







### KTR TO REVANTH

## Do whatever you want in phone-tapping case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy is set to become the first leader in the country to join the BJP after the Lok Sabha polls, announced Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao.

KTR emphasised that Revanth Reddy's silence regarding accusations of his ties with the BJP indicates a possible impending move. He challenged Revanth, suggesting that if indeed he has no plans to switch allegiance, he should publicly declare his commitment to remain with the Congress until the end.

KTR also said that accusations have surfaced against Revanth Reddy, alleging that he has been extorting money from business people in the State and forwarding it to the

Delhi high command. KTR further accused that Revanth Reddy has already dispatched Rs 2,500 crore to Delhi for the upcoming parliamentary polls. To amass such significant sums, Revanth Reddy allegedly halted the issuance of permissions for buildings and layouts over the past three months, pressuring real estate stakeholders for funds under the threat of denial of approvals, KTR said.

In a gathering of the Secunderabad parliament constituency, attended by MLAs, MPs, MLCs, corporators, and senior party leaders, KTR highlighted the dwindling power of the Congress party, predicting that it would secure no more than 40 MP seats in the upcoming elections. KTR asserted that only formidable regional political entities like

TMC, AAP, and BRS could thwart the BJP wave across the country, emphasising the growing support for local parties over the Congress.

Despite the Congress holding power in the State, KTR criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for aligning himself with BJP ideologies, contrasting his stance with that of national party leaders. KTR accused Revanth Reddy of endorsing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Gujarat model, thus becoming subservient to Modi as a "chhota bhai" (younger brother).

On phone-tapping case, KTR said the govt is giving leaks to YouTube but won't tell what's happening. "You have power. Do whatever you want, probe whatever you can. You can do nothing", he said.

### SENSING DEFEAT IN LS POLLS

## Opposition indulging in divisive politics: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP slammed INDIA opposition bloc leaders on Tuesday for their latest remarks targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused them of indulging in "divisive politics" to vitiate the country's atmosphere sensing their imminent defeat in the Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a press conference at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters here, party spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi appealed to people to "discard" and give a betting reply to such kind of "regressive forces" in the upcoming parliamentary polls by voting for Modi for the country's progress.

Trivedi lashed out at Karnataka minister Shivaraj Tangadagi's 'slap youngsters who raise 'Modi, Modi' slogans' remarks and accused him of

provoking people to resort to violence in the run-up to the election.

"Given their imminent defeat in the election, such remarks symbolise a dangerous propensity of even resorting to violence out of frustration," Trivedi said and demanded that the Congress make it clear if such kinds of "divisive and violence-provoking" statements have any relevance in a democracy.

He also slammed the opposition party over a comment posted on social media platforms from its leader Supriya Shrinate's accounts against actress Kangana Ranaut, who has been fielded by the BJP from the Mandi Lok Sabha constituency in Himachal Pradesh, saying it proves that the Congress and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive alliance (INDIA) are playing into the hands of "some unknown powers".

## BJP ‘misleading’ people on its promise of 2 crore jobs: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused the BJP of "misleading" people on its promise of providing two crore jobs every year and said the youth across the country are asking if it lied to them.

He also said the youth have to change their destiny themselves by breaking the web of illusion created by the BJP and assured that the Congress has resolved to undertake an employment revolution through 'Yuva Nyay', a promise made to the youth ahead of elections.

"Narendra Modi ji, did you have any plan for employment? This question is on the lips of every youth today. In every street and village, BJP people are being asked - why was the lie told about providing 2 crore jobs every year," he asked.

"The Congress has resolved to undertake employment rev-



olution under Yuva Nyay. Our guarantee is that as soon as we come into government: We will fill 30 lakh government posts, every educated youth will be given a job worth Rs 1 lakh per year under the 'Pehli Naukri Pakki' scheme and we will get rid of paper leaks by making a law," the Congress leader also said in a post in Hindi on X.

## ‘Not enough money for campaign’

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress on Tuesday said its candidates were facing a bit of a financial crunch while campaigning for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls due to the party's accounts being frozen by the Central government.

Congress Working Committee member and MP from Thiruvananthapuram, Shashi Tharoor said that all party candidates "were in a

financial crunch."

"The party has had its accounts frozen and is unable to give us the kind of support we would have liked to have from our party.

"We have, nonetheless, very loyal and hardworking Congress workers everywhere who are doing what they can and when the Election Commission allows us to raise funds legally from the public, we will do so," Tharoor said.

### PHONE TAPPING CASE

## Errabelli denies allegations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the phone-tapping case in Telangana getting murkier by the day, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader and former minister E Dayakar Rao on Tuesday denied allegations that he along with a police official involved in the case illegally detained a businessman and extorted Rs 50 lakh.

He also denied any involvement in the phone-tapping case, in which three police officials have been arrested. "I don't know why I am being dragged into this matter. I have nothing to do with

the phone tapping case," he said and claimed that the allegations are part of a political conspiracy.

Dayakar Rao told media persons that he does not know who Charan Chowdary is.

He claimed that Charan Chowdary was suspended from the BJP following allegations of land grabbing against him. He had also allegedly cheated NRIs after collecting money from them, the BRS leader said.

The former minister said Chowdary had also cheated a person named Ajay. He clarified that he knows only the NRIs who were cheated.

## ‘Leaders like us will die if Cong...

Continued on Page 1

However, we are very close. Whatever it may be, I will take the responsibility of the Chevella Lok Sabha constituency and strive for the victory of the Congress candidate".

The Chevella LS constituency candidate Gaddam Ranjith Reddy, Assembly speaker Gaddam Prasada Kumar, Vem Narendra Reddy, Challa Narsimha Reddy and several others were present.

### RAGHUNANDAN TO CM ON PHONE-TAPPING CASE

## Include KCR, KTR, Harish and Jagdish as main accused

### Why is CM not taking against channel run by Harish’s benami?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that former minister T Harish Rao has appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to protect him from the phone-tapping case on promise of switching to the Congress along with 26 BRS MLAs, former BJP legislator M Raghunandan Rao has demanded the CM and Harish to spell out what transpired

between them while they travelled together in a flight on March 19.

Raghunandan Rao said that Revanth Reddy went to Delhi on March 19 in A10389 business class at 10.15 PM. Harish Rao also travelled by the same flight.

Raghunandan Rao said they need to clarify "whether Harish Rao appealed to CM Revanth Reddy to protect him from

phone tapping case, after assuring the CM that he will join the Congress party along with 26 BRS MLAs... Why is the CM not taking action against the I-News Channel run by Harish Rao's benami?"

Addressing media persons at Kandli, Sangareddy on Tuesday, Raghunandan Rao said that three former ministers had a secret meeting on March 25th.

## phone-tapping ..

Continued on Page 1

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy also targeted the BRS. Even if for any reason the Congress compromises in the phone-tapping case, the BJP will not. In fact, for the Congress and the BJP, the phone-tapping case has given good opportunity to take action against the BRS leaders. Discussion is going on in the political circles on who were involved in the phone-tapping issue, weather KCR or his son KTR.

The political parties also think that these two names only figure in the phone-tapping case. The investigation authorities may soon open up to suspicions in this regard.

## BRS MLC Kavitha ..

Continued on Page 1

Earlier, Kavitha had requested the court to let her have home-cooked food in view of her health problems.

"She will be kept in a separate cell which will be shared by two other female inmates," a jail official said.

Kavitha is the third political leader after Aam Aadmi Party's Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, who are lodged in Tihar jail after being arrested in the excise policy-linked money laundering case. While Sisodia is lodged in

jail number one, Singh is in jail number two.

Another AAP leader Satyendar Jain, who was arrested in another money laundering case, is lodged in jail number seven.

Officials said Tihar's Jail number six lodges female inmates. Around 500 inmates are lodged in this jail. "The timings for tea, having food and watching television will be the same for her as other inmates," an officer said, adding she can access the books in the Tihar jail library, which is for all inmates.

## Names of..

Continued on Page 1

As per the instructions of the Election Commission of India, New Delhi, no deletion request or correction request can be processed in ERO Net at this time. It is also noted that enrollment in the voter list and shifting from one Assembly constituency to another can be filed up to April 15, 2024. Total voters are of thirty three million thirteen thousand in number, of whom male voters are of sixteen million four hundred fourteen thousand, and female voters are of sixteen million five hundred and ninety five thousand.

## CM: Party leadership..

Continued on Page 1

Modi did not give MMTS to Vikarabad, but took the Bullet train project to Gujarat. Modi developed Sabarmati River Front in Gujarat; however, the same Modi did not give funds to Musi River Front.

Alleging that the BJP had been obstructing the Regional Ring Road (RRR) to Hyderabad, Revanth Reddy questioned the BJP to tell why people should vote for Modi.

The Chief Minister said that Rahul Gandhi had walked for thousands of kilometers to protect the nation and to stand by party activists. There was a responsibility on all members

of the party to support Sonia Gandhi's leadership.

The party had announced 6-guarantees at Thukkuguda Rajiv Gandhi venue and at the same place the party would announce national guarantees on April 6 or 7, he said. The Congress party would blow the bugle of national politics from Rangareddy district. He said that Rahul Gandhi and AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge would attend the meeting.

CM for Delhi today

Revanth Reddy is going to Delhi on Wednesday to attend the CEC meeting at which the party may finalise the remaining 8 MP candidates.

## Nampally court to hear ..

Continued on Page 1

The Panjagutta police arrested Bhujanga Rao and Thirupattana on March 23 and produced them before the Magistrate on March 25, Sunday and Magistrate ordered to send them to judicial remand till April 6 to Chanchalguda jail.

When the officers of SIB were allegedly tapping the phones of politicians, they had reportedly extorted money from realtors, film stars, politicians and other prominent people.

After the case was filed against Praneth Rao and

other officers were arrested, businessmen and politicians are reaching the police and CM's office to complain as they were victims of the phone-tapping.

On Monday, a businessman Saran Chowdary has filed a complaint to the CM's office and Telangana police as ex-minister Dayakar Rao, ex-DCP Radha Krishna Rao and other officers have threatened him and extorted Rs 50 lakh.

However, Dayakar Rao said that he did not know Saran, and he did not do any illegal activities.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dwitiya: Mar 26 02:55 PM to Mar 27 05:06 PM

Tritiya: Mar 27 05:06 PM to Mar 28 06:57 PM

Nakshatram: Chitra: Mar 26 01:33 PM to Mar 27 04:15 PM

Swati: Mar 27 04:15 PM to Mar 28 06:38 PM

Rahukalam: 12:21 PM to 1:52 PM

Yamagandam: 7:48 AM to 9:19 AM

Varjyam: 10:25 PM to 12:10 AM

Gulika: 10:50 AM to 12:21 PM

Amritakalam: 09:08 AM to 10:55 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 38°

Humidity: 29%

Sunrise: 6:15 AM

Sunset: 6:28 PM

Updated: March 26, 2024 5:00 PM

## LIC world’s strongest...

Continued on Page 1

closely followed by NRMA Insurance, which saw an 82 per cent rise in brand value to US\$ 1.3 billion, according to a statement by Brand Finance Insurance. From a vantage point near the entrance to the bridge, jagged remnants of its steel frame were visible protruding from the water, with the on-ramp ending abruptly where the span once began.

Notably, Chinese insurance brands maintain dominance in the global rankings, with Ping An leading with a 4 per cent increase in brand value to US\$ 33.6 billion, followed by China Life Insurance and CPIC defending their 3rd and 5th positions, respectively, it said.

Allianz from Germany and AXA from France retain their spots in the 2nd and

4th positions to complete the Top 5, it said.

Among the brands experiencing significant growth in brand value, NRMA Insurance from Australia stands out with an 82 per cent increase to US\$ 1.3 billion, along with Denmark's Tryg, which saw a 66 per cent rise to US\$ 1.6 billion.

