the field level and keep vigilance on the people who act to obstruct the election duties.

He also said that in the conduct of elections, there should be clarity regarding the identification of critical polling

centres and vulnerable polling areas, and the route taken by the election management equipment should be checked. Installation of CC cameras in polling station areas, provision of infrastructure in the polling station should be ensured in advance; work in coordination with other government departments; full vigilance should be kept on those who create problems faced during the previous elections, rowdy-sheets, those with suspect sheet, those with history sheet should be bound over. During the election, law and order issues, social media messages and videos that are likely to create conflicts, things that go viral, should be informed to the higher officials.

## Man murdered in Mirchowk

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Mirchowk on Monday, a person identified as Shaik Wajid, a resident of Peerzadiguda, was murdered.

The accused was identified as Mohammed d Nisar Ahmed, a resident of the area.

Ahmed is presently absconding. The Task Force team reached the spot and assisted Mirchowk police in the investigation. "On receiving information of the murder, we have come to the spot. The parents of Wajid were informed and they are coming. After speaking to them we could know the reason," said the police.

# Hunger cry of 8 lakh students to release budget

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

R Krishnaiah, Member of Parliament, stated that due to non-payment of mess bills for the last 10 months, traders are stopping the supply of essentials such as, vegetables, oils, pulses, chicken, eggs and other food items to the hostels resulting in closure of hostels.

About eight lakh students are facing serious difficulties, especially in regards to food. He has written a letter to the Chief Minister urging him to release the budget immediately.

He said that students are facing serious difficulties due to

non-payment of mess charges of 700 BC and 1,500 SC/ST hostels in the State for the last 10 months. Apart from mess charges bills, rental building bills and current bills are not being paid despite the Chief Minister intervening and asking them to clear the dues of the hostels.

He also said that current bills are pending for the last 10 months. How will students study if electricity is cut to hostels during exams? This will affect the students' exam results. About 295 BC college hostels and 321 BC Gurukula Schools in the State do not have their own buildings.

"The government will bear the total tuition fees and special fees for engineering/ medicine/YBA/ YCA/ PG/ Degree courses. But in 2014, the government issued a GO against the full fee scheme. BC students are facing financial difficulties as they are unable to pay the increased fees. Thousands of BC students do not have the financial means to pay the fees of more than 35,000 in engineering. The government is granting full fees to other castes only but not for BCs. Hence, I request the Chief Minister to release the budget immediately," he added.

## Delivery boy's selfless act saves lives through organ donation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The tragic death of 19-year-old Biswal Prabhas, a delivery boy from Vattinagulapally village, Rajendranagar mandal, Rangareddy district, took a remarkable turn as his organ donation at a city hospital saved the lives of others. The selfless act of Prabhas has not only brought solace to his grieving parents but has also inspired countless individuals to consider the gift of life through organ donation.

On March 14, 2024, Biswal Prabhas met with a terrible accident while delivering food as part of his part-time job. He was immediately admitted to a hospital. Despite the hospital's best

efforts, the doctors declared him brain dead as he succumbed due to severe injuries.

During this challenging time, the medical team of the hospital approached Prabhas' parents and explained the possibility of organ donation. Overwhelmed with grief but inspired by their son's kind-hearted nature, the parents selflessly agreed to donate his organs, including his liver.

On March 18, 2024, Dr Senthil Kumar and his team successfully performed the liver transplant, showcasing yet again the exceptional skills and dedication of the medical professionals. The successful transplant has given a new lease of life to another individual who was desperately in need.

# 8.3 lakh challans issued in city since Congress govt came to power

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 8.3 lakh challans were issued in Hyderabad ever since the Congress government came to power. From Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 22, 2024, challans worth Rs 8,59,20,025 were imposed on two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers in the city limits. Of these, nearly 6.15 lakh pending cases of challans are there in Hyderabad during Dec 1, 2023 to Feb 22, 2024.

As per the information obtained through RTI, Rs 3.8 crore pending challans were paid during the same time-frame. For two-wheelers, 5.90 lakh cases were booked worth Rs 17.59 crore. Of these 1.41 lakh cases paid the challan

amount worth Rs 2.10 crore. There are 4.49 lakh pending cases of payment of challans by two-wheeler owners in Hyderabad to the tune of Rs 13.60 crore.

For three-wheelers, about 60,337 cases were booked worth Rs 1.26 crore. Of these, 17,230 owners paid the challan amount worth Rs 16 lakh. There are 43,107 pending cases of payment of challans by the three-wheeler owners in Hyderabad to the tune of Rs 93.97 lakh.

For four-wheelers, 1.82 lakh cases were booked worth Rs 7.32 crore. Of these 59,496 owners paid the challan amount worth Rs 1.59 crore. There are 1.22 lakh pending cases of payment of challans



by the four-wheeler owners in Hyderabad to the tune of Rs 5.9 crore.

RTI activist Kareem Ansari filed a request under the RTI Act regarding the challans collected by the Telangana police department after there was change in government.

The Hyderabad Commissioner of Police's office responded by providing a categorised report from December 1, 2023, to February 22, 2023.

Kareem highlighted that the pending amounts for two-wheeler vehicles exceeded those for three-wheelers and four-wheelers. He called for proper action to be taken by the government. Kareem said, "During BRS government, the challans were imposed strictly. So, the intention behind RTI was to understand the challans issued after change in government. After change in government, there is no proper attention given towards traffic management and collecting challans."





# BRS, YSRCP on the verge of extinction

There is a need for those who cry hoarse, alleging that the BJP is getting leaders of rival parties arrested to derive political mileage in elections, making an introspection of their omissions and commissions. The leaders who raise a closed fist, accompanying enforcement officials, as though they are getting arrested for public cause and for the sake of the nation and those who organise protests in support of such leaders might be aware of the fact that they amassed thousands of crores of rupees. In fact, the Congress leaders engaged in false propaganda against the BJP holding its alleged tacit understanding with the BRS (match-fixing) was responsible for not getting Kavitha arrested in Delhi liquor scam prior to Assembly elections. The Congress derived benefit in the Assembly polls. Commenting on Kavitha's arrest by the ED officials, the BRS alleges that Congress and BJP are two sides of the same

coin and colluded to get her arrested. But, the Congress dismisses the arrest as drama. But in reality, the law takes its own course of action. The law enforcement machinery always remains alert, detects those who indulge in irregularities and is ready to take action against them. The enforcement officials should not be afraid of anyone however big position the accused might be. They should take action against the perpetrators of irregularities at any cost. No political pressure would be mounted on them. "I am behind them and do not let go the corrupt off the hook," Modi said time and again to the officials of investigating agencies and patted their back. Because of the support they got, the agencies like CBI and ED became stronger. The mere mention of their names strikes terror in the hearts and minds of the corrupt. Kavitha should have been arrested long back in Delhi liquor scam, if anyone hap-

**The enforcement officials should not be afraid of anyone however big position the accused might be. They should take action against the perpetrators of irregularities at any cost. No political pressure would be mounted on them. "I am behind them and do not let go the corrupt off the hook," Modi said time and again to the officials of investigating agencies and patted their back.**

pened to go through the custody report filed by the ED in a Delhi special court two days ago and the charge-sheets filed earlier by the CBI feels. The investigating agencies explained everything clearly in them how she joined hands with Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and former CM Manish Sisodia to earn huge profits illegally in the liquor scam and how she held negotiations with middlemen and liquor traders in Oberoi hotel at Delhi and Kohinoor Hotel

in Hyderabad, what transpired between her and others involved in the scam through WhatsApp chat. Her accomplices in the South Group and her benami holders turned approvers and testified against her. They explained how the money was routed to various individuals in the hawala route. Her personal staff also deposed before the agencies stating whom they had given money bags. To wipe off all evidence, Kavitha is said to have removed data



**Y SATYA KUMAR**  
BJP National Secretary

from how many of her mobile phones and how she got them reformatting. She lodged complaints with courts with false information and bade her time seeking adjournment after adjournments. But, the investigating agencies would not stop discharging their duty however evasive Kavitha is. At last, the ED sleuths got her arrested in Hyderabad and brought her to Delhi. After going through the custody report of the ED, the court found prima facie evi-

dence against Kavitha and gave her to the ED custody for 10 days. On the lines of Kavitha, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal is bidding time avoiding ED prove. He ignored the ED summons at least nine times. He is not prepared to face the ED probe in spite of his name figuring several times in the charge-sheets and in spite of there being evidence to the fact that he discussed with Kavitha and others framing of liquor policy. In the scam, AAP leaders Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Vijay Nair have been lodged behind the bars. Kavitha indulged in Delhi liquor trade by virtue of KCR's connections with Kejriwal. The BRS was steeped in crisis as KCR tried to loot the whole Telangana along with his family members. Days are not far when the BRS is going to join the ranks of the parties that vanished from the political spectrum.

It appears that the days of Jaganmohan Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh are also numbered if the tremendous response the public meeting addressed by PM Narendra Modi at Chilakaluripeta on Sunday was any indication. Jaganmohan Reddy has been evading trial for the past 12 years in spite of his arrest in 2012 for owning disproportionate assets and in money-laundering cases. MP of Jagan's own party Avinash Reddy, who has been facing severe charges in the murder case of Jaganmohan Reddy's uncle and former MP Vivekananda Reddy, has been dodging the CBI for the past five years to escape interrogation. If Jagan or Avinash were not guilty in the case, why should not they cooperate with the legal process? The days when Jaganmohan Reddy and Avinash Reddy are lodged behind the bars upon proving

the charges against them are not far away. After the grand victory of the NDA, it is inevitable for the YSRCP to disappear like the BRS from political scenario. The allegations levelled by PM Narendra Modi on Sunday at the public meeting that there is a clear understanding between Jagan and Sharmila to run YSRCP and Congress and to split the votes of NDA are 100 per cent true. Jagan hatched a conspiracy to benefit the Congress preventing the NDA from cashing in on the anti-establishment votes. The former Congress chairperson Sonia Gandhi might have filed cases against Jagan as he did not share the graft money with her. But there were no differences between Sonia and Jagan. PM Narendra Modi's statement that he is strengthening the NDA to win more than 400 seats destroying the corrupt forces is still ringing in the minds and hearts of the people.

## Poll code poses problem for farmers in withdrawing money from banks

PNS ■ SURYAPET

The Model Code of Conduct is posing a problem for farmers in withdrawing money deposited by rice millers towards the sale of their farm products.

As the millers credit the money into the farmers' bank accounts, farmers living in remote villages are forced to travel all the way to the towns and cities to withdraw the money.

The farmers should show proof of carrying more than Rs 50,000. There were instances of officials confiscating the amount even after showing proof during the last Assembly elections. Due to the Model Code of Conduct, the millers are prohibited from paying



cash to the farmers.

So far, 30 per cent of the farmers have transported paddy to rice mills at Huzurnagar and Miryalaguda. They are likely to get the money for the sale of paddy in

the first week of April till the first week of May. They have to go to the banks in towns and cities to withdraw the money.

The big farmers will be paid at least Rs 5 to 6 lakh by selling the paddy. The farmers will

withdraw the money from banks. The bills given by rice mills were not acceptable to the election officials. The farmers cannot show any evidence for the withdrawal of the money.

If the farmers fail to get the money from the banks, they will not be able to meet the expenses and clear the dues. The farmers use the money to meet the input costs of Kharif and rabi, while they use the money realised in rabi season to clear the loans, meet family expenses, pay tuition fees for children in June, procure seeds for the next kharif and to buy diesel for tractors.

The farmers have been appealing to the poll officials to accept the bills given by the rice millers and not to seize the money from farmers.

## Sub-Inspector in ACB net

PNS ■ NIRMAL

Anti-Corruption Bureau sleuths on Sunday trapped and caught Sub-Inspector of Police of Mamada red-handed while allegedly demanding and accepting bribe to do official favours, the ACB officials said.

The SI registered a case against a person, identified as Salkam Satish hailing from Anantapet village in Nirmal district under sections 323, 341 and 291 for clashing with another person.

The SI threatened to remand Satish in judicial custody. He offered to release him on station bail provided the he paid him Rs 10,000.

The brother of Salkam Satish approached ACB and it led to the SI being trapped.

## Govt insensitive to farmers' woes: Jagadish Reddy

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Former minister and Suryapet MLA G Jagadeesh Reddy has accused the Congress government of being inefficient and insensitive to farmers' pathetic conditions. The farmers are now under tremendous pressure with their crop withering away due to drought-like conditions in the State.

Jagadish Reddy, along with former MLA Bhupal Reddy, inspected the withering crops in fields and also a lemon garden in Annaparti village in Nalgonda district. He interacted with the farmers.

Jagadish Reddy took the state government task and charged it with not doing anything to save the crops even though there is scope to provide irrigation facility under Musi project.

He demanded that the Congress government approach the Karnataka to get water Narayanapuram and Almat dams. Everywhere in



Former minister G Jagadish Reddy inspecting withering crops at Annaparti village in Nalgonda district on Monday

Telangana the crops are withering away, he said.

Not a single minister or MLA or official so far visited the farmers in distress, he alleged and charged the Congress Ministers with busy-ing themselves with illegal collection of money. Ministers Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and N Uttam Kumar Reddy, who hailed from Nalgonda, failed to come to the rescue of farmers.

It was high time that the Congress government conducted survey and paid compensation to the farmers whose crops were damaged, he said. Otherwise, the Congress government collapse due to the curses heaped on it by the farmers, he said.

Nalgonda municipal chairman Saidi Reddy, BRS leaders Cheruku Sudhakar, Pankaj Yadav and others accompanied Jagadish Reddy on his visit.