Additionally, LIC India achieved the highest first-year premium collection of Rs 39,090 crore in FY23, while SBI Life Insurance and HDFC Life Insurance led the private sector with new business premium collections of Rs 15,197 crore and Rs 10,970 crore, respectively.

In recent developments, the government approved a 17 per cent wage revision for LIC employees, effective from August 2022, benefiting over 110,000 employees.

## No problem..

Continued on Page 1

She noted that while the flushing of bore wells and repairs of pipes had already been completed, the Collectors were advised to correct the management errors immediately and pay special attention to continuous water supply. The Collectors were told to hold a teleconference with the concerned field level officials and nodal officials on drinking water supply in villages and towns every day. She directed that special measures should be taken to ensure that all the works sanctioned as part of the summer action plan were completed on time duly paying special attention on operation and maintenance.

She cautioned that while some states were facing severe drinking water.

## Summer Action...

Continued on Page 1

The collectors were told to hold a teleconference with the concerned field level officials and nodal officials on drinking water supply in villages and towns every day. She directed that special measures should be taken to ensure that all the works sanctioned as part of the summer action plan are completed on time duly paying special attention on operation and maintenance.

She cautioned that while some states are facing severe drinking water shortage, attempts are being made to publish similar type of news stories in our State as well. However, despite the lack of sufficient rainfall in the State this time, there is no need to worry as the water levels in the main reservoirs, SRSP,

Sripada Yellampalli and Nagarjuna Sagar are the same as last year. However, the collectors were also directed to make alternative arrangements. She said that in some municipalities and villages there were administrative deficiencies and these deficiencies were resolved immediately. She asked the collectors to respond to news items on water issues appearing on various media and take action immediately.

Municipal and Urban Development Department Principal Secretary Dana Kishore, Panchayat Raj & Rural Development Department Principal Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Municipal Department Director Divya, Water Board MD Sudarshan Reddy and other officials attended the video conference.

## Cargo ship..

Continued on Page 1

Earlier, Kevin Cartwright, director of communications for the Baltimore Fire Department, told The Associated Press that several vehicles were on the bridge at the time, including one the size of a tractor-trailer truck.

He called the collapse a "developing mass casualty event," though he didn't know at the time how many people were affected.

Cartwright added that some cargo appeared to be dangling from the bridge, which spans the Patapsco River at the entrance to a busy harbour. The river leads to the Port of Baltimore, a major hub for shipping on the East Coast. Opened in 1977, the bridge is named for the writer of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore declared a state of emergency

## Crew of ship..

Continued on Page 1

It said: "All crew members, including the two pilots, have been accounted for and there are no reports of any injuries. There has also been no pollution."

Whilst the exact cause of the incident is yet to be determined, the "DALI" has now mobilised its Qualified Individual Incident Response service.

The US Coast Guard and local officials have been notified, and the owners and managers are fully cooperating with Federal and State government agencies under an approved plan. "We are horrified by what has happened in Baltimore, and our thoughts are with all of those affected," Maersk said in a statement. "We can confirm that the container vessel 'DALI', operated by charter vessel company Synergy Group, is time chartered by Maersk and is carrying Maersk customers' cargo.







# Democracy will shine if the House represents more parties

If rulers are not democratic, people opt for change! Participants in the electoral process would do well to remember this always. Ruling parties often make tall claims for ensuring their comeback, thinking they are indispensable for the all-round development of the state. They pose as if they are the best rulers the state has ever witnessed. They base their assessment on the welfare measures taken up for the masses, who constitute a vital chunk of their vote bank. That does not mean people want to see the same person occupy the seat of administration again and again. If they want change, they will simply vote for another party to arrest certain undesirable tendencies.



At the same time, a person cannot be written off as a loser basing on the latest verdict given by the people. For example, Kamaraj Nadar, a towering personality on the Indian political screen and former chief minister of Tamil Nadu was defeated in the Virudh Nagar Assembly constituency at the hands of a rival from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the elections of 1967. The DMK then swept the polls in TN for the first time, bringing curtains down on the Congress rule in the state. Shocked at his defeat, Kamaraj later learned from the dominant section of voters they had simply decided to try the 'young man' who was in the electoral fray against Kamaraj! Kamaraj was famous for setting up of thousands of

**Shocked at his defeat, Kamaraj later learned from the dominant section of voters they had simply decided to try the 'young man' who was in the electoral fray against Kamaraj! Kamaraj was famous for setting up of thousands of schools and providing mid-day meals for children across the state, despite facing financial crunch. Besides, he had adopted visible austerity measures during his tenure as the chief minister. Such integrity is lacking among most of today's politicians.**

'Change' can be choice for the people to strengthen democracy. In fact, it is the responsibility of people to

ensure that rulers discharge their functions as per the wishes of the electorate.

Today, many sections in society remain as vote banks only, without getting their due share in the power structure. The utmost that various parties do is to set up corporations ostensibly for the welfare of every caste in society. It is a different matter that those corporations lack real



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

power. Members of down-trodden sections of society, who work for different political parties, strive to get an opportunity to contest the elections. But they seldom make it.

The current alliance of three opposition parties, Telugu

Desam Party, Bharatiya Janata Party and Jana Sena Party, has paved the way for more representation on the part of political organisations. It may be recalled that there was no major opposition voice except that of the principal opposition in the first House (2014-19) of the residual Andhra Pradesh state. The BJP, despite being an alliance partner of TDP, with four members in the House could not be considered as a voice of real opposition. There was literally no opposition in the House for a particular period when the then principal opposition YSR Congress Party decided to boycott the proceedings of the House. Unfortunately, this situation continued till the 2019 polls.

The situation worsened in the next House, which witnessed no representation of

any political party other than the ruling party and the principal opposition. The YSRCP stormed to power in AP by bagging 86% of the seats in the 175-member AP Legislative Assembly. The principal opposition, TDP, won only 23 seats. One seat was won by the Jana Sena Party (JSP) headed by film actor Pawan Kalyan and even that lone member shifted loyalties to YSRCP.

Now, with the coming together of TDP, JSP and BJP in AP, there may be relatively more representation in the House following the 2024 elections. There is a guaranteed representation of sorts, considering that JSP and BJP are contesting 23 and 10 Assembly seats respectively with the support of organisationally strong TDP.

Despite power sharing, the three parties in the alliance

would not hesitate to question the establishment on public issues.

It may be mentioned here that, in the history of Legislative Assembly in the erstwhile undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, there was representation of 11 registered political parties in the Legislative Assembly in 2004. That is, the Congress, TDP, TRS, MIM, BJP, CPI, CPI(M), BSP, Samajwadi Party (SP), Janata Party, CPI-ML-New Democracy had representation in APLA then. SP, Janata Party members joined their parent party - the Congress later. The ruling party, with 180+ seats, and the principal opposition, with comfortable numbers, and with the presence of other parties, then House had a very good composition that could spread the fragrance of democracy.

## Dharani portal a tool to grab lands: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) senior vice-president G Niranjan on Tuesday alleged that the Dharani portal was subject to the whims of an officer and became a tool to grab lands. He said that though the present Congress government ordered the cleansing of the Dharani portal, the official seemed to be coming in the way of it.

While addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, Niranjan alleged that some officials in the previous government were completely corrupt. The officials in the key departments like Revenue, Municipal and police enjoyed excessive free-

dom, and unlimited power and there was no control. He alleged that the BJP was misusing the agencies at the Centre and trying to trouble the leaders of the opposition parties. In the same way, the previous BRS government misused the Special Intelligence Branch and it stunned the people.

Niranjan alleged that the Telangana Police was earlier praised as competent and efficient, but this episode made the department embarrassed. Unfortunately, cybercrimes are committed by the police who are supposed to catch cybercriminals. Generally, criminals destroy the evidence, he said.

He said that the destruction of hard disks by the Special



Intelligence Branch officers and dumping them in forest areas was the culmination of illegal activity by police officers. Now it seems there is no difference between police and criminals. A building near Revanth Reddy's house was rented and a device capable of tapping spoken words within a range of 300 meters was brought from Israel and installed there. There are reports that the

conversations at Revanth Reddy's house had been tapped. Such equipment is necessary for Israel in view of the decades-long war between Israel and Palestine, he said, asking whether the State needed it.

He said that it seemed that this device was brought without Central approval. If this device is meant to monitor the movements of Naxalites, why is it installed in the city? They are targeting traders, real estate businessmen and hawalas agents, are they the police or a gang of thugs? In this regard, a letter was written to the Chief Secretary of the State Government and the State DGP asking them to close all these affairs and punish the culprits.

## Harish decries threat to freedom of expression

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

"It has become a new normal in politics for students and activists to be incarcerated for expressing dissent and being vocal about certain actions and policies of the Narendra Modi government. At the same time those opposition leaders, who faced graft charges, would become instantly clean after joining the saffron party," former minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader T Harish Rao pointed out.

Commenting on the arrest of BRS MLC K Kavita and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, he charged the Narendra Modi government with foisting cases on those who refused to toe its party line.

He was speaking at a BRS



activists meeting in Medak.

Harish Rao made it very clear that former chief minister and BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao would never join hands with the BJP under any circumstances. The BRS is a secular party. He decried the propaganda unleashed ahead of the last Assembly elections that the

BRS and BJP were cut from the same cloth.

He exhorted the BRS activists to educate the people that the party's win in the upcoming Lok Sabha election is necessary to keep the Telangana flag flying high. Telangana society needed BRS voice in Parliament as it represented the interests of the State.

Under the BRS regime, KCR gave priority to Muslims, he said, adding that the former chief minister appointed a Muslim as the Home Minister.

He condemned the Congress leader for trying to lure the BRS leaders and MLAs into the grand old party. The Congress government, he alleged, has been foisting cases on the BRS leaders and activists.

## Nine nabbed over remote radio unit theft



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Kacheguda Police on Tuesday arrested nine persons for stealing remote radio units worth Rs 60 lakh from the Airtel and Jio networks.

The accused were identified as Banavath Naga Raju (23), a resident of LB Nagar and native of Suryapet, Maloth Nages (24), Chukkolu Shiva (22), a resident of Sarooranagar, Dilshad Malik (24), Chand Malik (29), Shaharyan Malik (20), Sohail Malik (20), all natives of Uttar Pradesh, Neerudu Chaitanya (33) and Lavoori Ravi Naik (27) from Nalgonda district.

The accused were previously involved in 10 cases of theft under various police stations of the Hyderabad and Cyberabad commissionerates. The latest cases were registered under Adibatla and Bhanur of Sanga Reddy on February 14 and 20. Raju and Nagesh came to Hyderabad after completing their education. They worked as Tower Riggers of Airtel Networks under the Sub-contractor of Airtel Networks (Summit Enterprises) identified as J Venkata Ramana. In order to make quick money, the two accused planned to steal RRUs, Base Bands and cables from the network towers.

They committed thefts at Khairatabad, Kachiguda, SR Nagar, Madhura Nagar, Meerpet Vanasthalipuram, Nagole, Hayath Nagar, Shamshabad and Balanagar. All the stolen material was sold to another accused identified as Shiva who sold it to Dilshad, Chand, Shahryan and Sohail. They in turn sold the material to customers for reuse. The Commissioner's Task Force in coordination with the Kachiguda police nabbed the accused and seized the material from them. They were booked under Section 379 of the IPC.

## Powerloom workers embark on signature campaign

PNS ■ SIRCILLA

The CITU-affiliated power loom workers union and other affiliated unions on Tuesday embarked on a signature campaign demanding that the state government pay Rs 10,000 as an immediate support to each worker as the workers lost their livelihood for the past three months and release the pending 10% subsidy on the Bathukamma Saris payable to them and resolve problems of the textile industry here.

The workers threatened to stall the election campaign of all political parties.

A letter was addressed to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in this regard. Later, the CITU leaders, accompanied by textile workers, met Sircilla Polyester Cloth Producers' Association and urged the association members to immediately resume production as the suspension of it has been posing financial problems to workers. Otherwise, the association should pay Rs 10,000 per week to each worker.

## TSRTC to run 60 special buses for IPL matches at Uppal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) has arranged a total of 60 special buses for IPL matches at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium (RGIC) on March 27 and April 5. On Tuesday, TSRTC released a press communique where it mentioned that the buses will be operated between 6 pm to 11:30 pm from various destinations to the stadium and again these buses will pick up the return traffic.

TSRTC will run 4 buses from Uppal stadium to Mehdiptnam, 4 buses from Ghatkesar to stadium route, 2 buses from NGO's Colony to

stadium, 2 buses from Ibrahimpatnam to stadium route, 2 buses from Koti to stadium, 2 buses from Afzalgunj to stadium, 2 buses from Lakdikapool to stadium, 2 buses from Dilsukhnagar to stadium, 4 buses from Jeedimetla to stadium, 4 buses from JBS to stadium, 4 buses from Charminar to stadium, 2 buses from LB Nagar to stadium, 2 buses from BHEL to stadium, 2 buses from Kondapur to stadium, 2 buses from Mehdiptnam to stadium and 2 buses from Medchal to stadium.

For communication spectators can contact 9959226160 of Koti and 9959226154 of Rathifile bus station.



## Mood of people is with Cong: Ranjith Reddy

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

Congress candidate for Chevella Lok Sabha Dr G Ranjith Reddy is confident of winning for the second time. In an interview with The Pioneer in run up to Lok Sabha polls, Ranjith Reddy speaks about changing party, taking on BJP opponent Konda Vishveshwar Reddy and differences between BRS and Congress.

**When did you decide to join Congress?**

All these changes happened overnight. I informed KTR much before Assembly elections that I wouldn't contest in Lok Sabha elections. I was content and happy serving BRS party. But the way BRS lost elections, I thought I should stand up and agreed to contest. But the things that were happening around me, I decided to drop off of the contest. BRS was okay with me not contesting, but didn't want me to go to Congress. When I got elected as MP from TRS, initially I didn't realise the importance of it. Having gone into public, meeting Parliamentarians put me on cloud 9. I had the realisation and motivated me to come back. When there was an offer from Congress, asking me to contest, I had two things - People like me and my opponent had to be defeated. So Why not?

**What do you have to say about your opponent Vishveshwar Reddy?**

One of the reasons to switch to Congress is because of my BJP opponent. If I contest from BRS, someone would from Congress. It would be cake walk for BJP and Vishveshwar Reddy behaved as if he already won the elections due to triangular contest. I thought, why should I give up fighting so easily when Congress asked me to contest. I jumped because my fight was against him. I felt that Congress can fight and we will certainly win. Vishveshwar Reddy is saying look at Modi and vote for him. But I am saying, look at me and my performance vis-a-vis his performance. In villages, people are concerned about their issues, more than Modi and Rahul Gandhi. Whenever there are issues, they need go to person which I have been over last 5 years. If we are discussing Ram Mandir and CAA, Modi also has anti-incumbency.

**How are you handling criticism of this last moment decision?**

I was one of the very few who served BRS very sincerely. You can ask people at the helm of affairs in BRS if they can deny my contribution. I contributed more than anyone in the party. I told KTR much before the elections that I won't contest. Nobody said I was betraying then, now because I joined Congress, there is betraying. No one likes someone changing party. I was loyal to serving the party. Before leaving I informed them in person and spoke to them thrice.



**How do you manage differences among cadres?**

Congress cadres are resisting my cadre from joining, especially Vikarabad. I told Revanth and the MLA concerned. The Chief Minister said that cadre that I was doing as per party stance at that time. In today's meeting also I told whatever I did that day was correct. And now whatever Congress line is, will do accordingly. BRS was MLA centric and there used to be MP-MLA issue which was never resolved. I am pretty confident about winning elections now. The mood of people is for Congress. Revanth Reddy is in-charge of Chevella Parliamentary constituency. Contested MLAs those who won and lost are very seniors, that will be an add on. There is a soft corner for me among BRS cadres that will continue to help me. People may curse me, but will vote for me, because of the bonding.

**What is the difference in KCR and Revanth's style of functioning?**

KCR's style of functioning, his way of thinking, with experience and seniority he has, he is Mr KCR. The relationship I had with KCR and KTR was magnified that I was that close. I wasn't that close as it was being zoomed. Revanth-anna with energy and josh he strongly believes, Congress party gave opportunity for him to become MP and without experience became CM. Since he was always in opposition, he knows a lot about each and every issue. He knows the functioning of BRS also over the last 10 years. He is cornering, pushing, planning on implementing 6 guarantees. When I discussed about 6 guarantees, he was explaining that he may cut short few freebies and match the numbers which are required. Major chunk will be Rs 2500 for ladies which will be rolled out. I am sure the guarantees will be implemented

**GO111 is being put on hold by the Congress government...**

I spoke to Revanth Reddy on GO111. Abolishing was over, for the new GO 69, shape to be given for implementation was being discussed. CM Revanth was speaking about setting up an urban development body there, discussing modalities on how to be implemented - buffer zone, green zone and STPs. He was planning quite differently, which can be practically implemented. It will be implemented for sure. I don't say it is on hold, They are finetuning it

**There is opposition to Indian Navy's Low Frequency Radar Station (LFRS) in the Damagundam forest area**

Indian Navy's Low Frequency Radar Station (LFRS) in the Damagundam forest area is being opposed, people are worried that there will be an impact of radiation. There is speculation on the impact of Radiation. When GoI spoke to GoTS, the top most priority will be security, this being the top most point, it can catch the frequency of submarines. It is needed for country and there is a lot of government land. Initially BRS gave nod, but stopped it because Bison Polo nod was not being given by Centre. It came to a stalemate. Now Revanth Reddy agreed for setting up station.

**Congress govt agreed for 60% of funding for Palamuru Rangareddy project instead of National status**

Congress agreed to 60:40 for Palamuru Rangareddy project instead of National status. Yes, Palamuru Rangareddy is at slow pace but Opposition talks about it vis-a-vis old project. For this project Rs5000cr tenders were called for. All the 5 years, all MPs used to raise for National status. Instead National status, if Centre is ready to bear 60% of cost, I welcome it.. It is a big money and instead of dragging it forever, the project should go on quickly.

**What is the Agenda when you go to public?**

In the constituency, my role is to address issues to people. As MP role is concerned, will take it up in Parliament. As parliamentarians our Interest should be telangana state. Next issue will be RRR, ITIR, Pharma hub. Appa Manneguda road has been pending for 15 years. I got it cleared in last 5 years there were few issues with trees. I sat along with Nitin Gadkari who gave sufficient time. We have finalised the width of road 45meters. The tenders were called for and awarded for Rs1000crore. Suddenly a case came up in NGT. Finally the orders came, I will work with National highways authority

**When did you decide to join Congress?**

All these changes happened overnight. I informed KTR much before assembly elections that I wouldn't contest in Lok Sabha elections. I was content and happy serving BRS party. But the way BRS lost elections, I thought I should stand up and agreed to contest. But the things that were happening around me, I decided to drop off of the contest. BRS was okay with me not contesting, but didn't want me to go to Congress. When I got elected as MP from TRS, initially I didn't realise the importance of it. Having gone into public, meeting parliamentarians, put me on cloud9. I had the realisation and motivated me to come back. When there was an offer from Congress, asking me to contest, I had two things - People like me and my opponent had to be defeated. So Why not?

## Jupally challenges Harish for a debate on farmers' issue, irrigation projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Excise Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Tuesday threw a challenge at former Minister and BRS MLA from Siddipet T Harish Rao to tell whether the latter is ready for a debate on farmers' issues, irrigation projects and the corruption that took place during the previous regime. Krishna Rao demanded that Harish Rao tell the place, date and time for debate.

Speaking to the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, along with MLAs, Narayana

Reddy, V Shankar, Vamshikrishna and Rajesh Reddy, Krishna Rao, condemned the statement of Harish Rao that the BRS would lay siege to the Secretariat if the government failed to extend ex-gratia to the farmers for crop loss.

Krishna Rao said that the Congress government would make the corruption that took place during the BRS government public. He alleged that the BRS leaders seized the state treasury in the last 10 years and now they are stating that they would lay siege to the

Secretariat.

He made it clear that the Congress government would stand by the farmers who lost their crops due to unseasonal rains. He said that the chief minister Revanth Reddy already ordered the officials to submit a comprehensive report on crop loss.

The Excise Minister said that the government would extend Rs 10,000 per acre to the farmers immediately after the report comes. He said that the government would implement the crop insurance scheme from the coming

Kharif season.

Krishna Rao demanded that Harish Rao explain that sinking of pillar of Medigadda barrage was not the fault of the BRS government.

He said that the Revanth Reddy Congress government has been working sincerely though the previous BRS government made the state debt-ridden. He said that the Congress government has been implementing the promises given to the people. He suggested that the BRS leaders stop doing petty politics.



INDIA CORNER


11-year-old girl raped, murdered in Surat; two men arrested

An 11-year-old girl, who went missing a week ago, was raped and later murdered in Surat district of Gujarat, police said on Tuesday. Two persons, originally hailing from Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, were arrested in connection with the gruesome crime, they said. The victim went missing from her house on March 18 after which the police filed an FIR under Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 363 (kidnapping) on a complaint and formed multiple teams to locate her, Superintendent of Police (Surat Rural) Hitesh Joysar said. On March 23, the girl's semi-naked body was found dumped in shrubs near the locality where she lived, he said. Doctors later confirmed the girl was raped before being murdered, Joysar told mediapersons. "To solve the crime, more than 15 police teams were formed which surveyed over 600 houses and nabbed two suspects who later confessed to having committed the crime," he said.



Medication errors key challenge to patient safety: Study

A recent study, conducted by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals (NABH), has highlighted medication errors as the key challenge to patient safety in the Indian hospitals. The NABH is a constituent of the Quality Council of India (QCI) and the medication errors highlighted by it include improper labelling and dosage miscalculations, faulty medical devices, high rates of healthcare-associated infections and compromising patient safety. According to the study findings, around 58 per cent of the nurses reported feeling pressured to compromise patient safety over the efficiency of hospitals while 35 per cent of them complained of inadequate staff, and 32 per cent acknowledged poor patient safety culture for ineffective patient safety. The doctors echoed similar concerns, with 18 per cent of them claiming to be pressured to compromise on patient safety over efficiency.



Origin of butter chicken: Daryaganj moves Delhi HC

Restaurant chain Daryaganj has moved the Delhi High Court against certain allegedly defamatory remarks made by the proprietors of Moti Mahal in an interview on the issue of the origin of "butter chicken". The Moti Mahal owners have filed a lawsuit claiming that their predecessor, Late Kundan Lal Gujral, invented "butter chicken" and "dal makhani". They have also accused Daryaganj of "misleading people" on the origin of the two dishes. However, the owners of Moti Mahal have asserted that the remarks in question were an "editorial perspective" and cannot be attributed to them. Justice Sanjeev Narula asked the proprietors of Moti Mahal to submit an affidavit, affirming their effort to distance themselves from the statement in articles that have been published. In an application filed in the lawsuit, Daryaganj has raised concerns regarding the "defamatory" statements in the article -- first published in the "Wall Street Journal."



PM MODI DIALS BELGIAN COUNTERPART

Discusses West Asia, Russia and Ukraine peace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday spoke with his Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo and agreed to enhance cooperation and support for early restoration of peace and security in West Asia and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

During the telephone call, Modi also congratulated De Croo on the successful hosting of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels last week.