## Police seize gold worth Rs 5.73cr in Nalogonda

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The police in Nalgonda district seized gold worth Rs 5.73 crore, according to District Superintendent of Police Chandna Deepti on Monday. The police stumbled upon the the gold during the vehicle checking operation, she said.

In a media statement here, the police launched vehicle checking after the Model Code of Conduct came into force. As per the guidelines of Election Commission, a strict vigil has been kept on transporting of cash or gold. As part of it, a police party, led by Miryalaguda Inspector Police G Sudhakar, during vehicle checking, came across a sports utility vehicle speeding away. The police stopped the vehicle and found the gold when it was searched. The police took three occupants in the vehicle into custody. Meanwhile, unaccounted cash totalling Rs 2.29 lakh was seized from Gajelli Thirupathi of Muthampet village under Koutala mandal.

**SNCN ACHARYULU**  
■ HYDERABAD

The much awaited visit of Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Andhra Pradesh ended in a difference of 24 hours. By going through the speeches of these two leaders, it has been that Revanth Reddy was daring enough than Narendra Modi in criticising their political opponents.

The Andhra Pradesh Congress held a public meeting at Visakhapatnam which was attended by Revanth Reddy. The TDP, Jana Sena and the BJP jointly held a public meeting at Chilakalurpet which was attended by Narendra Modi. These two public meetings were held in the wake of the forthcoming Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha elections. In Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections the main

fight is between present Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Interestingly, Chandrababu is the political guru of Revanth Reddy and Jagan Mohan Reddy is an indirect ally of the NDA and a close associate of Narendra Modi.

But in the changed political circumstances, Chandrababu and Revanth Reddy, Jagan and Narendra Modi have turned as political rivals in the coming elections. In this backdrop, the AP visit of Revanth and Modi has created enthusiasm in the people of both Telugu states. Whether Revanth Reddy in his AP visit will criticise his political guru Chandrababu and at the same time whether Modi in his AP visit will criticise the indirect ally of NDA and his close associate Jagan, or not was the debatable question. But, Revanth Reddy proved that he

has guts than Narendra Modi in criticising his political opponent, whoever it may be.

In the Visakhapatnam public meeting, Revanth Reddy directly criticised his political guru Chandrababu. But in the Chilakalurpet public meeting Narendra Modi did not mention even the name of Jagan. Revanth Reddy in his speech questioned whether Chandrababu or Jagan would oppose Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He also asked whether they (Babu and Jagan) have the guts to question Prime Minister Modi on the issues of the State. Revanth Reddy criticised the BJP as Babu, Jagan and Pavan. He said that even if Jagan or Chandrababu wins the election both will be pushed into the fold of Modi.

Meanwhile, in the Chilakalurpet public meeting Narendra Modi disappointed Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan with his speech.

Against the expectations of the TDP and Jana Sena, Modi did not target Jagan directly and he did not even mentioned the name of Jagan. Moreover, Modi in his speech concentrated more on Lok Sabha elections than the AP Assembly elections. Modi urged the support of AP people to secure over 400 Lok Sabha seats in the coming general elections. Modi emphasised the need for a double engine government in Andhra Pradesh for historic development. In this connection, political circles opined that if Jagan retained power it will also become double engine government like in the past four-and-a-half years. Modi did not ask directly to defeat Jagan nor did he ask the people to vote for TDP alliance in the Assembly elections to make Chandrababu the chief minister. In this way, Modi disappointed the TDP and the Jana Sena in his AP visit.

## Cong MLA warns Mallareddy varsity authorities of 'consequence'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A slanging match erupted on Monday between Mallareddy University director Ch Bharat Reddy and Medak MLA Mynampalli Rohit over the student's agitation at Mallareddy University of Agriculture.

Bharat warned the organisers of the Mallareddy Universities of the consequences if the former continued to extort money from students in the name of fees. Bharat Reddy said there are 70,000 students in the university. The university is shaping the future of students. He con-



demned the vested interests entering the university and resorting to rowdism. These forces are playing with the careers of students, he said. Bharat said that Malareddy

had amassed huge wealth by exploiting students by collecting huge fees from them. He said the authorities at Mallareddy University of Agriculture failed to ensure

quality education for students. The authorities utterly failed to focus their attention on the safety of the students. The students for the last few days have been complaining that worms are found in food served to them. But the authorities have turned a deaf ear to their complaints, he said.

Of late, the students in the university resorted to agitation for one or other reason. Some alleged illegal structures in the universities too were razed to the ground by the authorities. A fight has been raging between the Myanpalli family and the Mallareddy family.

## No Prajavani at Praja Bhavan until June7

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of elections, Prajavani at Praja Bhavan has been temporarily deferred.

State Nodal Officer Prajavani, Hyderabad said, "it is hereby informed that in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, the Prajavani services at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan, Hyderabad, will be temporarily deferred till the Model Code of Conduct is in force".

The Prajavani services at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan, Hyderabad will resume on June 7th, 2024.

## Tamilisai sabotaged our political careers: Dasoju

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS spokesperson Dasoju Sravan penned an open farewell letter to Dr Tamilisai Sounderrajan after she resigned to post of the governor.

Sravan said, "You may kindly recognise that our careers and future lives were sabotaged with your political animosity towards the previous government, misguided interpretation of the Constitution and unlawful decision. However, we whole-heartedly wish you all the best for your ultimate success in your political career."

He said, "However, it appears that due to either a reliance on immature or misguided legal advice or a contentious decision for reasons known only to you, this genuine expectation was not met."

Sravan said, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to you for choos-

ing to once again enter into direct politics by contesting as a Member of Parliament. Your extensive experience in politics will surely help you manoeuvre through complexities of the political landscape".

He said, "I wish to submit that in the light of the recent High Court orders in WP 180 & 181 of 2024 dated March 7, 2024, we harboured a genuine hope and trust that wisdom and justice would prevail so that you would be kind enough to rectify your previous erroneous decision and that we will be appointed as MLCs."

Sravan said, "Madam, let me also respectfully submit that we were deliberately denied justice ignoring that we are from most marginalised communities and also discrediting all our sacrifices, credentials and contribution to the society merely because we have a political background."

## Lifer for rape and POCSO case in Saroornagar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A local court at LB Nagar pronounced a life sentence for the accused in a rape and POCSO case at the Saroornagar police station on Monday.

The accused Uppunuthala Harish (22), a carpenter, R/O Madhavanagar in Karmanghat, has been sentenced to life imprisonment and fined Rs 55,000 by the court. Also, the court ordered him to pay a compensation of Rs 10,00,000 to the victim.

Earlier, the culprit was involved in a case of rape of a minor under the Saroornagar police station. A POCSO case was registered against him under CR.NO 169/2016, including Sections U/S 366(A), 376(2)(h) of IPC, and Sections 3(a), 4 of the POCSO Act, as well as Section 3(2)(V) of the SC/ST Act of the Saroornagar police station.



INDIA CORNER

## ED raids 10 locations in Delhi-NCR in fake cancer drugs case

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday raided multiple locations in Delhi-NCR as part of a money laundering investigation linked to a fake cancer drugs manufacturing and selling racket, official sources said. The federal agency searched a total of 10 locations and recovered about Rs 65 lakh in cash from two locations. The money laundering case was registered taking cognisance of a recent Delhi Police crime branch case registered to probe an organised criminal racket allegedly involved in the manufacturing and selling of cancer and chemotherapy drugs to certain hospitals in Delhi-NCR, the sources said. The premises of main suspects and their associates such as Vipil Jain, Suraj Shat, Neeraj Chauhan, Parvez Malik, Komal Tiwari, Abhinay and Tushar Chauhan were covered. Out of the total cash, Rs 23 lakh was recovered from a bean bag kept in the house of Suraj Sharma, the sources said.



## Naxalite couple carrying Rs 7 lakh reward surrender in Chhattisgarh

A Naxalite couple, carrying a reward of Rs 7 lakh on their heads, surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Monday, an official said. Sodhi Sukka (45) and his wife Sodhi Sukki (37), who were active in the Kistaram area committee of Maoists, turned themselves in before senior police officials, citing disappointment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran G Chavan said. The couple also said they were impressed by the district police's rehabilitation drive for Naxalites, 'Puna Narkom' (a term coined in the local Gondi dialect, which means new dawn, new beginning), he said. "Sukka was inducted into the outlawed outfit in 2001 and has worked in various capacities. He was the head of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangthan (DAKMS a frontal wing of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) in the Kistaram area committee of Maoists," the official said.



## CRPF lauded for free medicare facilities in last hamlet of J-K

As part of its civic action programme, the CRPF on Monday organised a free specialised medical camp at Thanahala the last panchayat of Jammu and Kashmir bordering Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, officials said. The day-long camp was held at Dina Nagar hamlet of Thanahala, mostly inhabited by families belonging to the below poverty line (BPL), in the foothills of Ashapati Glacier on Bhadarwah-Chamba interstate road, they said. CRPF's Chief Medical Officer Dr Jaishree Singh said though the role of the paramilitary force is to give internal security, it is always there to provide assistance to the public during elections or natural calamities like earthquakes and landslides. "A team of special doctors from CRPF and sub-district hospital Bhaderwah provided free treatment and medicines to the patients who availed the facility at their doorstep," she said.



# NSA Doval stresses on strategic partnerships in regional security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Monday emphasised on the importance of strategic partnerships in regional security and collaborative approach towards nation building process, as he also interacted with the Indian officers and delegates from over 20 countries at an event here, officials said.

The NSA delivered a keynote address to the delegates of the maiden International Strategic Engagement Programme (IN STEP) at the National Defence College in New Delhi, the principal spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence posted on X.

The spokesperson also shared some photographs of

the NSA's interaction with the delegates on the NDC's premises.

"Ajit Doval underscored the importance of strategic partnerships in regional security and collaborative approach towards Nation building process and interacted with the IN STEP delegates," he wrote in another post on X.

"The Programme IN STEP from 18 - 30 Mar 2024 has been explicitly curated as a two week strategic engagement at National Defence College, New Delhi which is being attended by 29 International delegates from 21 countries and 08 Indian officers," the principal spokesperson of the ministry wrote in another post.

The National Defence College (NDC) is India's apex



**"Ajit Doval underscored the importance of strategic partnerships in regional security and collaborative approach towards Nation building process and interacted with the IN STEP delegates," he wrote in another post on X.**

institution of learning for study and practice of National Security and Strategy.

Established in 1960, it has over the years earned a reputation for excellence and gained world renown. It is

dedicated to the intellectual development and strategic enculturation of selected senior officers of the armed forces and civilian government services of India and those from foreign countries

for higher leadership positions and responsibilities, according to the website of the NDC.

The NDC is housed in Bungalow No. 6, at Tees January Marg in New Delhi.

## PROTESTORS BOYCOTT EVALUATION WORK

### UP: Teacher shot dead by constable over altercation

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

A teacher was shot dead by an Uttar Pradesh Police head constable following an altercation in the Civil Lines area here, an official said on Monday.

Angry teachers from different colleges held a protest blocking the circular road. They demanded strict action against the accused and began a boycott of evaluation work of Uttar Pradesh Board exam answer sheets.

The deceased -- Dharmendra Kumar -- was part of a team of the education department from Varanasi that had brought Uttar Pradesh Board examination answer sheets to the local SD Inter college here, Superintendent of Police (City) Satyanarain Parjapat said.

The group included another teacher and two class four employees and was accompanied by a police team from Varanasi, Parjapat said.

The teams from the education department and Varanasi police were waiting in a vehicle for the college gate to open when the incident took place on Sunday night, he said.

Kumar had an altercation with head constable Chander Prakash while they were in the vehicle, following which the

latter shot at the teacher using his service weapon, the officer said.

The injured man was rushed to the district hospital where he was declared dead, the SP added.

Meanwhile, teachers from different colleges blocked the circular road in protest over the incident.

According to the protestors, the policeman was under the influence of liquor and the argument broke out between the duo when he demanded tobacco from the teacher.

In a memorandum addressed to the state government, the protesting teachers have demanded at least Rs 10 crore compensation for the deceased's family and job to a family member.

They also warned that their dharna will continue until strict action is taken against the accused and demanded a written assurance by the district authorities.

The teachers have also begun a boycott of the evaluation of answer sheets of UP board exams in protest against the killing of Dharmendra.

The body has been sent for post-mortem and a case has been registered against the head constable. All others present in the vehicle have been taken into custody for questioning, the SP said.



## LS POLLS

### EC orders large-scale transfers of bureaucrats, West Bengal DGP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to ensure level-playing field in Lok Sabha elections, the Election Commission on Monday ordered the removal of home secretaries of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, sources said.

It also ordered the removal of the West Bengal director general of police, they added.

Also, the secretary of the general administrative departments of Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh have been removed.

Days after announcing the schedule for the Lok Sabha elections, the poll panel under CEC Rajiv Kumar also ordered removal of Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal, additional commissioners and deputy commissioners.

The commission had directed all the state governments to transfer officers connected with election-related work, who have completed three years or are in their home districts. Maharashtra had not complied with the directions in respect of few municipal commissioners and some additional and deputy municipal commissioners.

# Winters quickly transitioning to summer-like conditions in north

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An analysis of temperature data since 1970 shows that winters are quickly transitioning to summer-like conditions in north India, shortening the spring season.

Researchers at the US-based Climate Central, an independent group of scientists, conducted this analysis to place India within the context of global warming trends, focusing on the winter months (December-February).

The analysis revealed abrupt changes in temperature occurring in late winter across north India.