After the conversation, Modi tweeted, "Spoke to Belgium PM @alexanderdecroo. Congratulated him on the success of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. Exchanged views on strengthening bilateral ties; advancing India-EU Partnership under Belgian Presidency; and cooperation on regional and global issues."

De Croo also put out a tweet saying, "Called prime minister @narendramodi to



Modi tweeted, "Spoke to Belgium PM @alexanderdecroo. Congratulated him on the success of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels"

discuss the conflicts in #Ukraine & #Gaza and protecting shipping lanes in the Red Sea. We also talked about our growing commercial relations #semiconductors #pharmaceuticals #greenhydrogen and the upcoming royal trade mission to India."

In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the two leaders "agreed upon the need to enhance coopera-

tion and support for early restoration of peace and security in the West Asia region and Russia- Ukraine conflict", adding they also exchanged views on global and regional developments.

It said Modi and De Croo reviewed the excellent relations between India and Belgium.

"They discussed ways to further strengthen the bilateral partnership in diverse sectors

including trade, investment, clean technologies, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, green hydrogen, IT, defence, ports, among others," the statement said.

The two leaders affirmed commitment to further bolster the India EU Strategic Partnership under the ongoing Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Indian-origin mathematician Subramaniam dies in US

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Dr T N Subramaniam, an eminent mathematician of Indian origin and creator of Route One company & server for General Motors, passed away in Michigan on Tuesday. He was 76.

Subramaniam, who migrated to the US in 1979, was renowned in academic circles in India and the US.

He leaves behind him a rich legacy of mathematical models and theories for the world of maths. He taught Maths at Philadelphia university for some years and then shifted to Oakland where he taught for several years. Later, he founded the Route One company for the automotive manufacturing company, which handles auto-financing for all GM cars and GPS systems. He was the architect of the server for the site for General Motors in Troy, Michigan, in the US.

The then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also met him personally while on tour and encouraged him to be innovative and do things that the country could be proud of him.

ITS CIVILISATIONAL IMPRINT IS STILL VISIBLE IN THE REGION

India has long, distinguished maritime tradition: Jaishankar

PNS ■ MANILA

India has a long and distinguished maritime tradition whose civilisational imprint is still visible in this region, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday as he hailed the docking of an Indian Coast Guard ship here signified the deepening of bilateral ties with Manila.

Jaishankar, who is in the Philippines on the second leg of his three-nation tour, made the remarks during his visit to the Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Samudra Paharedar' during the vessel's port call to Manila.

"My visit and the ship's presence signifies the deepening India-Philippines relations," he said. "India has a long and distinguished maritime tradition, whose civilisational imprint is still visible in this region. Today, our Act East policy and the Indo-Pacific Vision have given it a more contemporary form," the minister said.

He said that another noteworthy development is the



"The cooperation between the Coast Guards of our two nations was facilitated by an understanding of enhanced maritime cooperation that was reached last year," he said, adding that he was glad to note that specialised training courses in India have commenced.

"We value the presence of the Philippines in the search and rescue and pollution response exercises which have been conducted by the Indian Coast Guard. The visit of this pollution control vessel to the Philippines is significant because it highlights the shared challenges that we face in that domain," he said.

"Like-minded countries of the Indo-Pacific should be doing more with each other," he said. "May it promote greater cooperation between our countries and may promote greater cooperation within the region and may it instill a greater sense of maritime interest and responsibility, particularly in the younger generations," he added.

Atal Pension Yojana poorly designed: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after the Congress dubbed the Centre's Atal Pension Yojana as a "poorly-designed scheme" that "hoodwinks and coerces" people into participating in it, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday hit back at the grand old party accusing it of "hoodwinking" people in the name of vote bank politics.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the Atal pension scheme is a "fitting representation of the Modi Government's policy making: headline management, with few benefits actually reaching the people". His attack came after a media report claimed that nearly one of three subscribers who dropped out of the Centre's pension scheme for unorganised sector, did so because their accounts were opened without their "explicit" permission. The report cited a recent sample study by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

"The 'flagship' Atal Pension Yojana is a very poorly-designed scheme, a paper tiger that needs officials to hoodwink and coerce people into participating in it. It's a fitting representation of the Modi Government's policy making: headline management, with few benefits actually reaching the people!" Ramesh said in a post on X.

Courts can't stop people from engaging in political activities: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has quashed the bail condition imposed by the Orissa High Court on a man that he shall not be involved in any political activity, saying it will breach his fundamental rights.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta passed the order on a plea filed by Siba Shankar Das, a former Mayor of Berhampur Municipal Corporation, against the January 18 order of

the high court.

The high court had dismissed his application seeking withdrawal of the bail condition which said that he "shall not create any untoward situation in public and shall not be involved in any political activities, directly or indirectly".

The condition was imposed by the high court while ordering his release on bail in August 2022.

"We find that the imposition of such condition would

breach the fundamental rights of the appellant and no such conditions could have been imposed," the apex court said in its March 22 order.

"We, therefore, quash and set aside the condition imposed by the high court, to the extent the same is extracted above," it said.

Das had approached the high court seeking modification of the condition imposed by it in the August 11, 2022 order while directing his release on bail.

DELHI CM DIRECTS OFFICIALS FROM ED CUSTODY

There should be no shortage of free medicines at Mohalla Clinics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has issued directions from ED custody to address shortage of medicines and diagnostic tests at mohalla clinics and hospitals in the national capital, Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Tuesday.

This is the second direction issued by the chief minister from ED custody.

Later in the day, Bharadwaj said a session of Delhi Assembly has been called on Wednesday.

"Tomorrow is the session of Delhi Assembly. The Chief Secretary has been ordered to

inform the status of free medicines and free tests in hospitals and mohalla clinics and if there is any deficiency, then come up with a complete plan to correct it. So that I can inform the assembly," he said in a post on X in Hindi.

Sharing details of the chief minister's order, Bharadwaj told a press conference that healthcare in Delhi has always been Kejriwal's priority.

He said Kejriwal believes that even though he has been arrested, people of Delhi should not face any problem in getting free tests and medicines in government hospitals and mohalla clinics.

"Even though he is in cus-



"He has issued a direction to me to address the issues. The health department will act immediately to address the issues," Bharadwaj said.

He said Kejriwal is concerned that a poor patient should not suffer because of this.

"In Delhi, lakhs of people are fully dependent on free medicines in government hospitals as they cannot afford to buy them. Some people need life-long medicines such as those suffering from diabetes and blood pressure. There are some kidney patients who need dialysis," he said.

Last week, the AAP national convener, who is in ED's custody till March 28 in the Delhi excise policy case, issued directions to Water Minister Atishi to address the water and sewer issues in some parts of the city.

At that time, sources had said the matter of issuing directions while being in custody will be looked into by the ED to ascertain if it is in line with the special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court's order issued to the agency and Kejriwal during his custody period.

At a meeting of legislators, councillors and office bearers of the AAP on Sunday, it was resolved that Kejriwal will continue to run the government from jail.

AS IMD PREDICTS A HARSH SUMMER

EC asks state poll officers to ensure key facilities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission has sought "strict compliance" of its directive of providing assured minimum facilities at polling stations, including drinking water, shade and medical kit, for the Lok Sabha elections in the backdrop of the IMD predicting a harsh summer.

It has also shared with its state chief electoral officers a set of 'dos and don'ts' issued by the National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) to minimise the impact of the impending heat wave.

In a letter sent out to its CEOs on March 16, the day it announced schedule for the Lok Sabha elections, the EC reminded them about its earlier set of instructions on assured minimum facilities at polling stations.

According to the June 2023 instructions on assured minimum facilities, which have been circulated afresh, during summer, every polling party shall be supplied with

oral rehydration salts (ORS) for their own use as well as for any voter needing the same due to heat-stroke.

"A hand bill on 'Dos and Don'ts' in case of heat stroke may be prepared and supplied to each of the polling parties.

An appeal to the electors may be issued to carry wet towels to protect themselves against dehydration and also advise women electors to avoid bringing children along with them to polling stations during hot weather

conditions," the instruction said.

The commission has cited IMD to note that there is a high probability of above normal temperatures during summer season, "which may translate into stronger and longer spells of heatwave especially during months of March to June, 2024".

Lok Sabha elections will be held in seven phases from April 19 to June 1 for which nearly 11 lakh polling stations are being set up across the 543 constituencies.

SC DISMISSES DELHI HC VERDICT

Orders CBI probe into death of Manipuri woman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Unresolved crimes tend to erode public trust in the institutions which have been established for maintaining law and order, the Supreme Court has said while directing a CBI probe into the death of a 25-year-old Manipuri woman who was found dead under mysterious circumstances in her rented house in south Delhi in 2013.

The body of the deceased, A S Reingamphi, was discovered on May 29, 2013 by the landlord of the tenanted premises who alerted the Police Control Room at 11 am on the same day. The cause of death could not be ascertained in the post mortem report.

The FIR was registered at the Malviya Nagar police station against unknown accused persons under Section 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The investigation was transferred to the Malviya Nagar Crime Branch, and pursuant to representations by her cousins, offence under Section 302 (murder) of IPC

was added. Later, two cousins of the deceased woman filed a petition in the Delhi High Court praying for direction for the investigation to be given to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The high court dismissed the plea saying the investigation has been carried out by the investigating agency seemingly without any bias and nothing has emerged on record if the landlord Raj Kumar and his brother-in-law Amit Sharma were having strong connection with any politician to influence the investigation.

The deceased woman's cousins Awungshi Chirmayo and Thotreithem Longpinao challenged the high court order in the apex court, which in 2019 constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to monitor the investigation.

The SIT in its report concluded that the woman had committed suicide by consuming some poison or medicine, though the viscera reports did not reveal the presence of any common poison or medicine in the Exhibits.



Exposure to artificial light at night may increase stroke risk

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People being continuously exposed to outdoor artificial light at night may be at a higher risk of having a stroke, a new research reviewing more than 28,000 adults in China has found.

The researchers said the excessive use of artificial light for enhancing visibility at night has resulted in about 80 per cent of the world's population living in light-polluted environments.

The team, including researchers from Zhejiang University School of Medicine, China, assessed the adults' exposure to residential out-

door nighttime light using satellite images that mapped light pollution. Cases of stroke were confirmed by the hospital medical records and the death certificates, they said.

Their analysis after following up the participants over a six-year period showed that 1,278 people developed cerebrovascular disease, including 777 ischemic (clot-caused) stroke cases and 133 hemorrhagic (bleeding) stroke cases.

The people with the highest levels of exposure to outdoor light at night were also found to have a 43 per cent increased risk of developing cerebrovascular disease compared to those with the lowest levels of



exposure.

"Our study suggests that higher levels of exposure to outdoor artificial light at night may be a risk factor for cere-

brovascular disease," said Jian-Bing Wang, a researcher in the department of public health and department of endocrinology of the

Children's Hospital, Zhejiang University School of Medicine, Hangzhou, China.

"Therefore, we advise people, especially those living in urban areas, to consider reducing that exposure to protect themselves from its potential harmful impact," said Wang, one of the corresponding authors of the study published in the journal 'Stroke'.

Continuous exposure to artificial light from fluorescent, incandescent and LED sources can suppress the body's ability to produce melatonin -- the sleep-promoting hormone, thereby disrupting the 24-hour internal clock and impairing sleep, the

researchers said.

"We need to develop more effective policies and prevention strategies to reduce the burden of disease from environmental factors such as light as well as air pollution, particularly for people living in the most densely populated, polluted areas around the world," said Wang.