The average temperatures in states in north India showed either a cooling trend or slight



warming in January, followed by strong warming in February.

This indicates that these regions are now experiencing abrupt transitions from cool winter-like temperatures to much warmer conditions traditionally observed in March, the researchers said.

To show this change, the researchers calculated the difference between the warming

rates in January and February, expressed as the change in average temperature since 1970.

The most significant jump in warming rates was observed in Rajasthan, where the average temperature in February was 2.6 degrees Celsius higher than in January.

A total of nine states and Union territories, including Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand, showed a January-February difference of more than 2 degrees Celsius.

This supports the reports that it feels like spring has disappeared in many parts of India, the researchers said.

## New graphic novel gives '101 reasons' to vote for PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Writer Shantanu Gupta has come up with a new comic, "101 Reasons, Why I Will Vote For Modi" that encourages voters to vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, starting on April 19.

Touted to work as a compendium of different comic art styles, the book has used as many as 10 internationally

renowned art styles in its making, including semi-realistic style, manga style, disney style, traditional Indian comic book style and black and white style.

It is essentially a conversation between a Modi critic and the author himself, and how the latter during the discussion ends up providing over 100 reasons to the critic to vote for Modi in the 2024 general elections.

"I have collected most of the stories after directly talking to

the beneficiaries of the different schemes of the Modi government.

Each of the 101 reasons are presented with comparison data of pre 2014 scenario, the human stories involved and an English poetic couplet to capture the impact of that particular scheme of the Modi government," said Gupta, author of another graphic novel "Ajay to Yogi Adityanath", in a statement.

## Custodial interrogation should be avoided when accused is cooperating: Delhi HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

When an accused is cooperating with investigation and is not likely to abscond, custodial interrogation should be avoided as great amount of humiliation and disgrace is attached with arrest, the Delhi High Court has said.

Justice Amit Mahajan observed that the purpose of custodial interrogation is to aid the investigation and is not

punitive, and that bail proceedings should not be utilized as means for recovery in monetary disputes which falls within the realm of civil proceedings.

The court's observations came while granting anticipatory bail to certain individuals in an FIR being probed by the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police for offences of criminal breach of trust and cheating under the Indian Penal Code.

"It is not in doubt that order for grant of pre-arrest bail cannot be passed in a routine manner so as to allow the accused to use the same as a shield. At the same time, it cannot be denied that great amount of humiliation and disgrace is attached with the arrest," the court said in a recent order.

"In cases where the accused has joined investigation,

cooperating with the Investigating Agency and is not likely to abscond, the custodial interrogation should be avoided. The purpose of custodial interrogation is to aid the investigation and is not punitive," the court stated.

Granting relief to the accused persons in the present case, the court noted that proceedings in relation to enforcement

of the settlement between the accused and the complainant was already pending and appropriate orders would be passed in those proceedings.

It further stated that a charge sheet had also been filed by the police without feeling the necessity to arrest the accused persons and their custodial interrogation was admittedly not required at this stage.

"It is trite law that bail proceedings should not be utilised as means for recovery in monetary disputes, since recovery of money essentially falls within the realm of civil proceedings," the court said. "The complainants are at liberty to initiate appropriate proceedings for recovery of their money or for compliance of the settlement arrived at between the complainants and the applicants," the court added.



# Scientists find new drug to prevent Ebola

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists have found a new way in which Ebola reproduces in the human body, identifying a potential target for drugs to prevent the viral disease.

The study also sheds light on how the deadly virus that affects people mostly in sub-Saharan Africa interacts with a human protein called ubiquitin.

"We used a combination of experimental and computational (using computers) methods to investigate the interaction between the Ebola virus VP35 protein and ubiquitin chains," said study co-author Rafael Najmanovich, a professor at the University of

Montreal in Canada. "Advanced computational modeling by our team predicted the binding interface between a viral protein, VP35, and the ubiquitin chains in human cells, and identified potential chemical compounds that could disrupt this interaction," he said.

Ebola is a type of viral hemorrhagic fever caused by several species of viruses from the genus Ebolavirus. Symptoms of Ebola start out flu-like but can progress to severe vomiting, bleeding and neurological (brain and nerve) issues.

The finding, published in the journal PLOS Biology, not only deepens our understanding of how the virus works, but also offers a promising avenue for



the creation of more effective therapies, the researchers said.

"In particular, it paves the way for the design of drugs capable of disrupting this interaction and slowing down viral replication," Najmanovich said.

Notorious for its devastating outbreaks and high mortality rates, Ebola virus poses a significant threat to public health,

the researchers said.

Understanding the intricate processes by which the virus replicates within the human body is essential for developing effective treatments, they said.

The latest study unravels some of the molecular intricacies of Ebola virus replication, shedding light on key proteins and pathways involved in the

process. The researchers were able to clarify structural and functional aspects of viral and human proteins interacting in a manner critical for viral replication.

One of the key findings of the study is the identification of one additional interaction for VP35, a multifunctional viral protein which plays a central role in viral replication.

The study revealed insights into the intricate interplay between Ebola virus and the host immune system.

By evading detection and subverting host defences, the virus is able to establish a foothold within the body, leading to unchecked replication and severe disease progression.

## Make use of latest tech for efficient, smart administration: President

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday asked IAS officers to make use of the latest technologies such as artificial intelligence and data analytics for an efficient and smart administration.

Addressing the state civil services officers attending the 125th induction training programme at LBSNAA (Mussoorie) who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, she said they are in a position where they can be an inspiration to others.

"As IAS (Indian Administrative Service) offi-



cers, you are required to develop an all-India perspective on administrative functioning and the policies and programmes of the government," Murmu said. She asked the officers to adapt to the changing world of digital governance and enhance their capabilities accordingly.

"You must make use of the latest technologies such as AI

(artificial intelligence), blockchain and big data analytics for an efficient and smart administration," the president said. This is the time when collaboration and convergence are the need of the hour, she said.

"Collaboration among various stakeholders at the organisational, state, national and international level is necessary for obtaining the desired results in shorter time periods. Similarly, convergence of new ideas and new technologies with rich and varied experiences can bring such impactful changes that one cannot even imagine," Murmu said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Pursuit of power

The Russian President is anxious to prove that he actually is his people's choice for the top job

The enigmatic Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has a reputation for having a tight hold on power. Beneath the surface of power, meanwhile, is a convoluted web of manoeuvres designed to validate his administration via elections. Putin has consolidated his control and maintained the impression of popular support despite criticism for being an authoritarian and charges of electoral manipulation. A case in point is the latest crowding of polling stations by Russian nationals as a way of protest during the three-day voting which ended on Sunday. Manipulation of electoral laws and institutions is seemingly one of Putin's most favoured instruments. The Russian leadership has put policies into place over time that essentially silence critics and obstruct real political rivalry. Putin and his associates benefit from selective enforcement of electoral restrictions, skewed media coverage and stringent registration requirements. It is possible for the Kremlin to create the appearance of a competitive electoral process while guaranteeing the intended result by manipulating the narrative and preventing Opposition voices from being heard. In addition, Putin has worked hard to project the image of a powerful, resolute leader who can defend Russia's interests against outside threats. Putin has successfully created a cult of personality by deftly manipulating State-run media and spreading (mis)information that presents him as essential to the safety and prosperity of the country. Putin has also used external wars and geopolitical crises to his advantage domestically. For instance, the Russian people broadly supported the annexation of Crimea in 2014, seeing it as a return of territory and pride in their country.



Many Russians view Putin as a bulwark against perceived foreign aggression, which has further enhanced his popularity. Putin can gain support and unity from the electorate by portraying himself as a global champion of Russian interests, which will validate his authority in public eyes. In addition, Putin has adeptly appropriated State institutions and utilised his command over the security apparatus to guarantee election results that are advantageous to his Government. Incidents of political persecution, like the detention of well-known activists and opposition figures such as Alexei Navalny, serve as a sobering reminder of what happens when you challenge Putin's authority. Putin aims to preserve control over important State power levers in order to secure his ongoing supremacy in Russian politics. Putin's complex campaign of manipulation, disinformation and pressure is part of his effort to gain legitimacy in the Russian elections. Putin aims to hold on to power and create an air of legitimacy by managing the election process, enhancing his public persona and taking advantage of international crises. Nonetheless, the enduring opposition and the diminishing confidence in Governmental establishments underscore the vulnerability of Putin's governance, implying that the pursuit of legitimacy is a continuous conflict in Russian politics.

### PICTALK



A realistic mechanical elephant, gifted to Thrikkayil Mahadeva temple by PETA India, in Kochi

## Surge in celiac disease calls for awareness

The gap between prevalence and diagnosis of celiac disease underscores the urgent need for heightened awareness and improved diagnostics

Traditionally thought to be uncommon in Asia, recent studies, including those conducted by AIIMS, have shed light on the prevalence of celiac disease in many Asian countries. In India alone, an estimated 6 to 8 million people are believed to be living with the condition, yet only a fraction have received a formal diagnosis. This alarming gap between prevalence and diagnosis underscores the urgency for increased awareness and enhanced diagnostic and treatment capabilities. Celiac disease, also known as celiac sprue or gluten-sensitive enteropathy, is a chronic autoimmune disorder that affects the small intestine. It is triggered by the ingestion of dietary gluten, a protein found in wheat and barley. When individuals with celiac disease consume gluten, their immune system responds by damaging the lining of the small intestine, leading to various gastrointestinal symptoms and potentially causing long-term health complications. Celiac disease affects approximately one per cent of the global population, although many



cases remain undiagnosed. The condition can manifest at any age, from infancy to late adulthood and can affect both genders. However, women are more prone to develop celiac disease. The first Asian Pacific Celiac Disease Symposium (APCDS 2024) commenced in New Delhi, focusing on the critical aspects of management, diagnosis and treatment of Celiac Disease. The symposium, organised by AIIMS in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Association of Gastroenterology (APAGE) and the International Society for the Study of Celiac Disease (ISSCD), marks a pivotal moment in the fight against this autoimmune disorder. APCDS 2024 serves as a platform for leading experts, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders to address the growing prevalence of celiac disease in the

Asia-Pacific region. Given the observed increase in cases across Asian countries. The establishment of timely diagnosis and management systems is crucial. Dr. Govind Makharia, Professor in the Department of Gastroenterology and Human Nutrition at AIIMS, highlighted the significance of the disease, "there is a need for concerted efforts to increase awareness and enhance diagnostic and treatment capabilities. Celiac disease knows no borders, and the symposium has emphasised the necessity for a united front in addressing this global health issue." Individuals with celiac disease may experience a range of symptoms, including: **Digestive Issues:** These can include diarrhoea, constipation, abdominal pain, bloating and nausea. **Malnutrition:** Damage to the small intestine can impair nutrient absorption, leading to deficiencies in vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients. This can result in fatigue, weight loss, anaemia and stunted growth. **Skin Problems:** Some individuals with celiac disease

may develop dermatitis herpetiformis, a skin rash characterised by itchy blisters. **Joint Pain:** Celiac disease has been associated with joint pain and inflammation. **Neurological Symptoms:** In some cases, celiac disease can cause headaches, numbness, and tingling sensations. The primary treatment for celiac disease is strict adherence to a gluten-free diet. Along with the scientific programme in APCDS 2024, a workshop for dietitians was also organised to create infrastructure for celiac disease. Since dietitians are central in the treatment of celiac disease, it is necessary to have dietitians with in-depth knowledge about celiac disease and gluten free diet. The aim was to sensitise them with different challenges faced by patients and how to overcome them. Also, a workshop for patients was conducted to educate them about the disease and treatment protocol. Group counselling sessions were conducted by a team of dietitians and patients queries were answered. (The author is consultant Celiac dietician, AIIMS; views are personal)



WAJIHA MEHTAB

## Addressing the poll conundrum

To ensure free and fair elections, tackle the menace of muscle power, money power, misinformation and code of conduct violations diligently

The Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar, has announced the 18th Lok Sabha election schedule, starting in April. He has identified four major problems that affect India's free and fair elections. These are the 4Ms: Muscle power, Money power, Misinformation, and violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). They are not new. During his campaign in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to end the criminalisation of politics and regulate the use of black money.

However, the question remains whether it is possible to prevent the improper use of the model code of conduct and control the use of money and muscle power. The Association for Democratic Reforms, an election watchdog, has found that several major Indian political parties, including the BJP, Congress, TMC, NCP, RJD, AAP, CPI(M) and YSRCP, have fielded candidates with criminal offences. The current Members of Parliament (MPs) own assets worth Rs 29,251 crores with an average wealth of Rs 38.33 crores. The report found that 44% of Union Ministers in India have a criminal record, and 25% of MPs have serious criminal cases against them. Of the total MPs, 53 are billionaires, and 475 are corepates. Increasing use of Money and Muscle power threatens Indian democracy. Politicians began using musclemen for their work, but since the 1980s, these criminals have started running for office. Political parties also find it easy as they fund their campaigns, and people vote for them out of fear. The nexus between crime and politics is a persistent issue that will not go away soon. This link impacts the country's democracy and governance. The connection between the two factors leads to high-cost elections and voter bribes. Those with financial resources use their money to buy their way into politics and become competitive. In the Supreme Court verdict, candidates running for election since March 2003 must provide information on their criminal charges, financial situation,



marital status, sources and amounts of income, wealth, and education in a self-sworn affidavit. However, some candidates need to give more consistent information about their education and assets. The Election Commission has changed the rules for political party funding during elections. The new regulations include decreasing the cash donation limit from Rs 20,000 to Rs 2,000 and introducing anonymous electoral bond contributions. However, companies can still donate to political parties without disclosing the source of funds up to a certain amount. The law does not limit the number of cash donations to enhance transparency. The Supreme Court prohibited the sale of election bonds this year. The government introduced the bond system in 2018. Individuals or companies can purchase these bonds at a value ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs one crore, with no limit on the maximum amount. In the last five Assembly polls, electoral bonds worth Rs 6,128 crore were sold, raising concerns about transparency and accountability. Only a few parties benefitted, including the BJP and the Congress, and the BJP had a significant share. The court found that the

“THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA HAS SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISED 17 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS, 16 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND OVER 400 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. WITH 978 MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS, THE CREDIT FOR MAKING THIS HAPPEN GOES TO THE VOTERS

bonds lacked transparency and banned them recently. Poll officials seized drugs, cash, and liquor worth over Rs 1760 crores in the five poll-bound states, more than seven times the seizures made in previous Assembly Elections worth Rs. 239.15 Crore. Rajiv Kumar has banned Cash transportation in bank vehicles after sunset as part of the new rules for the 2024 polls. The Commission will also monitor Non-scheduled chartered flights for cash, liquor, and drug movement to aid in seizure efforts. Indian democracy has thrived for over 75 years despite various challenges such as illiteracy, poverty, and more. The power has shifted smoothly 17 times, unlike in the neighbouring countries. The Election Commission of India has successfully organised 17 Lok Sabha, 16 Presidential elections, and over 400 assembly elections. With 978 million eligible voters, the credit for making this happen goes to them. Several committees in India, such as the Goswami, Vohra, and Indrajit Gupta Committees, the Law Commission, the National Commission to Review the Constitution, the Election Commission of India, and the Administrative Reforms

Commission, have proposed electoral reforms. They must be implemented urgently. Committees have proposed ways to solve the problem of undesirable people entering government positions. However, these suggestions still need to be implemented. The Election Commission has established a Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for political parties to adhere to during elections. The EC needs more power to enforce the MCC and ensure political parties comply. Another problem is the spread of Misinformation and fake news during elections. The Poll body needs to curb this further. The Misinformation and whispering campaign prevents a level playing field. Individuals, political parties, and the government must work together to maintain democratic principles. Parliament should implement policies to enhance political finance regulations and ensure that candidates with significant criminal cases cannot run for office. Additionally, the government must prioritise political transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### TEACHERS GET RECOGNITION

Sir — It's truly great to know that the Maharashtra government in a recent resolution issued by the state school education department has permitted the teachers to use the prefix 'Tr' in front of their names on the lines of doctors and advocates. The resolution, besides introducing a dress code for school teachers has permitted teachers to use the prefix 'Tr' before their names. This noble and highly appreciative gesture is worth emulating as educators across the nation have been requesting the various governments for a prefix that can give significant recognition to those in the noble profession which is also considered to be the mother of all professions. The 'Tr' prefix can uplift the spirits of school teachers who despite being the very foundation of education go unnoticed. Besides 'Dr' for doctors and 'Adv' for lawyers a few years ago Chartered Accountants were bestowed with a 'CA' and architects gracefully adopted 'Arch' for their titles. This gesture of Maharashtra is sure to be emulated by other state governments as teachers in the various states have been seeking this to acknowledge their indispensable role. Bestowing 'Tr' to teachers can garner more respect and admiration for the teaching community. The introduction of the 'Tr' prefix no doubt will redefine the teaching profession rewarding those in the profession with societal recognition and also giving a morale boost for teachers whose hard work and dedication create a better future for the society, nation and the whole world.

M Pradyu | Kannur

#### AI AND ELECTIONS

Sir — Artificial Intelligence (AI) is significantly influencing the 2024 Indian elections, particularly in the realm of campaigning. AI technologies are being utilised to create a variety of content, including memes, deepfakes and simulated audio, to support specific narratives and influence public opinion. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been at the forefront of adopting AI for campaign purposes, such as

#### One nation, one election



Former President Ram Nath Kovind, who leads the high-level committee on 'One Nation, One Election' has submitted its report. It is for conducting simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies followed by elections to the local

bodies within 100 days. There are many questions that remain to be answered before the law takes shape. It is accepted that cost can be reduced considerably. In the case of the death of an elected representative in the midst of his term will a by-election be held or the post will be kept vacant? Secondly, our anti-defection law is not that stringent. Defection in single or in groups should be totally banned. Thirdly splitting a party after elections or changing sides by defection should cause a member to lose his post. In the case of a fractured mandate will a reelection be held again in a state? All disputes need to be resolved before a decision is taken.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

translating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches into multiple languages to reach a wider audience. This use of AI extends to micro-targeting voters with personalised content, advertisements, and messages based on extensive datasets that analyse population, social media engagement, and online behaviour. However, there are concerns about the ethical implications of AI in elections, especially regarding the spread of misinformation and the lack of regulation over AI-generated content by party IT cells and social media operatives. The Election Commission of India monitors official social media accounts and ad spending but does not regulate the actions of these groups. Experts suggest that while AI can revolutionise campaign strategies and voter outreach, it also presents challenges that need to be addressed to ensure fair and democratic elections.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

#### PARENTS SHAPE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Sir — In the labyrinthine web of child development, parents serve as architects, shaping not only the physical environment but also the psychological and emotional landscapes within which their children grow. The words they speak and the actions

they take echo deeply within the hearts and minds of their children, leaving lasting impressions that mould their very beings. Positive expressions of love, encouragement and nurturing support foster emotional resilience and self-esteem. Conversely, neglect, criticism or verbal abuse can lead to deep emotional wounds like low self-confidence, depression and anxiety. The quality of parent-child communication plays a pivotal role in shaping children's mental health. Open, supportive dialogue nurtures trust and emotional intimacy, providing children with a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings. On the contrary, communication barriers or conflicts within the family dynamic can aggravate emotional distress and strain relationships. Recognising the deep-rooted impact of their words and actions, parents must prioritise emotional support, positive communication and empathy to nurture their children's holistic development. By fostering a supportive and loving environment, parents encourage their offspring to thrive and flourish in every aspect of their lives.

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE INDISPENSABLE  
ROLE OF MENTORS

From guiding individuals to fostering skill development, mentors play a pivotal role



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's dynamic and fast-paced world, the need for mentors is more critical than ever. Hardly anyone can think of a time when they have been influenced in a significant way apart from mentoring. With rapid advancements in technology and changing job requirements, continuous skill development is essential for staying relevant in the workforce. As the professional landscape is becoming more sophisticated, prospective specialists need mentorship and guidance to stay focused and motivated.

Mentoring is a dynamic relationship between a more experienced individual i.e. the mentor and a less experienced individual i.e. the mentee, wherein the former provides guidance, support and expertise to help the latter develop personally, professionally or academically. In a short sense, it is fundamental to professional growth and success and is nowadays a common finding with highly successful people. It comes in a variety of different forms and areas of life and includes several aspects such as training, accompaniment, boost and direction from people who have both – done it before and are generally independent of the mentee's current.

Change is highly inevitable, whether it's in the form of industry disruptions, organizational restructuring or personal life transitions. In an era marked by high levels of stress, anxiety and burnout, mentors play a crucial role in supporting their mental health and well-being. They offer a listening ear, provide coping mechanisms and encourage self-care practices to promote resilience and balance.



Along with professional guidance, they also support personal development by helping mentees in a variety of tasks such as setting goals, prioritising tasks, managing time effectively and even maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Mentoring is not only required in organisations but is also essential in schools and organisations as it fosters skill development, career guidance, personal growth, leadership development, diversity and inclusion, enhanced performance and well-being. It contributes to the overall success and health of educational institutions. Some of them and even seniors serving as mentors can pass on their knowledge, expertise and leadership skills and provide feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement and helping them progress in their careers thereby ensuring continuity and succession within the organisation. Research has shown that employees who have access to mentorship programmes are more likely to feel engaged and satisfied with their jobs as they help them feel valued and supported thereby, increasing their loyalty to the organization and reducing turnover. Not only this, but they also even play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace by supporting underrepresented employees, advocating for their advancement and fostering a culture of inclusivity. Overall, mentors serve as trusted advisors, guides and role models who contribute to mentees' success and fulfilment in both their personal as well as professional lives.

A good mentor can a new job applicant up to speed quicker and help with answers to questions that may arise. Mentoring can be that hand that reaches down and pulls an individual out of the pit. It can change lives forever and create permanent relationships. It can even help a child get on the right track if they do not have someone else to help them. Mentors are indispensable for guiding and supporting individuals through complexity, fostering skill development, facilitating networking, nurturing leadership and fostering personal growth. Their guidance and support are and will be highly invaluable in helping mentees navigate the challenges and opportunities of the modern world.

*(The writer is an educator; views are personal)*

# Gender bias in politics is a crude reality



ARCHANA DATTA

The recent South Carolina primary victory of Donald Trump over Nikki Haley has reignited discussions surrounding gender biases in political elections



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ON THE EVE OF THE POLL, ONE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINIAN REPUBLICAN SUPPORTERS IN HER HOME STATE REPORTEDLY COMMENTED THAT ‘YES, MS HALEY DID SOME FINE THINGS AS GOVERNOR, BUT DONALD TRUMP IS THE MAN,’ WHICH PERHAPS REFLECTED THE PREDOMINANT PUBLIC MOOD

Donald Trump has won the South Carolina primary, defeating Nikki Haley, the last major Republican candidate in the race for Presidential nomination. On the eve of the poll, one of the South Carolinian Republican supporters in her home State, reportedly commented that ‘yes, Ms Haley did some fine things as governor, but, Donald Trump is the man’, which perhaps reflected the predominant public mood. Now, is this a case of a perceptible preferential bias among voters in favour of male candidates compared to female candidates?

‘Many voters seem to use gender as one of the ways to evaluate candidates, predict a candidate’s beliefs and competency — and use it as a shortcut for information about the candidates — and these subtle biases in some electoral contests, put a candidate at a disadvantage because of his or her gender’, said Kira Sanbonmatsu, a political science professor, Ohio University, who authored a 2000 study on ‘gender and voter’s preferences’. A study in French parliamentary elections across different polling stations found that votes for women are lower in municipalities with more traditional gender-role attitudes (Barbanchon and Sauvagnat, 2019). However, a 2018 research contended that ‘gender, through which men and women identify with masculinity and femininity with sets of roles, traits and ideals, strongly conditions the impact of sex on the voting pattern, but, it differs from case to case, depending on where one places oneself on a masculinity/femininity continuum’.

Many men, who do not strongly identify with hyper-masculinity, are equally or more liberal than women on various issues, while, many highly feminine women with very traditional gender identities, are more conservative on some issues, and thus, gender cannot be automatically treated as a ‘first-order’ or ‘meta’ identity, the study added. There is also a competing view that ‘gender is not a strong pull on the vote or on political attitudes, and that there are few male-female gaps in attitudes in voting’ (Amanda Bittner, University of Newfoundland & Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Queens University, 2017).

A study in Spain, after it adopted a law in 2007, that obliged political parties to include at least 40 per cent of women on every list for every election, did not find any evidence that it had either worsened women’s relative electoral performance or voters’ lower electoral support for exogenous reasons (Bagues and Campa, 2020). Nevertheless, in the 2018 midterms in the USA, sex and gender did play a prominent role, leading to large partisan gaps between men and women in casting their ballots. A study in India revealed that a ‘woman voter’ is more likely to vote for a male candidate, than a man to vote for a woman, as it is more about perception of society, than the candidates’ suitability’. Sadly, women’s under-representation in electoral politics is a reality! World Economic Forum’s Gender Equality Report, underlined that so far only 25% of a hypothetical 100% gender gap has been closed in women’s political participation. Many political scientists explained the gap from the angle of supply and demand constraints, as there is ‘a shortage of potential candidates’, and also ‘lower appeal of women politicians in electoral battles’. Several socio-economic and cultural barriers keep women away from politics, and create ‘a higher opportunity cost of running for elections’ (Fox et al., 2001).

Women also tend to be less in number in professions that become a conduit for a political career (Welch, 1977, Clark, 1994). Studies also mentioned the ‘ambition deficit’, as many women, despite having the requisite professional and economic credentials, often fight shy of entering competitive politics (Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007 & Fox and Lawless, 2004). Family and relational considerations dissuade many of them, as recent research in Sweden found that female politicians in mayoral positions experienced a significant increase in the likelihood of divorcing their partner (Folke and Rickne, 2020). On the other hand, ‘women are routinely demotivated by being told that they do not belong here, signifying a structured system of oppressive gender hierarchy in politics’. Sexism among party leaders is also rampant, more so, if they are aware of voters’ bias against women, as a votes-maximising strategy. While, India witnessed an increasing turnout of women voters, in the 2019 election, but, the number of women candidates remained less than 9 per cent. Those who did get party tickets, mostly, have family political connections or are ‘dynastic’ politicians. The gender quota at PRIs ‘hasn’t created much larger candidacy responses at the state level’. However, a study (Bhalotra et al. 2018), analysing electoral data over three decades (1980-2007) found that a woman’s electoral victory leads to an 18.5 percentage point higher probability of having a woman as a major party candidate in the next election. Now, as of November 2021, gender quotas have been adopted in 132 countries, either in the form of voluntary party or compulsory legislative quotas. A study (1995-2012) disclosed that such measures enhanced women’s representation from 11 percent to 21 percent. Some critics argued that it is ‘anti-democratic’, and ‘manipulate voters’ choices’, while, a section of women’s rights activists claimed, they are ‘disrespectful in the assumption that women cannot get seats on their own’, and are often negatively labelled as ‘quota women’. Nevertheless, it brought women in many least-developed countries like Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania to the political front, and increased their substantive representation on issues that are traditionally seen as gendered. India has already passed the Women’s Reservation Bill, 2023, its implementation cannot be put off to an uncertain date!