While light pollution has been previously studied to increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, the researchers said this was one of the first studies to explore the relationship between exposure to light pollution at night and the potential risk to brain health and stroke.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Much ado about nothing

Arvind Kejriwal governing from jail may look unconventional, but it is not unconstitutional

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is keeping his word so far: That he would rule the Capital from behind bars upon being arrested in the multicore liquor scam. The issuance of Government orders from prison, however, has sparked a controversy. His political opponents, including the BJP are raising concerns about the influence of criminal elements within the Government apparatus. The saga began when Kejriwal, also the national convener of AAP, was incarcerated following his alleged involvement in the liquor scam. Despite being in jail, he continued to issue orders related to governance matters in Delhi. This is unprecedented as no serving Chief Minister has ever been jailed. While Kejriwal's supporters argue that his actions demonstrate a commitment to his responsibilities, critics point to the broader implications of a jailed politician running a Government. BJP leaders have wasted no time in alleging that this development is emblematic of the pervasive influence of criminal elements. The BJP leaders



assert that allowing individuals facing serious criminal charges to wield power from jail sets a dangerous precedent. Moreover, they argue that it raises questions about the efficacy of the justice system in curbing such abuses of power. On the other hand, AAP supporters claim the BJP's allegations are aimed at tarnishing their party's image. They maintain that Kejriwal's actions are within bounds of his duties as Chief Minister and emphasise his commitment to serving the people of Delhi. Furthermore, they contend that Kejriwal's governance from jail reflects the resilience and determination of a leader who refuses to be deterred by legal challenges. In reality, the entire

controversy is unfounded. If the Constitution permits an individual to retain a constitutional position while under judicial custody, it logically follows that they have the right to govern from wherever they are. Given its lack of prudence, it might appear unconventional, but it aligns perfectly with the constitutional framework of India's political system. Unlike Laloo Yadav and Hemant Soren, Kejriwal chose not to comply with the establishment's expectations by resigning and instead remained in his post. Additionally, being in judicial custody alone does not constitute a conviction or indictment, regardless of the strength of the allegations, and thus holds no legal validity. In the wake of the controversy surrounding Kejriwal's governance from jail, the next logical step for him would undoubtedly be to pursue avenues for securing bail. For a sitting Chief Minister to be in jail is an extraordinary circumstance, and Kejriwal's legal team will likely be working diligently to secure his release at the earliest opportunity. Amidst the heated exchange of accusations and counter-arguments, the broader implications of this controversy cannot be ignored. It highlights the complex interplay between politics, law enforcement and the justice system in India. As the debate rages on, it remains to be seen how this controversy will shape the political landscape in Delhi and beyond in the days to come.



Devotees carry Seethala Mallikarjuna Swamy's 'Rathotsava' towards Mullayanagiri hill, in Chikkamagaluru

PTI

## Water, an elixir of life and an agent of peace

Ineffective water management practices contribute to water scarcity by water loss, inefficient allocation and degradation of water resources

Water is an indispensable factor in the survival of humanity on this planet. For everything related to humans, we have one or other alternative. But for water, there is no alternative. Water is essential for life, playing a critical role in various bodily functions and processes. Science and religion have a consensus on one point. The first life on the planet originated in water. Water is often referred to as the "elixir of life" because it is essential for all living organisms' existence and survival. Without water, life as we know it would not be possible. All our civilizations and international co-operations have taken place through water bodies. But the recent water shortage plaguing the silicon city of India, Bengaluru, has sent shocking waves among the city dwellers, who, despite having financial stability, are finding it difficult to get water for their daily use. If it's Bengaluru today, it will be in other cities shortly. According to a recent United Nations report, multiple zones within India's Indo-Gangetic basin have surpassed a critical level



of groundwater depletion, with the entire northwestern region projected to face significantly diminished groundwater resources by 2025. Groundwater depletion occurs when the water extraction rate from aquifers exceeds the recharge rate, leading to a decline in groundwater levels over time. In the Indo-Gangetic basin, excessive groundwater pumping for irrigation, urban water supply, and industrial use has resulted in the widespread depletion of aquifers. The conversion of agricultural lands to high-rise commercial buildings also affects proper recharging. Ineffective water management practices contribute to water scarcity by exacerbating water loss, inefficient allocation, and degradation of water resources. Over-extraction of groundwater, inefficient irri-

gation techniques, leaky distribution systems, and inadequate conservation measures all contribute to the mismanagement of water resources. Urban planners should leave a "water buffer space" within every 1 km radius for proper recharging of the groundwater. For this, they should construct beautiful artificial lakes that harvest rainwater and recycled water. Similarly, in every household or high-rise building, the Government should see that they have proper working rainwater harvesting facilities. Access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation is a basic human right and is essential for preventing water-borne diseases and maintaining health and well-being. Without sufficient water, people cannot meet their basic drinking, cooking, and sanitation needs, jeopardising their health and well-being. Water is a key driver of socio-economic development, supporting various sectors such as agriculture, industry, and tourism. Water infrastructure investments, water-based industries, and water-related services contribute to eco-

nomic growth and job creation. In regions where water is already scarce or shared by multiple parties, disputes over water allocation, usage rights, and infrastructure development can arise, leading to tensions and conflicts. In India, we have seen severe conflicts over water sharing in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. More such tensions will erupt in future when water scarcity increases. The developments in science and technology can artificially produce anything related to human life, including food products or even human babies; however, research to date has not made it possible to produce water artificially. Hence, we need to maintain the natural water balance on this planet without disturbing it. In the current pace of urbanisation and environmental degradation being carried out by humans, it would be very difficult to regenerate water if it gets depleted. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

## A showdown of arch-rivals

This electoral battle is shaping up to be a multi-party contest, primarily between the ruling BJP-led NDA and the INDIA bloc

Who will win the 2024 Lok Sabha polls? The election scene has become clear after the Chief Election Commissioner announced the poll schedule last week. They will begin next month and end on June 4, when the results will be announced.

It will be a multi-party contest, with the ruling BJP-led NDA alliance and the opposition coalition of the INDIA bloc being the primary contenders. Meanwhile, alliances are being built and major parties have announced the candidates. Party hopping and secret deals are also going on. Prime Minister Modi aims to perform a hat trick. Currently, it is a one-horse race, with the BJP dominating and the opposition parties trailing behind.

The Opposition INDIA coalition comprises 26 parties. They have formed a pre-poll alliance to challenge the BJP. It aims to field a single opposition candidate against the BJP in the upcoming elections. The Opposition suffered two consecutive defeats in 2014 and 2019, significantly damaging its image. It needs to connect with voters, including millennials.

Congress, leading the Opposition, is a 138-year secular party that used to represent marginalised groups like SCs, STs, OBCs and Muslims. It has been weakened since the eighties, with the rise of regional satraps and today, it is a mere shadow of its former strength. It lacks leadership. After the 2014 and 2019 defeats, Congress now claims it is committed to social justice and empowering India's poor, oppressed, Dalits, farmers, youth and women with its five guarantees: Yuva Nyay, Bhagidaari Nyay, Naari Nyay, Kisan Nyay and Shramik Nyay.

The Opposition mainly aims to challenge Modi by consolidating anti-BJP votes and offering incentives. This strategy worked for Congress in recent Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana Assembly polls, which Congress won. Congress hopes to gain from the BJP's anti-incumbency buffering sops and freebies. They also highlight Rahul



Gandhi's recent Bharat Jodo Yatra, which was meant to connect with the people.

To succeed, Congress must raise bread-and-butter issues such as inflation, joblessness and social discord to engage with young voters who play a decisive role in elections. They must show an alternate strategy to appeal to them. Simultaneously, some powerful chief ministers of state-level parties dominate their states, making it a tough fight for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in these areas.

2019, the BJP and its allies secured only 45 per cent of the votes. The remaining 55 per cent were up for grabs for the INDIA bloc. Although no national leader matches Modi's popularity, some influential regional leaders can sway voters in their respective regions. This is particularly true for West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The biggest challenge for the coalition is to project a single leader against Modi. Unfortunately, there is an ego clash among the coalition partners, which makes it difficult to agree on someone. Secondly, the BJP boasts a strong organisation with immense financial and political power. The Opposition doesn't seem to have a solid



WITH BOTH SIDES RAISING THEIR PITCH, THE 2024 ELECTIONS WILL SEE A NO-HOLDS-BARRED NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN, AS THIS WILL DECIDE THE FUTURE OF THE OPPOSITION AND THE AGGRESSIVE BJP

and compelling storyline, except for its commitment to safeguarding the Constitution and democratic values. However, voters are more concerned about basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. For instance, Sonia Gandhi's Aam Admi slogan in 2004 resonated well with the masses. Low-income people generally live paycheck to paycheck and may not relate to abstract political concepts.

The Congress Party is still clinging to its glorious past and failing to acknowledge the current scene. As the second-largest Party, Congress automatically expects to lead the coalition. It has been losing its leaders to the BJP and a steady flow of these leaders demoralises the Party. The Opposition needs a solid counter to the BJP's propaganda and religious narrative. The BJP has grown since 1980; today, it is the biggest Party in India. It has a strong organisation with unlimited money power.

The Party seeks votes in the name of the Prime Minister. The BJP has a better chance of winning this time. The BJP's lucky mascot is Modi. His supporters consider him a doer due to the implementation of various measures. These include the Triple Talaq, CAA,

revocation of Article 356 in Jammu and Kashmir and the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The BJP highlights its achievements in the last decade and various welfare initiatives to attract voters. The continuity has helped Modi achieve his agenda. Modi has gained international recognition over the past ten years and ensured India's position at the high table, which excites his supporters.

On the negative side, the Opposition claims that the Modi Government has been targeting Opposition leaders and harassing them with Government probe agencies. The BJP poaches on other parties, lawmakers, and leaders. It has absorbed many second-rung leaders who chose to find better prospects in the saffron Party.

With both sides raising their pitch, the 2024 elections will see a no-holds-bar negative campaign, as this will decide the future of the Opposition and the aggressive BJP. Modi's secret to success is a divided opposition. As long as this continues, Modi will continue to win. The Opposition must chant the mantra of unity to win or even improve.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### KEJRIWAL CANNOT BE CM

Madam — Apropos news article "After Kejriwal, AAP Sealed," published on March 24, this is my response. As far as Arvind Kejriwal is concerned, he will have to stay out of politics for a long time. Aam Aadmi Party leaders may claim that Kejriwal will remain the Chief Minister. Still, now it will be almost impossible for Arvind Kejriwal to remain in the post of Chief Minister. Delhi state holds a special position. Here the Lieutenant Governor has unlimited powers. The Lieutenant Governor comes under the Central Home Department. In such a situation, if Arvind Kejriwal does not resign, he will certainly be dismissed in the future. The arrest of Kejriwal will have an impact on the election campaign of Delhi and Punjab. AAP is playing the victim card but the public must repeatedly criticise it. That means the entire opposition is currently on the defensive on the issue of corruption. Kejriwal has committed a huge strategic and legal mistake by not responding to ED's nine summonses. He has to bear the brunt of this at the time of the Lok Sabha elections. If he had gone to the ED office for questioning in November itself, he would have been arrested today. One does not have to see this day. Even if ED had arrested him in November, he could have got bail after four to five months as it happened in the case of Sanjay Raut. The leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party made serious mistakes in the case of Arvind Kejriwal. Govind Rao Rotti | Vijayapura

### REGULATE REUSED COOKING OILS

Madam — In commercial settings like restaurants, it's common practice not to discard oil after a single use. Unfortunately, with deep frying, failure to regularly change the oil can lead to the generation of trans fats through repeated reheating, potentially causing inflammation in the body as per health experts. Unhealthy oils can adversely affect mainly heightening the risk of cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes. Repeated heating of oil also leads to the

### The parched IT hub



Apropos news article "Zero Water Day Night in Bengaluru," published on March 25, this is my response. Bengaluru is known as the garden city of India. It had more green patches earlier. It had more lakes. Nearly 80 per cent were greenery patches. Now things have changed. Water scarcity was quite unknown to the people of this city since the perennial Cauvery River flows here. Now due to the advent of IT corridor, the city has become a concrete jungle. People have migrated in large numbers to Bengaluru. Also, the change in the climatic conditions and

failure of monsoon rains have resulted in acute water scarcity. Water is more misused here than purposefully used. Even tanker supply by the Corporation is seen as inadequate. Private suppliers fleece the people taking advantage of the situation. The storage in the reservoirs is far below the demand.