*(The author is former Director General, Doordarshan & All India Radio, views are personal)*

# From awareness to action: India’s fight against thalassemia

Collaboration between the public and private sectors is crucial to create widespread national awareness about thalassemia



KIRIT P SOLANKI

through various initiatives. One key programme is the Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (TBSY), launched in 2017 and recently extended into its third phase in May 2023. This Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative provides financial assistance to thalassemia patients eligible for bone marrow transplant treatment. Recognising the critical need for safe blood management, the National Blood

Transfusion Council (NBTC) has established guidelines ensuring free blood access for thalassemia patients across all states and territories. Furthermore, the government prioritises preventing Transfusion-Transmitted Infections (TTIs) by promoting voluntary blood donation and implementing world-class blood screening methods like Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT).

India, known as the thalassemia capital of the world, harbours over 1.5 lakh people living with thalassemia major (i.e., blood transfusion-dependent) and diagnoses approximately 10,000 new cases annually, despite its preventable nature. Living with thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder, is a constant struggle, especially when ensuring a sufficient and readily available blood supply is a continuous challenge. However, the Government of India has been working to address this issue and continues to do so. In 2020, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare inaugurated a Thalassemia Screening and Counseling Center at the Indian Red Cross Society's National Headquarters (IRCS NHQ) Blood Bank to educate the public on the prevention of this disease. Additionally, there are currently 10 transplant centres in India. In 2023, Vinod K. Paul from NITI Aayog announced that the model used to screen people in tribal belts for sickle-cell disease would be applied to thalassemia screening as well, urging the Union Government for a national mission to tackle thalassemia.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)'s decision to provide blood transfusion therapy to thalassemia patients free of charge is a welcome move that will significantly ease the patients' lives. On the research front, the ICMR National Institute of Immunohematology (NIIH) and the National Institute of Research in Tribal Health (NIRTH) are researching haemoglobin disorders such as thalassemia, engaging in field investigations, and enhancing diagnostic techniques. Furthermore, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, launched the third phase of the Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (TBSY) to commemorate World Thalassemia Day. The minister emphasised the importance of increasing awareness, screening, and treatment facilities for blood disorders like thalassemia and sickle-cell anaemia. The launch also included the unveiling of the Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana Portal and the release of Standard Treatment Guidelines for Sickle Cell Disease. Thalassemia can be prevented through early detection and intervention. Recognising this potential, the government has prioritised raising awareness and implementing screening programmes to reduce the national burden of the disease.

**Way Forward**  
Effective thalassemia management requires stricter enforcement of standardised blood screening guidelines. Collaboration between patient advocacy groups and healthcare providers can address concerns about blood safety, transmission risks, and social stigma through accurate information dissemination. Implementing advanced screening methods is crucial, but robust implementation is also key. Upgrading healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare workers, and investing in new technologies are essential for significant progress. Collaboration between patient advocacy groups like the Thalassemia Patients Advocacy Group (TPAG) and healthcare providers can address concerns about blood safety, transmission risks, and social stigma.

*(The writer is a member of Parliament, views are personal)*





MONEY MATTERS

Gold falls to Rs 66,140 per 10 grams; silver declines Rs 100

Gold price marginally fell Rs 10 to Rs 66,140 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 66,150 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also declined Rs 100 to Rs 77,000 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets trading at Rs 66,140 per 10 grams, down Rs 10 from the previous close," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,156 per ounce, unchanged from its previous close. Silver was also quoting lower at USD 25.11 per ounce. In the previous trade, it had settled at USD 25.19 per ounce. "Gold prices are down on continued profit-taking/long liquidation as traders position themselves ahead of the two key central bank's policy outcomes, starting with the Bank of Japan on Tuesday and the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday. The former is expected to end its negative rate policy."



Air India Express to operate over 360 daily flights

Air India Express will operate more than 360 daily flights during the summer schedule, with international services set to rise by over 20 per cent. The airline is in the process of completing the merger with AIX Connect (earlier known as AirAsia India) and the schedule includes flights of both carriers. In a release on Monday, Tata Group-owned Air India Express said it will offer over 360 daily departures during the summer schedule. Compared to last year's summer schedule, there will be an increase of over 25 per cent in domestic flights and more than 20 per cent rise in overseas services. "This translates to an additional 55 domestic flights and 19 international flights, bringing the total to 259 domestic and 109 international departures," the release said. Generally, the summer schedule is from the last Sunday of March till the last Saturday of October. In 2024, the summer schedule will be from March 31 till October 26.



SUN Mobility partners with Revfin for EV financing

Battery swapping solutions provider SUN Mobility has partnered with EV financing digital platform Revfin for financing solutions. Under the partnership, Revfin will offer innovative financing solutions for electric vehicles (EVs) that use SUN Mobility's Battery-as-a-Service (BaaS) model, the companies said in a statement on Monday. Revfin will finance electric two-wheelers for fleet business and electric three-wheelers for cargo and passenger vehicle segments. Over the next two years, SUN Mobility plans to deploy almost 1 lakh of these vehicles under the BaaS model, it added. "By combining SUN Mobility's innovative battery swapping technology with Revfin's accessible financing solutions, we are paving the way for a cleaner, greener future for all," SUN Mobility Chief Executive Officer Anant Badjatya said. "By extending our tailored financing options for electric fleet operators."



Outlook on small, mid-cap stocks remains strong in long run: experts

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid market regulator SEBI's concerns over stretched valuations in the small and mid-cap stocks, analysts were of the opinion that valuations are backed by earnings.

However, a section of analysts expect that volatility will continue in the short run but they remain bullish on the long-term prospects of the small and mid-cap stocks.

"Given the strong fundamentals, and as long as earnings continue to grow quarter-on-quarter, markets are likely to remain robust over the long run valuations are backed by earnings," said Shailesh Saraf, smallcase fund manager and founder of Value Stocks.

He said expectations are backed by India's growth story and rising corporate earnings.

All NSE-listed companies continued to grow their quarterly corporate earnings, and as of the December 2023 quarter, it stood at Rs 3,62,973 crore, a Value Stock report showed.

"I remain very bullish about Public Sector Undertakings stocks have performed well. In



2023, the Nifty PSE Index soared by 77 per cent, surpassing the Nifty 50's return of 20 per cent while the PSE Index, in 2024, has given a return of 21 per cent as against the Nifty 50's return of a mere 3 per cent," Saraf said.

There is potential for further gains due to low valuations as the Nifty PSE Index is still trading at a PE of just 10, he said.

The price-to-earnings (PE) ratio measures a company's share price relative to its earnings per share (EPS).

He advised investors to invest in themes like PSU where valuations 'still remain attractive'.

The net equity inflow of Rs 26,866 crore in February 2024 marks the continuation of a positive trend, extending over 36 consecutive months, showcasing the unwavering investor confidence in the Indian equity market, Prabhudas Lilladher Investment Services Head Pankaj Shrestha.

A study by Value Stocks said that the stock market has generally responded favourably to election results, with a likelihood of some short-term volatility in the months preceding the polls.

"The near-term outlook for small and mid-cap stocks in India appears subdued, mirror-

ing the cautious sentiment of a broader market. A modest correction of around 10 per cent is likel within the sector due to profit booking, year-end accounting adjustments, and valuation biases," brokerage platform Tradejini chief operating officer Trivesh D said.

However, the current market adjustment reflects a return to more sustainable pricing, he said.

"The correction could present opportunities for long-term investors who conduct thorough research before entering this dynamic segment," he said.

Pawan Bharaddia, Co-founder & CIO of Portfolio Management Service firm Equitree Capital, stated that small caps have seen a decent correction and some pockets of the market are indeed experiencing higher valuations, which could suppress the broader market.

"One may use the correction to accumulate high-quality businesses in this genre as they unfold significant wealth-creating opportunities over the next couple of years," he added.



FM urges ADB to become partner in development agenda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday met Asian Development Bank's new Vice-President (market solutions) Bhargav Dasgupta and discussed ways to further the development agenda.

"Both exchanged views on how @ADB\_HQ may partner with India to further the development agenda. They also discussed harnessing ADB's convening power to crowd in other public and private sector institutions to participate in India's growth," the finance ministry said in a post on X.

ADB in September 2023, appointed Dasgupta as VP for a period of three years. Prior to this, he was MD and CEO of ICICI Lombard General Insurance.

Startups must adhere to self-regulating ecosystem



He also said that there should not be any regulatory intervention if India wants to create a vibrant startup movement as "government regulation stifles innovation"

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian startups must adhere to a self-regulating ecosystem to bring in transparency and ethical behaviour, G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said on Monday while observing that chasing valuation at all costs sometimes leads to misgovernance.

He also said that there should not be any regulatory intervention if India wants to create a vibrant startup movement as "government regulation stifles innovation".

Speaking at the Startup Mahakumbh event, Kant said India has been able to create the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world, and

the challenge for the country is to make it the number one nation of startups in the world in the next five years.

"Startups must adhere to a self-regulating ecosystem governance as this will bring in transparency, ethical behaviour in our statup ecosystem," he said.

Noting that startups are 'national assets', the former NITI Aayog CEO said they must bring in best practices, and by following these best practices, startups will trust their stakeholders, they will attract investors and ultimately achieve sustainable growth.

"It is very important that startups should focus on

growth...(but) valuation at all cost sometimes leads to misgovernance," he noted.

Kant also spoke about challenges faced by some startups in India recently and emphasised that all leaders of startups must ensure that there is proper financial management and audit.

"In my experience, I have witnessed startups flourishing, while others like BYJU's, GoMechanic, Housing.com and Trelly faced challenges. There must be good corporate governance in place.

"All of you entrepreneurs are innovators. As you grow and expand, you must ensure that there is proper financial management and a proper audit. Self-regulation is the key," he said.

Kant noted that there should not be any government intervention if the country wants to create a vibrant Indian startup movement.

"There should be no regulatory intervention because government regulation stifles innovation. We must understand, that the innovation will always be ahead of regulation," he said.

IT sector to see 3-5 % growth, hiring to be muted: Icra



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian IT sector's revenue growth is expected to come at a tepid 3-5 per cent in FY25, a domestic rating agency said on Monday.

The sector's hiring will "remain muted" in the near-term until the growth momentum picks up, Icra Ratings said.

However, the companies' profitability is expected to be resilient amid concerns on topline growth, it said, adding the operating profit margins for the USD 250 billion Indian

IT sector will come at a healthy 21-22 per cent in FY25.

The agency said in the first nine months of the ongoing 2023-24, the industry has posted a revenue growth of just 2 per cent, as against 3-5 per cent it had estimated for the sector in the past.

The topline growth for the first nine months of FY23 had stood at a healthy 9.2 per cent.

Persistent macroeconomic headwinds in key markets of the US and Europe, which has led to lower discretionary IT spends by corporate has led to expectations of tepid revenue

growth even in FY25, its sector head Deepak Jotwani said.

He, however, added that critical spending and cost optimisation deals continue to gain traction, supporting the growth prospects for the Indian IT services companies to "some extent".

The agency expects a pick-up in the growth momentum once the macroeconomic headwinds subside on strong order books and deal pipeline of most companies and tech spending becoming far more integral to overall capital allocation for corporate after the pandemic.

While it expects hiring activity to remain muted, the agency said the attrition levels will stabilise over the near term, inching closer to the long-term average of 12-13 percent, as an overall slowdown in growth momentum and strong hiring in the previous fiscal has corrected the demand-supply mismatch witnessed earlier.

The agency maintained its stable outlook on the sector for the new fiscal.

ASK group arm aims to raise Rs 3,000 cr from AIF

PNS ■ MUMBAI

ASK Hedge Solutions on Monday said it is targeting to raise Rs 3,000 crore corpus from wealthy individuals and family offices in the next 18 months for its alternative investment fund.

The ASKAbsolute Return Fund is an open-ended category-III alternative investment fund (AIF), which will be seeking to raise the money from high networth individuals, ultra HNIs, family offices and corporate treasuries, the company's chief executive officer Vaibhav Sanghavi told reporters here.

Over the past decade or so, the nascent long-short platform has delivered returns of 10-15 per cent from a compound annual growth rate perspective, Sanghavi said.

He said the current fund will be targeted purely at domestic investors, but the next one of a similar strategy will open it for foreign investors as well.

Stock markets close higher in volatile trade

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher in a highly volatile trade on Monday as investors turned cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve interest rate decision.

After gyrating between gains and losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled higher by 104.99 points or 0.14 per cent at 72,748.42. As many as 14 Sensex shares closed in the green while 16 in the red. The index moved between a high of 72,985.89 and a low of 72,314.16.

The broader Nifty of the NSE rose by 32.35 points or 0.15 per cent, to close at 22,055.70 as 21 of its components advanced and 29 declined.

The gains were primarily led by metal, auto and commodity shares while IT and Tech shares capped the upside. Reliance Industries which

rebounded more than 1.5 per cent from the day's low was the major contributor to Sensex and Nifty gains. RIL settled higher by 1.45 per cent.

Tata Steel rose the most by 5 per cent among Sensex shares. Mahindra & Mahindra,

"The Indian market followed the positive Asian peers with a mixed bias. Domestic issues, like mutual fund stress tests, hardly brought any negative views, but premium valuation remains as a concern. Midcap & small caps are

attempting to scroll up, however consolidation persists," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Policy actions, this week, from global central banks, the US

FED, BOJ, and BOE will dictate the market direction. Indication, by the FED, that rate cut may probably be in the latter half of CY24, should bring a mixed sentiment in the short term, he added.