Not only in Bengaluru but in other places of the state the situation is grim. Places like Raichur, Bellary and Mysore are reeling under water scarcity. Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Ooty, Delhi and Gurgaon are no exceptions. The Government should identify water storage lakes and desilt them periodically. Rainwater harvesting should be done on a war footing. Our forefathers saw potable water in rivers and lakes. The next generation saw it in the wells. We now see water in bottles. Our future generation will see it in capsules may ring true if we don't act now. We must sustain judicious water management else the situation will become disastrous.

Sravana Ramachandran | Bengaluru

accumulation of visible and invisible granules, altering the oil's composition and introducing neo-formed compounds (NFCs) over time. This process diminishes the oil's nutritional quality. FSSAI lacks regulations or definitions for reused cooking oils, often leading food safety officials to rely on visual cues such as colour or appearance. Therefore, FSSAI must frame regulations for reused cooking oils. Vijaykumar H K | Raichur

### MONEY MANAGEMENT IS AN SKILL

Madam — Everyone continually works hard to accumulate wealth and lead a luxurious lifestyle, and money is the source of all these pleasures. Although making money is not a particularly tough chore for everyone, how one manages their finances is what counts. In numerous instances, individuals who were fortunate enough to inherit wealth but lacked financial management skills have become mired in debt;

conversely, those who began from nothing and were fortunate enough to possess sound money management skills have seen their wealth increase threefold.

A quotation reads, "Money moves from those who do not manage it to those who do." Money management is very underrated but still, a very crucial skill to be learned although these skills are already built in the people of our country giving the right direction to these skills can add fuel to the fire. People should be taught money management skills like saving, investing and maintaining personal finances. This will help them to enjoy life to the fullest and have emergency funds on hand. It will also help them to become financially independent and lead balanced lives when they move abroad for college or a job. Lisha Gera | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

LIFE SHOULD BE A PRECIOUS JOURNEY

In the rush to meet obligations, do we overlook beauty around us?



RAVI VALLURI

Life is something very precious, a divine gift given to us by God or nature. Do humans realise how high-priced is it? When we wake up in the morning, aren't we in a tearing hurry to accomplish all the unfulfilled tasks of yesterday?

Do we spend some quality time embracing nature, take a few deep breaths, spend moments in solitude and feel the silence encompassing us? Are we grateful for our existence or do we mechanically hit the gym and head for the kitchen to have the mandatory morning cup of coffee? Yes, for sure morning exercise like a walk, a jog, or executing the chores are essential, but it is equally important to slow down the pace of life and become grateful to the Universe for its vastness and its exquisite grandiose geometry.

Pierce Brosnan, who wielded guns and gals with remarkable felicity once remarked, 'I realise how precious life is, probably because I've seen how it can be taken away.' As the cloud moves across the sky, so do moments in our lives. We need to be in harmony with our thoughts and actions and also realise the ephemeral nature of events.

Once, a student approached his Master and complained that he could not meditate as his body ached, he felt distracted or asleep and was extremely disconcerted. The wise man smiled and merely said that this would pass. After some days, the tutee was in an ecstatic mood and apprised his teacher that the meditation was wonderful and he had had an experiential feeling. He could observe stillness in the mind; see a shimmering light and experience levitation. The Master merely smiled and added that even this would pass.

Life should be treated as a celebration and as a precious gift since it is fleeting and transitory.



The sacrosanct premise of life therefore should be to focus on its truly celebratory nature and savour its prepossessing moments.

For all this to happen, we need to increase our prana/energy levels manifold. We derive energy from food, breath and rest provided to the body and by maintaining a calm and meditative mind. These sutras or tenets are imparted during the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living.

However, the prana/energy level needs to be sustained to nurture the precious moments of life. Humans have to treat their minds and bodies as sacred.

Early morning blues can be combatted with warm lime water laced with honey. It is efficacious for the human body to have a few glasses of this elixir of life. A sattvic diet helps in increasing prana levels and also in meditation. The purpose of yoga is not just performing physical exercises but to ultimately do pranayama and meditation. This helps assuage the mind so that we are in a position to recognise and appreciate life's precious journey.

Physical sciences, till recently, were all about matter and particles. However, newer studies reveal the mysteries of science have transcended the boundaries of matter and dwelled on waves and their patterns. Waves connect us to science and also to people.

While acknowledging the precious nature of life, we need to harness the potential further by choosing a passion. This is an outlet from the dreary ho-hum of life and we can appreciate the droplets on the petals, a nest built on our roof or a koel bird singing mellifluously.

In this age of a wired world, humans need to break the chains of tech bondage and develop a harmonious dwelling place where people care and share making life a truly momentous journey.

*(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)*

# Conspiracy theories abound for terror attack



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

A cloud of speculation surrounds the Moscow terror attack; allegations range from claims of internal collusion to Ukrainian complicity, supported by the West

In the end, neither these corrupt politicians nor the manifestos of these inhuman actions, but unarmed civilians will have to pay the price.

Over a hundred unarmed civilians were mercilessly killed by those brutal assailants, while hundreds more were wounded in Saturday's terrorist attacks on the outskirts of Moscow. Conspiracy theories, as in many other cases, are deepening. Some say it was an inside job orchestrated by certain parties to gain sympathy. Second, Ukrainians planned it with the help of Western intelligence agencies. Third, this was perpetrated by extremists. Consequently, conflicting yet interesting reports are emerging from all sides.

Though these warning messages sound fishy, the amount of intelligence activities in the region certainly emphasises recent detailed reports on CIA activities in Ukraine published by The New York Times, stating that the US and UK were in Ukraine long before the war. "At the end of 2021, Putin was considering whether to launch a full-scale invasion. He met with the head of one of Russia's main spy services, who told him that the CIA, together with British intelligence MI6, controlled Ukraine and turned it into a staging ground for operations against Moscow."

However, it is interesting to note that in this brutal attack, terrorists who targeted concertgoers at Moscow's Crocus City Hall not only successfully executed the operation, but also managed to evade capture and attempted to cross the border located over three hundred kilometres away. Later, according to Russian media, all four attackers were apprehended by Russian security forces. A man detained on suspicion of involvement in the Crocus City Hall attack has reportedly confessed to being promised a reward of 500,000 rubles, according to Russian journalist Margarita Simonyan. The alleged killer stated in a video posted by her, 'I shot down people at the Crocus for money; [I was promised] about 500,000.'

Strangely, Russia was attacked by the Islamic State, or more accurately, according to Western media outlets, by ISKP. The Islamic State—Khorasan Province is a regional branch of the Islamic State terrorist group active in South-Central Asia. At the beginning of this month, on March 7, the FSB stated that it had stopped an ISKP cell from carrying out a terrorist attack targeting a synagogue. "On the territory of the Kaluga Region, a stop was put to the activity of Wilayat Khorasan, a cell of the Afghan branch of the international terrorist organisation Islamic State, which is banned in Russia, whose members were planning to commit a terrorist act against one of the Jewish religious institutions in Moscow," the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said in a statement to the state-run TASS news agency.

What is fascinating is that almost all Western countries currently supplying arms, personnel, and other vital support, including precious intelligence, to Ukraine for its fight against Russia, were issuing early warnings about such brutal terrorist attacks. On March 7 and 8, several foreign embassies in Russia warned their citizens about the threat of terrorist attacks in Moscow. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow posted a security alert late on March 7, stating, "The embassy is monitoring reports that extremists have imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow, including concerts, and U.S. citizens should be advised to avoid large gatherings over the



WHATEVER THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES OR ANY OTHER GROUND REPORTS THAT CAME TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AFTER THIS HORRIFIC TERRORIST ATTACK, ONE THING IS CERTAIN: RUSSIA INDEED HAS INTERNAL SECURITY LOOPHOLES AND ENEMIES ARE CAPABLE OF SNEAKING THROUGH ITS SYSTEM

next 48 hours." The Finnish Foreign Ministry urged its citizens on Saturday to avoid public gatherings in Moscow over the weekend, following the US warning about possible terrorist attacks in Russia. The US Embassy further stated that it is actively monitoring reports indicating that "extremists have immediate intentions to target large gatherings in Moscow."

After the US warning, the UK issued a similar advisory advising UK citizens to avoid travelling to Russia due to the risks and terrorist threats. The British Foreign Office recommended against all travel to Russia. Germany, Latvia, and Estonia also urged their citizens and those with dual citizenship not to travel to Russia shortly. These advisories essentially highlight the reliability, effectiveness, and capability of Western intelligence agencies in the region.

However, it is important to pay attention to the argument made by the Ukrainian Defence Authority on the attack: "The behaviour of the criminals is also an important factor. They fled, although such attacks are characterised by suicides with the victims and the voicing of demands, or at least reasons. Accordingly, the criminals wanted to survive. But how did they cover a distance of more than 300 kilometres without being noticed? Why, having prepared so thoroughly, did they not do the simplest thing—buy a few spare cars to change on the way? Was it because they were guaranteed security by the Russian special services?"

These questions are undoubtedly crucial not only for unravelling the mysteries behind the attack but also for preventing its recurrence. This distinctive IS attack contradicts its previous behaviours; typically, IS members launch attacks to become martyrs. However, in this instance, they attacked to obtain "money"

from unknown sources, a practice strictly prohibited, Haram, according to Islam.

Meanwhile, in his address to the nation, President Putin asserted, "All perpetrators, organisers, and masterminds of this crime will face fair and inevitable punishment, whoever they may be and whoever directed them. I emphasise once more: we will identify and bring to justice every individual who stands behind these terrorists, those who orchestrated this atrocity, this assault against Russia and our people."

Whatever the conspiracy theories or any other ground reports that came to the public domain after this horrific terrorist attack, one thing is certain: Russia indeed has internal security loopholes, and enemies are capable of sneaking through their system. It is clear that, according to Western pre-warnings of the attacks leading us to presume that these brutal attacks were pre-planned to execute during the recently concluded election where Putin marked the highest percentage of any elections since 2000. This signalled which side the majority of Russians were standing on, while the West kept repeating the same mantra of authoritarianism. On the other hand, can the Ukrainian President go for an election and prove the same, despite remaining in power by manipulating the constitutional clauses? However, Ukrainians, alarmed by the election, launched a risky invasion to halt voting in Russian border areas, particularly in Belgorod city and its region. During the three-day operation, Ukraine killed 11 civilians with drones and rockets and injured 82, including nine critically. Among the casualties were an election official and a thirteen-year-old girl, whose father was seriously injured.

Ironically, most Western nations with imperfect democracies expect their enemy countries to be "per-

fect democracies." This paradox can only please a mind accustomed to duplicity but will never overcome common challenges such as normalising the global supply chain and achieving peace while mitigating the burning risk of a possible nuclear attack. The most powerful nations, despite engaging in dirty politics to reaffirm their supremacy, will never hesitate to engage in anything contradictory to their preaching.

Nevertheless, determining whether this attack was carried out by ISKP or another group influenced by various integrated parties is a matter that requires verification. However, this attack has the potential to inspire other terrorists in countries facing genuine threats from IS, ISKP, and other extremist factions. We cannot underestimate the importance of security in the forthcoming Indian elections and ISKP's direct threats against China and its investments in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other places. In early September 2022, the ISKP published its most comprehensive critique of China to date, belittling the Belt and Road Initiative and calling on Muslims to take up arms against "red atheists whose hands are soaked with the blood of innocent Uyghur Muslims."

Ironically, the tone of these threats is very similar to how the United States evaluates its competitors. Should we take lightly what the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump repeatedly referred to as the president as 'Obama and Hillary Clinton are as ISIS co-founders'? Sometimes, political jokes, rhetoric and blabbering play a very important role in understanding the context of our day-to-day life and its reality.

*(The writer, a journalist, expresses personal views which are independent of any institutional affiliations)*

# Controversial issues reignite India-Lanka relations

The contentious issues of Katchatheevu and Sethusamudram resurface amid Tamil Nadu's election fervour

The schedule for the General Election 2024 has been announced and the State of Tamil Nadu is full of rattle and brouhaha over non-issues. The ruling DMK which has been maintaining silence over issues like the provision of drinking and irrigation waters and the fate of the State's fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy have dusted and taken out age-old topics for use as campaign materials in the election. A cursory glance over the election manifesto of the DMK drafted under the chairmanship of M K Kanimozhi, the late Karunanidhi's daughter by his third wife Rajathi, makes the reader doubt whether Tamil Nadu is a part of India or not.

One of the salient points of the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

DMK's election manifesto is to make Tamil Nadu a NEET-free State. This means that admission to the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the State's medical colleges would be free of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test, the selection system ordered by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court. It was the UPA Government (2004-2014) in which the DMK was the second largest constituent

that brought the NEET into practice. Similarly, the DMK would revive and resume the works of laying a canal through the Palk Strait known as the Sethusamudram Channel. The project work has been put on hold following directives by the Supreme Court based on the fact that it is neither economically sustainable nor commercially viable. The only motivating factor behind the revival of Sethusamudram Channel is that the DMK Government would be able to demolish the Ram Sethu, a stone structure believed to have been built by the army of Lords Ram to cross the sea in their mission to same Maa Sita from the custody of the Ravana. This is being seen as the Dravidian's reply to the Pranaprathista of

the Ram Temple at Ayodhya held in January. The DMK has declared its mission to destroy Sanatana Dharma once and forever. Udhayanidhi Stalin, heir apparent to the DMK throne and the chief minister-ship in the eventuality of Stalin leaving Tamil Nadu for an early rendezvous with his father M Karunanidhi and ideological father Ramasamy Naicker, have declared time and again that Sanatana Dharma is more dangerous than Covid and Cancer and should be banished from the face of the earth.

Yet another promise made by the DMK is the retrieval of Katchatheevu, a small islet handed over to Sri Lanka by the Government of India in 1975. The decision to secede this 285-acre uninhabited islet

to Sri Lanka in 1975 was taken after a series of discussions involving top-level diplomats of Sri Lanka and India including G Parthasarathi, a close aide of Indira Gandhi.

Katchatheevu is an uninhabited islet in the Palk Strait. The islet once used for pearl farming was strategically important for fishing activities and was owned by the Raja of Ramnad and later became part of the Madras Presidency after the delimitation of Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait during British rule between the then Governments of Madras and Ceylon. In 1921, both Sri Lanka and India claimed this piece of land and the dispute remained unsettled.

The agreement signed by Indira Gandhi and her Sri Lanka counterpart Sirimao

Bhandarenaik in 1975 and 1976 says that with the establishment of the Exclusive Economic Zones by the two countries, India and Sri Lanka will exercise sovereign rights over the living and non-living resources of their respective zones. The fishing vessels and fishermen of India shall not engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Sri Lanka, nor shall the fishing vessels and fishermen of Sri Lanka engage in fishing in the historic waters, the territorial sea and the Exclusive Economic Zone of India, without the express permission of Sri Lanka or India, as the case may be, according to the agreement. The agreement made it clear that Katchateev belongs to the territory of Sri Lanka.

From 1976 to 2008, the DMK and its leader Karunanidhi were silent over Katchatheevu. It was a case filed by AIADMK general secretary J Jayalalitha in 2008 that made Karunanidhi take up the issue as part of his political one-upmanship. When the case came up for hearing, the then chief justice R M Lodha asked Mukul Rohatgi, the then attorney general, what were the possibilities of retrieval of Katchatheev. "If you want Katchatheevu back, you will have to go to war to get it back," Rohatgi told the Court. In another development, the Coast Guard in an affidavit filed by it in Madras High Court said that it was the Tamil Nadu fishermen who violated the International Maritime Boundary Line and fished in

Sri Lankan territorial waters. Sinha Ratnatunga, a respected editor of a popular newspaper in Sri Lanka said that more than 600 fishing boats from India cross over the IMBL and carry out bottom trawling in the island's territorial waters violating all norms. The bottom trawling using purine nets destroys the entire marine wealth in the Sri Lankan waters. The demand for the retrieval of Katchatheev is with an ulterior motive. The Dravidians do not want a cordial relationship between India and Sri Lanka. Should Lanka too end up as the Maldives? asks R R Wijayabalan, who is one of the best friends of India in the island nation.

*(The writer is special correspondent with the pioneer; views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

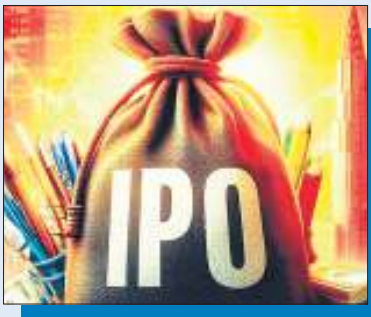
## Rupee jumps 33 paise to close at 83.28 against US dollar

The rupee recovered from all-time low level and appreciated 33 paise to close at 83.28 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday on decline in the US dollar and positive Asian currencies. Forex traders said weak domestic markets and surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.33 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.26 and a low of 83.37. The local unit finally settled at 83.28 (provisional) against the dollar, higher by 33 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee depreciated 48 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.61 against the American currency. Forex and equity markets were closed on Monday on account of Holi. Market analysts said, for the domestic unit, record forex reserves provide a cushion, enabling the Reserve Bank to mitigate the rupee's downside. India's forex reserves increased by USD 6.396 billion to USD 642.492 billion for the week ended March 15, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.



## SRM Contractors IPO subscribed 3.56 times on Day 1 of offer

The initial public offer of SRM Contractors received 3.56 times subscription on the first day of bidding on Tuesday. The IPO received bids for 1,54,35,840 shares against 43,40,100 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The category for non-institutional investors got subscribed 6.26 times while the portion for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 3.54 times subscription. The quota for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) got subscribed 1.57 times. The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of fresh issue of up to 62,00,000 equity shares has a price range of Rs 200-210 a share. SRM Contractors mopped up Rs 39 crore from anchor investors on Friday. The firm is an engineering construction and development company engaged primarily in the construction of roads (including bridges), tunnels, slope stabilization works and other miscellaneous civil construction activities in the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, as per its website.



## YouTube removes 2.2 mn videos in India over violation

YouTube removed over 2.25 million videos in India between October and December 2023 for the violation of its community guidelines, with the country topping the list of video takedowns ahead of nations like the US and Russia. Singapore with 1,243,871 video takedowns ranked second on that list and the United States (788,354) was placed third, according to YouTube's data on video removals by the country/region of upload. Indonesia ranked fourth (770,157), while for Russia the number of video takedowns stood at 516,629, as per YouTube's Community Guidelines Enforcement report that provides global data on the flags YouTube receives and how the Google-owned platform enforces policies. Globally, during the period (Q4 2023) YouTube removed over 9 million videos for falling foul of its community norms. More than 96 per cent of these videos were first flagged by machines rather than humans.



# 'India needs to double down on electronics manufacturing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has slowed down on the manufacturing front and needs to double down on electronics manufacturing services (EMS)-designing, manufacturing, testing components and assemblies for original equipment manufacturers, Tata Electronics Chairman Banmali Agrawala said.

During a conversation with Vinay Ramesh, COO at the Foundation for Economic Development, Agrawala said India has gone 'slow' on the manufacturing front and needed to ensure that the sector,

which accounts for 13-15 per cent of India's GDP, has a much larger share as it will create better-paying jobs.

"Our share in the global trade in manufacturing is negligible, so there is ample room for growth. Electronics, on its own, has a global trade worth USD 5 trillion. Given the pace of digitalisation the world over, it is only going to grow, and this is something India should be after," Agrawala said, adding that India's domestic consumption is not going to be enough to be able to achieve sustained economic growth.

"We have to have the world



as our marketplace," he said. Agrawala further said the government should continue to work with the sense of urgency they have shown so far and

ensure that the enabling infrastructure for manufacturing is in place.

"It's not just the quantity but also the quality of power and water supply that matters. This makes the difference; the logistics in terms of connectivity to airports, proximity of airports, because the components industry moves through air. The government would do well to ensure this enabling infrastructure is in place. A lot of this is in the domain of state governments," he added.

He further said that this is going to be a people-heavy operation.

# Govt initiatives, growing investment to create more job opportunities: CEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Various initiatives from the government and growing investment are going to create more job opportunities during the decade, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran said on Tuesday.

The last decade of the century was marked by a decline in capital formation in the economy and moderation in credit growth, he said at an event here.

"Hopefully, those things are a thing of the past. Non food credit growth is now running close to 20 per cent, balance sheets of companies and banks



are in good shape and hiring (is showing improvement)," he said.

Quoting 2021-22 data, he said, employment in agriculture declined by 15 lakh, man-

ufacturing and services added 37 lakh jobs each and the construction sector generated 19 lakh jobs, he said.

"This trend we hope will continue in the future, as indicated by the robust gross value added growth in manufacturing and construction sectors," he said.

Talking about various government initiatives for job creation, Nageswaran said, skill development, provision of 12 per cent contribution of employers towards EPFO by the government, New Education Policy, and important structural reform in human development have been

undertaken.

Apart from these, he said, the government has invested in physical infrastructure facilitating industrial and manufacturing growth, and generating employment in those sectors and restoring the health of financial institutions such as banks and non-banks.

Speaking about areas of improvement, he said, there is a need to make regulatory and tax policy implementation regimes less onerous, less cumbersome, less coercive, and also less predatory.

It is still not easy in India to close business in India, he said.

## Tendulkar-backed company to invest Rs 5,000 crore for semiconductor facility in Maha

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RRP Electronics, a company backed by former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, on Tuesday announced an investment of Rs 5,000 crore for a semiconductor facility in Maharashtra.

The investment will be done over the next five years, the company said in a statement. Contributions from Tendulkar in the overall investment or details of other shareholders were not disclosed by the company.

The statement said on March 23, a 25,000 square feet facility in the satellite city of Navi Mumbai was unveiled in the presence of Tendulkar, retired



nuclear physicist Anil Kakodkar and the company's founder, chairman, promoter and chief executive Rajendra Chodankar.

It is an outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT) facility and plans are afoot to establish a comprehensive research and development centre and have an expanded setup encompassing multi-line OSAT and a fab foundry, the statement said.

"Embarking on a journey of innovation, RRP Electronics pledges an initial investment of Rs 5,000 crore over the forthcoming five years, with equal vigour and commitment earmarked for phase II," the statement said.

# India's CAD dipped to US\$ 10.5 billion in October-December: RBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's current account deficit declined to USD 10.5 billion or 1.2 per cent of the GDP in October-December quarter from USD 11.4 billion in the previous three months and USD 16.8 billion a year back, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Tuesday.

Net FDI inflow at USD 8.5 billion during April-December 2023 was lower than USD 21.6 billion during April-December 2022, it said.

Also, accretion of foreign exchange reserves (on a BoP basis) was at USD 6.0 billion in October-December (third quarter of current financial year that ends on March 31)



compared to an accretion of USD 11.1 billion a year ago.

The merchandise trade deficit at USD 71.6 billion was marginally higher than USD 71.3 billion during the third quarter of 2022-23.

Services exports grew by 5.2 per cent on a year-on-year basis on the back of rising exports of software, business and travel services. Net services receipts increased both sequentially and from a year ago that

helped cushion the current account deficit.