The US Federal Open Market Committee meeting will commence on March 19 and the policy rate decision will be announced on Wednesday.



Krystal Integrated IPO subscribed 13.21 times

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of facility management and security services provider Krystal Integrated Services got subscribed 13.21 times on the last day of bidding on Monday.

The initial share sale received bids for 3,96,26,200 shares against 29,99,448 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

The portion for non-institutional investors received 43.90 times subscription while the category for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) got subscribed 7.33 times. The Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) part fetched 3.31 times subscription.

‘Innovation driving next versions of our biz’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal on Monday said the company's culture of embracing disruption and being paranoid in order to evolve and stay ahead, is driving innovation in its business.

He hinted that in one year's time Blinkit could be bigger than Zomato.

Goyal - who is counted among India's growing tribe of celebrity founders - said the mantra for Zomato is "how do we disrupt our own businesses" and not become complacent.

Speaking at the Startup Mahakumbh event, Goyal said "Zomato has a business plan competition going within the company, which is going to offer funds to a small team which will disrupt the businesses that we are in, and that could lead to Zomato version 5 or Blinkit version 2."

Blinkit - the quick com-



Goyal - who is counted among India's growing tribe of celebrity founders - said the mantra for Zomato is "how do we disrupt our own businesses" and not become complacent

merce platform - itself is part of Zomato 'version 4' he said, adding "in one year's time Blinkit could be bigger than Zomato, so I don't know how long Zomato will have its own relevance."

During a fireside chat with Info Edge founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Goyal said the company believes in being paranoid to stay ahead.

Notably, Info Edge is among the earliest backers of Zomato. Bikhchandani observed that

Zomato will stay relevant and resilient for foreseeable future because people will continue to want food delivered at home, to which Goyal replied "As soon as we start saying nothing can happen, we are dead."

"So we have to be paranoid about it... that someone can do something and we should be the ones doing these things on our own," he said.

He shot down a suggestion from the audience about drone delivery being the new frontier

for Zomato and said "it is not going to work out".

Goyal advised entrepreneurs to be led by passion and drive while building the company of their dreams, and cautioned that starting a venture with the sole desire of making money won't work and may lead to "bad governance calls".

Goyal spoke candidly about how his own company prefers to be always paranoid to stay ahead. Complacency should not kick in at any point of time, he asserted.

"I see a lot of founders starting a lot of companies, and I ask them why did you start this company, and the answer is 'I want to make a lot of money'... I don't think that works, because that leads to bad governance calls... that's not the purpose with which you should start a company," he said addressing a packed hall.

His advice to aspiring and new entrepreneurs: "you should be so passionate about

something, you should be willing to risk your life for it, only then you are able to build a company of your dreams".

"That's the only piece of advice I have... do it with passion, don't do it for money," he said.

Bikhchandani advised entrepreneurs and startups to be too frugal and hands-on, and always connected to the market and consumers.

Goyal emphasised that continuous innovation is "must" for businesses, as no business model can survive for more than a decade or two without innovation.

He further said that anyone looking to start a company and turn an entrepreneur with an objective of being "comfortable" and "happy" would be making a "wrong choice".

"You have to learn to handle the stress to succeed. The only way to lose is to quit... if you can survive, you'll win," he advocated.

PNS ■ MUMBAI

There has been a 5 percentage points increase in campus hiring of women in 2022-23, compared to the previous year as companies in India are keen on inclusivity and diversity in the workplace, a report said on Monday.

In FY23, 40 per cent of the fresh talent hired from college campuses were women, up from 35 per cent in the previous year, AI-powered recruitment automation firm HirePro said in the report.

The report is based on evaluation of data during FY23, for a sample size of 5,50,000 B'Tech candidates across all five zones -- central, east, north, south, and west -- of the country.

As per the report, a majority of women participated in campus hiring exams last fiscal for sectors such as IT, banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) and research and development (R&D).



Further analysing the data, the report said IT services top the chart in women's participation in campus hiring.

The report also revealed that out of the five zones, south India had the highest women participation in campus hiring exams in 2022-23, at 39 per cent.

The east, meanwhile, recorded the lowest participa-

tion at 24 per cent for campus hiring. The west zone saw 34 per cent participation, central zone saw 28 per cent, and north at 27 per cent, it said.

"The data derived from our campus hiring report serves as a tangible testament to India's progress toward achieving gender equality in the workforce," HirePro Chief Operating Officer S Pasupathi added.



# NITYA MEHRA REVEALS WAS ASKED TO ‘INCLUDE BOYS’ IN *BGDC*

TEJAL SINHA

Think of a director who has mastered the art of bringing out socially meaningful content without sounding too preachy—none other than Nitya Mehra. “I don’t think I sit at my desk and very often be like, How can I say a certain thing?” shares the star filmmaker on a brighter note.

Well, of course, as a filmmaker, she’s got a lot to say in life—a

list, in fact—and what better than bringing it out through the filmmaking platform? And according to her, the core of everything is the characters or the experiences you get inspired by. But again, “I am very conscious and scared of sounding preachy, and that is very hard because I feel filmmaking at the end of the day is my escape. Every time I watch a film, that is what brings me out of the space that I am in. It kind of trans-

ports me, and the last thing is, I want my own voice telling me, “This is the way you need to live life.”

Thus, there’s a fine line and balance to it. “You got to work with the writer with the right kind of team to be able to share your vision with them and kind of just own the idea and make sure it kind of becomes organic to those characters.”

In fact, even before she’d entered the filmy world as a filmmaker, Nitya Mehra knew one thing for sure: to bring out her boarding school days, and *Big Girls Don’t Cry* was that one.

Winning much appreciation for her recent project, *Big Girls Don’t Cry*, currently streaming on Prime Video, something that to her was exciting about the project was that it has ‘no contemporaries’. But, “Where is the story about females who are on the verge of adulthood and figuring out their identities? How often do we witness a true portrayal of school life in India? I don’t want an entire generation of Indian girls asking, ‘Where are the

shows about us?” she questions. And now, with this, things are going to be a little competitive, she says.

“It is an amazingly interesting space to engage,” shares the *Baar Baar Dekho* filmmaker. And for her, the young adult space is extremely interesting. “I just can’t get enough of them; I love them. All the characters were very clear in my head. What really intrigued me was when I knew we had cast well, but when I saw them actually come live on the edit table, it was actually when I couldn’t get over how they had embodied and couldn’t tell the difference between the characters and the actors that were playing. For me, it’s been intriguing, and I’ve been so humbled by this experience.”

But of course, comes the ‘gender prejudice’ of the industry in the picture, just like how it was for Sudhanshu. She was in fact told by people that though they had loved it, she was asked to ‘include boys’ in the story. Nitya knew the team had to bring something unique into the picture, and yes, they went on!

And again, just like how we had brought in during our conversation with Sudhanshu Saria yesterday about how he’s got to work with the legendary Pooja Bhatt twice, so has it been with Nitya too. More special, in fact! “Pooja’s last film as an actor was my first film in Bombay ever,” gleefully goes on Nitya, adding, “Again, it is not a coincidence why people

rub shoulders in life. When she came to work, I hadn’t seen her for so many years—almost 20 years. It was like this instant, like an electric thing happening in the room, because I was extremely impressed when I met her. I was extremely enamoured, and she made me feel so good and so confident about myself. She was the lead actor amidst others, and I was living in town, and we had to go to Chembur every day.”

Basically, she shares that she comes from a background where her parents always felt that films were just being made, and who made them was never questioned. Certainly, they were apprehensive of sending her to Bombay, this big city. But “Then you know, which is why it is so important to surround yourself and try and make your way into some spaces where you can look up to people and have the correct role models, and for me, that is what Pooja was. She had a production house, I remember, so I would see her fleetingly get ready, and they’d put me in background action, which means I was very busy in a corner doing things as the film’s life was dependent on it. But I just remember her as the boss woman because I remember her being so inclusive of all of us, taking us to the office, and that has not changed to date. You should be noting down everything that she says (we laugh). She is like this walking-talking philosopher, so not much has changed. I have grown up a little bit; she has too, but not really. We were meant to be.”



Filmmaker Nitya Mehra, known for her socially meaningful content, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about her much-acclaimed series *Big Girls Don’t Cry*, not being preachy through her content, challenges bringing all-girls stories onboard, and her camaraderie with Pooja Bhatt.



## NURTURING TALENTS TO PURSUE THEIR MUSICAL FANACIES

PNS/HYDERABAD

Who doesn’t love music? In addition to being fun, listening to music may even improve your health, according to certain studies. Music also has numerous other psychological advantages. In addition to energising the body and calming the mind, music can even improve pain management.

The idea that music has the power to affect your emotions, ideas, and actions probably does not come as a huge surprise. You may readily grasp how music can affect moods and even motivate action if you’ve ever been brought to tears by a moving live performance or been pumped up while listening to your favorite fast-paced rock anthem.

Like any other music enthusiast who loves listening to music or playing instruments, Sangita Tiwari and her co-founder, the gifted and versatile singer Swarit Nigam, founded MusicChamps, an educational startup that inspires music lovers of all ages and gives students the tools they need to realize their greatest potential.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Sangita Tiwari, who began MusicChamps in 2023, shares, “During the pandemic, I was dumbfounded to see how the majority of children were glued to their phones all the time. This certainly has an impact on productivity and creativity. Basically, I wanted to do something for these children—in fact, for all age groups. It was then that I thought of setting up a platform for music enthusiasts where they could learn and teach others. Everyone of us loves music;

while some enjoy singing, the others enjoy playing instruments.”

Finding the right instructor within one’s budget is a huge task in itself. Again, with online platforms, the quality of service is affected. Well, this was the issue she had to go through. And thus, with this platform, she aims to render high-quality services related to music in terms of courses,

interactive tools, instructional videos, and sheet music. “I have recruited the top, highly professional certified music instructors to teach people of all age groups at affordable prices, thereby tackling all the major issues. The company’s primary services encompass a diverse array of music classes, including keyboard, guitar, ukulele, violin, flute, drums, and vocals.

The mission of this start-up is to provide exceptional music education for music beginners by offering access to unparalleled instructors who provide personalised guidance. The platform provides a wide range of high-quality resources, including instructional videos, sheet music, and interactive tools.”

Initially, just like many entrepreneurs with no business background, she too had to go through her own share of challenges. For example, connecting with beginners with suitable instructors! However, she shares that as she took the platform online, the firm evolved successfully as an online learning hub by implementing a personalised approach to match learners with the best-suited teachers.

While we went ahead with the interview, she also went on to express her gratitude to We Hub and said that they had offered a lot of support by suggesting various marketing platforms and networking. Thereby, helping her launch the startup within a time span of six months! Within a brief six-month period, the start-up has successfully enrolled over 200 learners from five different countries, namely India, the US, the UK, Canada, and Singapore. This global reach has earned MusicChamps a reputation for innovation in the music education space.



BRINGING A PLATFORM FOR MUSIC LOVERS TO POLISH THEIR SKILLS, *THE PIONEER* BRINGS TO YOU ABOUT MUSICCHAMPS AS WE CONNECT WITH THE FOUNDER.

## Myths about cancer you should no longer believe!

Debunking cancer myths is essential for promoting understanding, support, and empowerment. Cancer is a formidable adversary that affects many lives. Since cancer is a complicated illness, there are a lot of myths and misconceptions about it that can cause unneeded anxiety, denial of necessary treatment, and delays in diagnosis.

### MYTH 1: DYING FROM CANCER IS INEVITABLE

Contrary to popular belief, there is still hope after being diagnosed with cancer. Many people with cancer successfully navigate life after treatment because of advances in medical technology and available treatments. For countless patients, early identification has greatly increased survival rates and quality of life when combined with extensive care and support networks.

### MYTH 2: LUNG CANCER SOLELY AFFECTS SMOKERS

Although smoking is still the greatest risk factor for lung cancer, it’s important to understand that people who do not smoke can also develop the disease. Lung cancer in

nonsmokers is influenced by a number of factors, including genetic predispositions, environmental pollutants, and secondhand smoke exposure. By busting this myth, we can gain a greater understanding of the complexity of cancer and strive toward more all-encompassing preventative and therapeutic approaches.

### MYTH 3: IT’S EASY TO SPREAD CANCER

Despite what many people think, cancer cannot be spread via touch or sharing utensils like the common cold. Recognising this truth is essential to reducing the stigma associated with cancer sufferers.

### MYTH 4: CANCER MAY BE CURED BY SUPERFOODS

While eating a well-balanced, fruit- and vegetable-rich diet is clearly good for your health overall, it’s important to dispel the myth that any one meal or supplement will treat cancer.

(The author, Dr. Parikshith Jayaprakash, is the medical oncologist at Sunrise Oncology Centre.)







# Karan has returned with a quirky comedy titled *Bad Newzz*

Karan Johar has returned with a quirky comedy that is a spiritual continuation of the Akshay Kumar and Kareena Kapoor film. The director posted the first look posters for *Bad Newzz*, which stars Amy Virk, Triptii Dimri, and Vicky Kaushal in key roles, on his Instagram profile on Monday. In the final poster, the movie's title is revealed, hinting at the story of parents dealing with infertility. For the first time ever, Triptii and Vicky are teamed together in a romantic comedy. Amy debuted in the film 83, directed by Ranveer Singh, and in the film *Bluj: The Pride of India*, starring Ajay Devgn. This is his first collaboration with Dharma Productions on *Bad Newzz*.



## OSCAR-WINNING SCREENWRITER, DAVID SEIDLER PASSES AWAY

Famous screenwriter David Seidler, who won an Academy Award for his work on the film *The King's Speech*, passed unexpectedly on March 16 at the age of 86 while fly-fishing in New Zealand, according to Hollywood media. According to his manager, Jeff Aghassi, "David was in New Zealand, the place he loved most in the world, doing fly fishing, which gave him the greatest peace. It's exactly as he would have written it if he had the chance." However, the cause for his death was not officially stated.



In a lavish celebration of International Women's Day, the United Telangana Local Women's Association Front (UTLWAF) was established and the Telangana Womenergy Awards ceremony was hosted by Deepthi Reddy Madugula, the founder of Womenergy, a well-known organisation committed to women's empowerment. The occasion was held at NITHM, Gachibowli. Among the dignitaries in attendance were Sangeetha Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals; Anuradha Reddy, Vice Chair of Continental Hospitals and Chairperson of the Diabetes Foundation; and Sudha Reddy, Agri-Industrialist.



At the 2024 EMPOWERED WOMEN AWARDS, 50 Telangana women who are achieving success in a variety of sectors were recognised and celebrated. On March 17, 2024, "Save the Girl Child" and "Mundadugu Foundation" together organised an event that was hosted at Harita Plaza. Mudadugu Founder Rajendra Palnati, Former Additional Chief Secretary and Red Cross Chairman Ajay Mishra, Superintendent Sivakumar Goud of Chanchalguda Jail, renowned music director RP Patnaik, and CEO of GemOpencube Vinod Pentakota graced the occasion as honorary guests and presented the awards to the recipients.



Students of Sancta Maria International School came together to raise funds for two charity initiatives, ISP Street Child United and 'Heal A Child', in collaboration with the NGO Street Child United, which is working for a brighter future for street children.



Hyderabad Runners Society hosted a special movie screening of 'La Ultra: The High,' featuring the captivating documentary 'Moving Mountains', at Prasad Labs. The initiative sought to bolster awareness and educate participants about the challenges and triumphs of ultra-running. Packed to a full audience, the screening provided a glimpse into the world of extreme endurance, showcasing the resilience and determination required to conquer daunting terrains and harsh climates. The session with Dr.Rajat Chauhan, the race director of La Ultra was moderated film Director Bala Rajasekharuni.

### FUN

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

1 Look at the stars through this

6 Naming words

7 Memorise

9 Awful to look at

10 Say again

12 A team game with sticks

14 Trip over

17 A short spell of very wild weather with wind and rain

18 Instructions for building houses

19 Played make-believe

DOWN

2 Of the same length

3 A compass direction

4 Less hot

5 A flat dish

6 Zeros

8 Stinging plants

11 A hard safety hat

13 A large group of singers

15 Not asleep

16 Unlock

SOLUTION

W	A	T	C	H	I	N	G	
A	D	E	A	E				
S	P	E	A	R	I	V	E	
P	A	R	D	E				
A	U	T	H	O	R	F	R	O
R	S	R	B	O	U	G	H	
A	R	M	S	B	O	U	G	H
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# ‘I would not have regretted doing *Razakar*, not even if this had been my last film’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Politicians are also discussing *Razakar: The Silent Genocide of Hyderabad* as a film. Better than that, what is it? It appears that the film accurately depicted the historical realities of Nizam's rule in Telangana both before and after Indian independence. Additionally, one of the film's key actresses concurs.

Anushree Tripathi tells us exclusively over the phone, after concluding all of the media appearances: "I have been performing in theaters for a while, but my theater background wasn't anything that could have helped me play the role of a Nizam's wife. Even though I'm quite opinionated in real life, I had to exercise extreme caution when it came to my character."

The actress disclosed that she went through multiple more preparations, saying, "First, I went to the Chowmahalla Palace. I talked to a few Muslim women and noticed how reserved they are. Then, Harish Chandra Rayala, who is renowned for his technique training, trained me. We took our roles very seriously, and my walk was taken care of as well. I was particularly asked to communicate with my eyes! Additionally, I am quite aware of how the Telugu audiences perceive our eye movements. I experimented with numerous monologues during the course of two to three months of my acting training. I watched the films that had a strong regal theme! Another person I looked up to was Keerthy Suresh from *Mahanati*, especially with her glamorous pose."

More importantly, she said, "Throughout, I solely paid attention to Muslim women. Not mine, but every other character in the film was based on actuality. The scriptwriter, who is also our director, developed one imaginary character for me, and that was mine."

Yes, she did feel complicit in a number of scenes. Anushree tells us, for instance, that she frequently felt as though she was on the wrong side of things. "Maintaining the spark of chemistry between Makarand Deshpande and myself was one of my favourite challenges! I felt like I had icy feet and was incredibly anxious. Mysore Palace setting was equally magnificent, even if everyone else was filming in nearby villages or Ramoji Film City. Everyone used to make fun of me since I was always accompanied by four people while I wandered around in my baggy clothes. I was the center of attention on the *Razakar* sets!"

She even said, quite candidly, "At first, I was worried about the screen space. I truly enjoyed the three additional scenes that aren't in the film! Due to the film's extended running time, the songs had to be cut as well. The producing company suffered a loss of about six crores in those conditions. I was therefore quite interested in learning how they were pairing me with Anasuya, Vedhika, and so on. When I finally saw my sequences carefully placed on screen on the Hyderabad screening night, I was very thrilled."

We also couldn't have missed the following in this interview: "It's encouraging to see local politicians praising our film on patriotism. On the day of the screening, I heard a lot of people from the present generation recollect how their ancestors had fought in this war. That



Actress Anushree Tripathi, who is proud to be a part of the recently released *Razakar*, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about being part of the project, preparations for the project, and more.

movie was that significant. They lost family members in these fights, and it hasn't been discussed until recently. I observed the families get tearful."

She also recalled the time that Taj Falaknuma Palace denied them permission to shoot for nearly three and a half months, for a mere five days. "The princess didn't like some of the royal-themed scenes in the film! The film wasn't about Islam, and a lot of the people acting that way weren't supposed to. Not just in Bollywood, but a lot of well-known personalities in tollywood turned down to star in the film too! As an insider, I am aware of how difficult it was for the crew to cast female actors. How many actresses, in the end, turned down the roles? They mistakenly believed that our film would attack a certain religion. They assumed! I am glad that I was a part of *Razakar*. Reviews praise the movie's visual effects and colour grading as well. I would not have regretted anything, not even if this had been my last film. I was a part of a mission, not a movie."



## ‘OM BHEEM BUSH ISN'T A COMEDIC ADULT FILM’

TEJAL SINHA

On March 22, *Om Bheem Bush*, which also stars Sree Vishnu, Priyadarshi, and Rahul Ramakrishna, will be released in theaters. It is billed as a full-fledged comedic delight. Under the direction of Sree Harsha Konuganti, UV Creations and V Celluloid (co-produced with Sunil Balusu) are bringing out the movie. Actor Priyadarshi discusses attempting out a full-fledged comedy years after *Jathi Ratnalu* in this interview. He restates his belief that acting is a better career choice than becoming a hero.

While *Hushaaru* was being made, the *Pelli Choopulu* actor shared that director Harsha presented a rough screenplay for this movie.

"The concept was too simple at the time. The concept was expanded into a whole screenplay following his work on *Rowdy Boys*. This is a horror comedy in the vein of a buddy movie," shares the actor, adding, "In the movie, my name is Vinay Gummadi. I've attended Osmania University before with my two pals. The other two believe in occult practices and the power of mantras; I believe in science. Unlike the three principal males from *Jathi Ratnalu*, who are from rural towns, they are native to the city. The two films have completely distinct settings."

The film, the actor says, is primarily humorous. "The entire interaction between the three friends is funny. The villagers' characters are very entertaining. Raccha Ravi plays one of them. I've been partnered with Ayesha Khan. Two songs are included, one with a crazy background and the other with a party tune. There aren't really any romantic songs."

When doing a buddy comedy, you have to communicate in terms that young people understand. And so, the 18-30 age group is their target demographic; they are familiar with meme language and social media culture. "There must be allusions to well-known Telugu motion pictures. This isn't a comedic adult film. Nowhere are there any references to sexuality. Such a work is always clean comedy," shares the *Tholi Prema* actor, adding, "Working with Rahul and Vishnu, whom I've known for a long time, was enjoyable. None of the three of us have any experience with movies. As friends, we all share that extra layer of connectedness."

As an artist, he is someone who has been very adaptable. And that is not something that only his projects talk about; he believes it too. "I have a lot of opportunities when I identify as an actor. I get to work on different things. I played a significant role in *Mangalavaaram*, but it wasn't my main role. My persona held equal significance to that of Payal Rajput. I portray a preteen girl's father in the two-season online series *Save the Tigers*. My characters get plenty of attention from me. My directors and I talk about the screenplay and characters all the time. I completed my homework and research. Whenever I have time, I also take part in workshops. Following a somber film like *Malleshram*, I played a completely comedic performer. I was doing films like *F2* and *Brochevarevarura* at the time. When *Pelli Choopulu* occurred, I was 26 years old. At the age of 34, my knowledge has only grown. Participating in movies such as *Balagam* may leave a lasting impression on your character. They are influenced by the books they read. Watching *Hi Nanna* while dubbing for my role was an entirely different experience."

Being a rationalist, he doesn't believe in the existence of God. But "I respect other people's beliefs and don't force mine on them. I have donned amulets for style sake. Near Pune, there is a village called Bhor. There is a magnificent medieval mahal there. Filmed in real settings, the creators ensured that *Om Bheem Bush* was accomplished on a grand scale. Mumbai was the source of the costumes as well, to guarantee the fantastical element. UV Creations went above and beyond with producer Sunil."



## Prabhu Deva joins Rojin Thomas's directorial cast for *Kathanar*

Prabhu Deva, an actor and choreographer, has officially joined the cast of *Kathanar - The Wild Sorcerer*, the much anticipated Malayalam film, according to the directors. An image from the internet showed the actor being greeted on the movie set with warmth by director Rojin Thomas, actor Jayasurya, and producer Gokulam Gopalan.

The Malayalam cinema industry is already buzzing about *Kathanar - The Wild Sorcerer* thanks to its impressive plot and star-studded cast. With Gokulam Gopalan producing the movie under the brand of Sree Gokulam Movies, South Indian actresses Anushka Shetty and Devika Sanjay are scheduled to play the key roles.

In an interview, director Rojin Thomas underlined his confidence in producing a ground-breaking 3D fantasy movie, which is a unique accomplishment in Malayalam cinema. "With *Kathanar*, we want to use local talent's skills and state-of-the-art filmmaking technologies to showcase Malayalam cinema to the world," Rojin said.

Rojin and screenwriter P Ramanand have been working on the concept of *Kathanar* for more than six years, even after a protracted pre-production period that lasted almost two years. The project, which was originally slated to start production even before Rojin's feature debut *Home*, has expanded into a possible franchise, with the first two installments presently being made concurrently. Rojin also hinted at the prospect of more chapters in the future.

Fans of Prabhu Deva's memorable performance as Vavvali in the historical drama *Urumi*, co starring Prithviraj Sukumaran and Genelia D'Souza, are bringing back fond memories of the actor's return to Malayalam film.



## Mohanlal to team up with director Tharun Moorthy for *L360*

The renowned filmmaker of Saudi Vellakka and Operation Java, Tharun Moorthy, is slated to work with Mohanlal on his next movie. The movie, which will be Mohanlal's 360th project overall, is reportedly called L360. The movie, which is being produced by M. Renjith under the Rejaputhra Visual Media, was recently revealed on social media. "Unveiling



our next film," Rejaputhra Visual Media and Tharun Moorthy wrote on Instagram to announce the release of the picture. There will be more updates soon!

Fans reacted strongly to the announcement, with thousands of likes and comments swarming social media sites, demonstrating a great deal of fervour and excitement for the impending partnership. For those who don't know, Mohanlal and Tharun Moorthy

had originally planned to work together on Benz Vasu, which was once billed as a commercial amusement and purportedly a remake of a 1980 Malayalam movie starring the late great actor Jayan. However, it is said that unidentified problems led to the project's cancellation.

Mohanlal is now working on L2: Empuraan, the follow-up to the 2019 hit film Lucifer, which is his third project with Prithviraj Sukumaran. He will work with director Joshiy again on the action thriller Rambaan, which is penned by Chemban Vinod Jose after a run of recent blockbusters.



## SINGER MANGLI WARNS FANS NOT TO ACCEPT RUMOURS AFTER HER CAR-CRASH

A few days ago, singer Mangli's car was involved in a small collision. She and her team did, however, clarify that it wasn't anything serious and that she wasn't hurt in the incident.

Mangli explained what happened on Instagram on Monday. "Dear everyone, I am safe and sound," she posted on Instagram Stories. "A few days ago, there was a minor accident that happened unexpectedly. Please don't believe the rumours that are being spread. I appreciate your kindness and care." Mangli and her group were returning from an event in the late hours of March 15 when the tragedy happened close to Tondupally within the boundaries of Shamshabad. Sources informed that "everyone traveling that day is fine. The event we were returning from happened on the Bengaluru-Hyderabad route. None of us, including Madam (Mangli), were in the car; therefore, it wasn't a serious accident. The rear light of the car was damaged when a truck struck it when it was parked on the side of the road. There is nothing to fear for, and we are all safe."

It is being reported that a police report has been filed in accordance with Indian Penal Code Section 279. Following their attendance at a spiritual event near Hyderabad, the singer and two members of her entourage were making their way back to Hyderabad.



## An elegant event was held to launch the trailer of *Yamadheera*

In the upcoming film *Yamadheera*, Indian cricketer Sreesanth plays the antagonist, while Kannada hero Komal Kumar is helming the film as a leading protagonist. The first movie that Vedala Srinivas of SriMandiram Productions will produce is *Yamadheera*. In this film, Nagababu, Ali, Satya Prakash, and Madhu Sudhan also have important parts. The well-known producer Ashok Kumar recently completed the teaser for this film, and yesterday the trailer premiere event took place at the Film Chamber in magnificent style! Key members of this event included producer

D. S. Rao, P. Srinivasa Rao, treasurer Ram Satyanarayana, and secretary Prasanna Kumar of the Telugu Film Producers Council. On this particular occasion, Vedala Srinivas, the producer, and Shankar, the director, collaborated for this Kannada movie, *Yamadheera*, and according to Prasannakumar, the secretary of the Telugu Film Producers Council, "In this film, even *Yamadheera*'s title is extremely catchy. Similar to how the word 'Dheera' has a hit film called *Magadheera*, the word 'Yama' has previously been associated with blockbuster films like *Yamadonga*, *Yamaleela*, and *Yamagola*. Komal Kumar had a great performance as a police officer as well. Everything was expertly filmed in various countries. This political drama is akin to Vijay's earlier film, *Sarkar*."







## KOHLI JOINS RCB TRAINING CAMP

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Superstar Virat Kohli on Monday made his first appearance in the training session of his franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore ahead of the IPL beginning March 22. Kohli, who was out of the country for the birth of his second child, arrived in India

on Sunday. The former India and RCB captain was seen taking rounds of the Chinnaswamy Stadium as part of his warm-up. Skipper Faf du Plessis also attended the session. RCB, who have never won the IPL, begin their campaign against reigning champions Chennai Super Kings in Chennai on Friday.

Kohli's performance in the lucrative T20 league will be closely tracked as the event precedes the T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean. The 35-year-old played his first T20 since the 2022 World Cup back in January against Afghanistan. Skipper Rohit Sharma also made a comeback in that series

and is expected to lead India in the T20 World Cup beginning June 1. Kohli also missed the five-match home Test series against England due to his family commitments. The batting great had a memorable IPL last year, aggregating 639 runs including two hundreds and six half-centuries.



## Pooran or De Kock to don keeping gloves in IPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul is all set to play for his franchise from the opening IPL game after getting all clear from the National Cricket Academy but he has been advised against wicket-keeping in the first few games.

Rahul had once again suffered a strain in his quadriceps during the first Test against England in Hyderabad and even though he was expected to join the team by the third game, the stylish right-hander felt a tightness in his muscles and skipped all the remaining games.

## Rishabh might find it very difficult to get back his fluency at IPL onset: Gavaskar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rishabh Pant will find it "very difficult" to be at his fluent best at the beginning of the IPL but Sunil Gavaskar expects that his knees will react better once he starts batting more and more in match situations. Having survived a horrific car crash in December, 2022, Pant will make a comeback to competitive cricket after more than 14 months as Delhi Capitals captain after an extensive rehabilitation programme. "It'll be very difficult. But the good thing is he (Pant) has played some cricket. So he has got some practice. To get fluency in batting is a little tough," Gavaskar told 'Star Sports'. He then explained his point of view. "When you talk of a knee injury, the pivoting that takes place. Wicket-keeping is difficult as well, but even in batting, the knee is quite important. So, maybe, in the beginning, we won't see the real Rishabh Pant that we are

used to," the maestro said. Pant's presence and his chatty nature also adds to the entertainment quotient, Gavaskar admitted. "To find a wicket-keeper like him who comments from behind the stumps, that's full-on entertainment because there are a lot of wicket-keepers who would like to disturb your concentration by saying different things." ".....But Rishabh Pant has the ability to say such a thing that whoever he is targeting, they also laugh, they also enjoy it. But when enjoying it, their concentration goes down a bit, right? The advantage is for his team then." Gavaskar is also interested in how Shubman Gill's maiden captaincy stint turns out. "That is going to be the most important thing: the way he can handle the captaincy. Will it affect and impact his batting? And the second thing is there is a commonality in our initials; both of us are SG's, and if we go even further, my initials are SMG, and he has Shubh-Man Gill in his name."

## It is unbelievable batting with Virat: Du Plessis

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis says Virat Kohli's infectious energy, which easily rubs off on everyone, is the secret of the brilliant on-field and an equally fulfilling off-field equation he shares with the Indian superstar. Du Plessis, who took over the team's captaincy after Kohli decided to step down at the end of the 2021 season, said batting with the prolific right-hander is an "unbelievable experience." "It's unbelievable batting with him. He is one of the favourite guys I like to bat with. He brings out so much energy in me, like sometimes, I feel I am fist bumping my glove though his hand because he gets so passionate being out there in the middle," Du Plessis told 'Star Sports'. "It's really infectious the way he gives that energy,... How this guy is always on and how does he manage it...On the field while catching balls, we both are very competitive and make sure we get those good catches for the team," the stylish right-hander said. He might not be the skipper anymore but Kohli's inputs and role in lifting the fielding



unit's energy is also something that Du Plessis admires. "He is really important to me in terms of field (placements) I think. He leads in so many things as far as a team is concerned but fielding is where he sets the tone and energy on the field," the former South African captain said. Off the field, Du Plessis, called Kohli, "a terrible influence" on him. "We both love food and we both really into our fashion that another things we spend a

## Trying to hasten my recovery during WC led to prolonged rehab, admits Hardik

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Hardik Pandya's bid to hasten his comeback towards the business end of last year's ODI World Cup game actually aggravated his ankle injury and in the process delayed his possible return by five months. Pandya had twisted his ankle trying to stop the ball on his follow-through during India's fourth World Cup game against Bangladesh in Pune on October 19. Initially, he had eyed a comeback during home T20Is versus Afghanistan but after a prolonged rehabilitation, his comeback vehicle turns out to be upcoming IPL — a cash-rich league that catapulted the colourful Baroda all-rounder into instant stardom around a decade back.

"My injury was a freak one. It had nothing to do with my past injuries or my fitness. I tried to stop the ball and twisted my ankle. When I got injured, my injury from day one clearly showed that I would be out of the World Cup," Pandya said during a media interaction organised by Mumbai Indians here on Monday. Pandya was itching to make a comeback by semi-finals but his desperation proved to be counter-productive in the long run.

"We pushed but it would have been an uphill task that I would be fit for the World Cup semifinals or the final. When we pushed, it kind of triggered the injury and my recovery took longer (than expected)," Pandya admitted that his urge to represent India half-fit during World Cup semi-final was unjustifiable. "I had a recurrence. My injury kind of expanded more and the question was that do I want to represent India at 50 per cent? The answer was no, because India deserves better than that and I myself would not be able to justify the fact that I am coming (back) not completely ready," he said.



"From there, the whole focus was that that I will come back as soon as possible, but with injuries and something like the freak injury which I had, you have to give time. "It is not something which goes away with physiotherapy, it is just natural body recovery which we need to do and obviously the whole MI thing came. I was sitting at home, working hard and this news came and it was even more special," Pandya added about his switch to MI from Gujarat Titans. Pandya said he was back to full fitness around the time India played a three-match T20I series against Afghanistan at home, but did not have enough opportunities to play. The all-rounder was recently a

part of the Reliance One team at the DY Patil T20 tournament, which marked his return to professional cricket after a the lay-off. "When I got fit, the Afghanistan series (had) just started. I have been fit since then (but) there were no games to play," he said. "When I got injured, I had no clue how bad it was. When I went for the scans, it just showed just a little niggle which would be fine. But as a couple of hours progressed, it showed the real picture - my ankle was swollen. "I straight away went to the NCA next day to fasten my process and make sure that I come back. Again, we tried everyday making sure that I am available for the World Cup

(end) and we had to take a call after the 12th day," he added. Asked if Pandya will bowl in the IPL, the MI skipper replied in "affirmative". **WAITING FOR UPDATE ON SURYAKUMAR YADAV:** Meanwhile, MI head coach Mark Boucher said the team is waiting to hear from the Indian cricket board on the fitness status of star batter Suryakumar Yadav. "We are awaiting updates on Suryakumar from the BCCI. We have always been under a cloud of fitness issues but we have a world-class medical team. We may lose one or two in terms of fitness but we have to move on as it is sport," Boucher said. It has already been reported by PTI last week that world's No.1 ranked T20 batter, who is recuperating from a sports hernia surgery, is likely to miss the first few games but his rehabilitation as far as World T20 is concerned is on track. **MI WON'T HAVE A POLICY OF RESTING PLAYERS:** Boucher, however, said that there would be no policy of resting the players keeping this year's T20 World Cup in mind. "As the coach of Mumbai Indians, I am going to be a little bit biased and hoping to see my best players play all games. I have a soft spot for my players and I do understand that they might have niggles and that's when I will fall back on my medical team and work with them accordingly," he said. Talking about Rohit Sharma, Boucher said the Indian skipper was "fantastic" against England in the recently-concluded Test series and hoped to have his rich form continuing in the IPL. "Rohit has been in a fantastic touch. The way he was hitting the ball against England was fantastic. I am looking forward to seeing him go out and express himself. If he has a fantastic season, we will be there in the dying stages of the tournament," Boucher said.

## Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by four wickets

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM (BANGLADESH)

Concussion substitute Tanzid Hasan hammered 84 off 81 balls to help Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by four wickets in the third one-day international and seal a 2-1 victory in the series on Monday. Opting to bat first, Sri Lanka posted 235 all out in exactly 50 overs courtesy of Janith Liyanage's 101 off 102 balls for his maiden century. Soumya Sarkar, who felt neck stiffness and complained of a headache and vision difficulties after his head hit the ground while saving a boundary, was substituted by Tanzid and the replacement proved his worth with an innings laced with nine fours and four sixes to see Bangladesh home with 9.4 overs left. After Tanzid's fluent start, Rishad Hossain — one of the three changes made by Bangladesh for the match — struck an unbeaten 18-ball 48 containing five fours and four sixes to steer the hosts to 237-6.

Bangladesh won the first match of the series by six wickets before Sri Lanka leveled with a three-wicket victory, leaving a decider. Tanzid and Anamul Haque, who replaced the out-of-form Liton Das, added 50 runs for the opening stand, with Tanzid dominating the partnership. Pacer Lahiru Kumara, who grabbed a career-best 4-48, removed Haque (12) and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (1) in consecutive overs to put the Sri Lanka on the front foot protecting an under-par score. Kumara also broke the 49-run partnership between Tanzid and Towhid Hridoy when he undid the latter with extra bounce after he scored 22 and then removed Mahmudullah (1) with a back-of-the-length delivery in his next over to leave Bangladesh at 113-4 in the 24th over. When legspinner Wanindu Hasaranga had Tanzid caught by Charith Asalanka at long-on after building pressure on him with a series of dot balls, Sri Lanka got a ray of hope with Bangladesh at 130-5.

## Last year taught us a lot of things: Mandhana

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Smriti Mandhana said she got solid backing from the management after their failure to win the Women's Premier League last year, which went a long way in them lifting the title here on Sunday. She said the 2023 campaign "taught us a lot of things" as her team beat Delhi Capitals by eight wickets to land the title here. With this, RCB's spirited bunch has managed to achieve what their men's team could not do over 16 years, and Mandhana thanked their loyal fanbase for always supporting the side. "Last year taught us a lot of things, as a player, as a captain and as a team. The management, the way they backed me during the review

after the season...they have been through a lot and a big thumbs up (to them)," Mandhana said at the post-match presentation. On the title triumph, she said, "The feeling has not sunk in yet, maybe it will take time. Hard for me to come out with a lot of expressions. Only thing I want to say is I am proud of the bunch. "We have been through ups and downs but they have stuck at it, and the way we have gotten past the line (tonight), it was amazing. Our Bangalore leg was really good. We had two tough losses (in Delhi). That is what we talked about. "The last league match was like a quarter, then the semi and then the final. In such tournaments, you have to peak at the right time." The spin pair of Shreyanka Patil (4/12) and Sophie



Molineux (3/20) helped RCB bowl out DC for 113, and then, talismanic skipper Mandhana (31), Sophie Devine (32) and Elysse Perry (35 not out) saw them home with three balls to spare. The Royal Challengers made 115 for two in 19.3 overs, a far easier victory than that tight-looking final over finish. Mandhana added, "For them (management) to have this trophy, it is amazing for them. I am not the only one who has won the trophy, the team has won. For RCB as a franchise to win, it is really, really special. "This win is definitely one of the top five maybe. A World Cup (win) would top it. I have a message for all the RCB fans, the most loyal fan base. Nothing would have been possible without their support. Ee Sala Cup Namde (The Cup will be ours this

time) always comes up, and now I just want to say Ee Sala Cup Namdu (The Cup is ours this time)." DC, led by Meg Lanning, will rue the missed chance of bettering their runners-up position from WPL 2023, but she admitted that her team was outplayed on the day. Lanning said, "Disappointing to not get it done tonight. We played some good cricket through the tournament. But it was about not playing well on the day. Congratulations to RCB, they outplayed us. But we can be proud of our efforts throughout." On their batting collapse, she said, "It all happened relatively quickly, as it tends to do. Crazy things happen, and every game has been pretty close. You can never sort of rest and think it is under control because there are so many good teams.