In the financial account, foreign direct investment recorded a net inflow of USD 4.2 billion, more than double of net inflow of USD 2.0 billion in Q3 of 2022-23.

Foreign portfolio investment recorded a net inflow of USD 12.0 billion in the quarter, higher than USD 4.6 billion a year back. External commercial borrowings to India recorded a net outflow of USD 2.6 billion in October-December as compared to a net outflow of USD 2.5 billion a year ago.

Non-resident deposits recorded a higher net inflow of USD 3.9 billion than USD 2.6 billion a year ago.

# Sensex, Nifty snap 3-day winning run on selling in IT, banking shares

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 361 points on Tuesday, snapping its three-day gaining streak due to selling in index major Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and IT shares amid mixed global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 361.64 points or 0.50 per cent to settle at 72,470.30 with 20 of its components ending in the red and 10 in the green. During the day, it fell by 468.91 points or 0.64 per cent to 72,363.03 points.

The broader Nifty of NSE declined 92.05 points or 0.42 per cent to 22,004.70 as 30 of its constituents dropped and 20



advanced. Among Sensex shares, PowerGrid fell the most by 2.07 per cent.

Bharti Airtel dropped 1.99 per cent amid its subsidiary Bharti Hexacom announcing the launch of its Rs 4,275-crore IPO on April 3 at a price band of Rs 542 to Rs 570 per share.

## Gold falls Rs 100; silver slumps Rs 250

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price fell by Rs 100 to Rs 66,850 per 10 grams in the domestic market on Tuesday amid weak trends in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had settled at Rs 66,950 per 10 grams in the previous session.

In addition, silver also slumped by Rs 250 to Rs 77,500 per kg. In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 77,750 per kg.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 66,850 per 10 grams, down by Rs 100 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi,



Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,173 per ounce, down by USD 4 from the previous close.

"Gold is seen stuck in a range as we look ahead to more economic data and the central bank action on the interest rates, some caution is seen in the market ahead of the US GDP data on Thursday and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) and core-PCE on Friday.

## INDIAN FOOTFALLS TO AUSTRALIA SURGE

# India becomes 5<sup>th</sup> largest inbound market for Tourism Australia

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Australia witnessed over 6 per cent on-year growth in Indian tourists arrivals in January this year, with 26,200 Indians travelling to the country, Tourism Australia said on Tuesday.

Moreover, India has also significantly improved its ranking to be the fifth largest inbound market for Tourism Australia in 2024, from seventh in 2019.

"In January we did extremely well with 26,200 Indians travelling to Australia, compared to 24,700 during the same month

in 2019, a growth of 6.07 per cent. "If we calculate from February 2023 till January 2024, the total number of Indians visiting Australia has crossed the 4,00,000 arrivals milestone to reach 4,02,200," Tourism Australia Country Manager - India and Gulf - Nishant Kashikar told PTI.

This growth in footfalls is mainly due to Tourism Australia's joint endeavours with its airlines, key distribution partners, and over 5,000 Aussie Specialist Agents in India to drive consideration and conver-



sions, he said.

"The number of airlines connecting New Delhi, Bengaluru

Also, the electronic lodgement of visa application, which has made the visa application process easy and more convenient, helped in more Indians visiting Australia, he said.

Moreover, the travel trend has completely changed for Indians after the Covid-19 pandemic as there is a generational shift with the age of travellers going down, also the attitude of Indians have become more splurging and people have become globetrotters wanting to attend festivals, sporting events, concerts among others, Kashikar noted.

"This resurgence of Indian tourists to Australia is a testament to the resilience and rebound of international travel, particularly from one of our most valued markets. "This is a clear indicator of the strong desire for travel and exploration among the Indian travellers, who are drawn to Australia's unique landscapes, wildlife, and the multicultural vibrancy of our cities.

Going forward in 2024, we expect the same momentum to continue from India," he added.

## FRONT-RUNNING CASE

# SEBI bans two persons from securities market for 3 years; slaps Rs 77 lakh fine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SEBI on Tuesday barred two individuals from the securities market for three years and imposed a penalty of over Rs 77 lakh on them for their involvement in front-running.

Front-running refers to an illegal practice in the stock market where an entity trades based on advanced information from a broker or analyst before the information has been made available to its clients.

Those restrained by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) are -- Rohit Mankotia, who was employed in Radico NV Distilleries, and his mother Shila Devi. Further, Mankotia was on deputation to Sapphire Intrex Ltd (Big Client) and his work is related to tech-



nical analysis of stocks for Sapphire. Sapphire is the promoter of Radico Khaitan Ltd (RKL) and held 33.95 per cent equity shares of RKL, as per Sebi order.

Additionally, the two persons have been directed to disgorge Rs 38.8 lakh within 45 days and the same will be credited into the Investor Protection and Education Fund (IPEF).

In its 65-page order, Sebi found that Mankotia while having access and possession of information about impending

trades of the Big client, executed trades in NSE equity segment and NSE equity derivative segment from the account of his mother Shila Devi based on impending orders of the Big client. Shila Devi aided and abetted Mankotia in implementation of such a scheme as she did not raise any objection to use of her account for the purpose of front running and accordingly, they committed fraud and violated the provisions of PFUTP Regulations.

This came after Sebi conducted an investigation into trading activities of the two individuals during the period from July 2021 to June 2022 (investigation period) to ascertain any violation under the PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules.

# Adani Ports to acquire 95 per cent stake in Odisha's Gopalpur Port for Rs 1,349 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Tuesday announced the acquisition of a 95 per cent stake in Gopalpur Ports in Odisha from Shapoorji Pallonji Group and Orissa Stevedores Ltd at an equity value of Rs 1,349 crore.

In Gopalpur Ports, Shapoorji Pallonji Group (SP Group) firm SP Port Maintenance Pvt Ltd has a 56 per cent stake and Orissa Stevedores Ltd (OSL) has a 44 per cent stake. Gopalpur Port is an all-weather deep-water berthing port with a capacity of 20 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) situated in Ganjam district of Odisha.

In a regulatory filing, APSEZ said that it has entered into definitive agreements to

acquire the entire 56 per cent shareholding of SP Group and a 39 per cent stake of OSL in Gopalpur Port Ltd (GPL). OSL will continue as a JV partner with a 5 per cent stake, the filing added.

APSEZ said the equity consideration for a 95 per cent stake is Rs 1,349 crore, with an enterprise value of Rs 3,080 crore, subject to closing adjustments.

In addition to the enterprise value stated above there is a contingent consideration of Rs 270 crores estimated to be payable after 5.5 years, subject to fulfilment of certain conditions as agreed with the sellers, it added. Along with deferred payments, total enterprise value is Rs 3,350 crore.

In a separate filing, SP Group informed that it has agreed to sell its stake in Gopalpur Port



to APSEZ at an enterprise value of Rs 3,350 crore, as part of its deleveraging strategy with planned asset monetisation.

"Acquisition of Gopalpur Ports Limited (GPL) will drive synergy with our existing ports and strengthen APSEZ's presence on the East Coast,"

APSEZ said.

"The acquisition of Gopalpur Port will allow us to deliver more integrated and enhanced solutions to our customers," APSEZ managing director Karan Adani said.

Adani added that its location will allow APSEZ unprecedented access to the mining

hubs of Odisha and neighbouring states and allow us to expand our hinterland logistics footprint.

The port had recently signed up with Petronet LNG to set up a greenfield LNG regasification terminal.

In FY24, GPL is estimated to handle about 11.3 MMT cargo (up 52 per cent Y-o-Y) and earn a revenue of Rs 520 crore (up 39 per cent Y-o-Y). The estimated EBITDA will be Rs 232 crore (YoY growth of 65 per cent).

"In our view, the Gopalpur Port is all set for strong growth and margin expansion in FY'25 with opportunities already identified for achieving higher operational efficiencies and infra debottlenecking, implying further value accretion for APSEZ shareholders," APSEZ said.



# Embracing the richness of timeless rhythm with ‘Mridangam’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The Mahindra Percussion Festival is back with its second edition, bigger than ever for two exciting days instead of just one. The festival, which has an impressive lineup of regional musicians, strives to revitalise Indian street culture and percussion traditions. Anantha. R. Krishnan, a remarkable figure in the music industry, was one of the gifted musicians with whom we had an intimate conversation. He began his musical career on the ‘Mridangam’, the primary drum of the Carnatic style.

“Mridangam playing in my family has sort of been a generational legacy,” he tells us in this exclusive interview. “It so occurred that my great-granduncle and my grandfather were two of the most well-known figures from the foundations of ‘Mrindangam’. That’s a sign of my family history and the way the ‘Mridangam’ is ingrained in me. To the readers’ surprise, nevertheless, I had no intention of playing the ‘Mridangam’ before—just because it’s in my family’s tradition!”

As the interview takes an emotional turn, the maestro shares that there was a phase in his life when he had to go through a grief period in his life when his grandfather passed away.

“Suddenly, it was like stepping into his shoes! Someone must do it. I returned as soon as I could to India. I thought it would be wrong to ignore the fact that my grandfather had a group of individuals who relied on him somewhat. They all believed that I was now the primary provider. There was a slight bias in the odds! I was in the spotlight all of a sudden,” he recalls.

He studied the basics of the Mridangam under his uncle, Shri. R. Ramkumar, before starting formal instruction under his grandfather at the age of five. He is the grandson and disciple of the renowned Mridangam master, Shri. Palghat R.

Raghu. The Indian classical musician keeps dropping intriguing tidbits. “When working with the biggest names in the music business, I find that it matters more to me to understand how they view the music industry than how widely recognised they are in the media. Sound is God! I find my spirituality in music; it’s my religion. I feel the vibes. I also receive criticism from others, but I take it well. To be honest, I don’t use that for anything.”

At the age of seven, he gave his debut at a concert, and before he turned twenty, he played with a select group of Indian classical artists, including Mandolin Srinivas, Prof. T.N. Krishnan, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Dr. KJ Yesudas, and Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna. We were curious to hear about a few of his standout performances from his esteemed global music tours! The winner of the Best Mridangist Prize remarks, “My granddad was the subject of a little documentary that was posted on YouTube. We made it in celebration of his 80th birthday, and someone discovered an extremely unique footage!

Even though I couldn’t remember seeing this clip, I was imitating my granddad on stage.”

The best thing, he tells us, is that he is currently a faculty of percussion at A.R. Rahman’s KM Music Conservatory in Chennai: “The dopamine after giving a fantastic musical show is to go to my music

conservatory immediately, and nothing can negate it because someone needs my time. After giving it some thought, I also realised that I should be a part of this conservatorium since it also keeps me away from the conceit that comes with being a musician. And now to give ‘vidya’—I also learned that I have to be very modest. There are intelligent, keen people out there! Meeting them is also helping me develop as an instructor.”

Most remarkably, he has been awarded the category’s Best Mridangist Prize by the Music Academy, Madras, the premier organisation for advancing classical Indian music, five times. As part of the National

Endowment of the Arts initiative to increase cultural awareness in the United States, he received the State of the Arts Award from the New Jersey government twice, in 1997 and 1998. He studies tabla with Ustad Zakir Hussain as a special interest student as well!

He performed as a featured soloist on the Miles from India tour, which was nominated for a Grammy and debuted in Town Hall, New York City. The tour featured jazz greats Ron Carter, Dave Liebman, Lenny White, Ndugu Chander, and Pete Cosey, and it featured the music of the great Miles Davis performed on Indian instruments. So, “I was just staring wide-eyed at my Grammy participation

the entire time. Not to come across as corny, but I am genuinely very appreciative of my profession.” He received invitations to play at EXPO 2000 in Hanover and the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin, Germany in 1999 as part of the Millennium celebrations. He performed at the illustrious *Sadler’s Wells Music Festival* in London one year later. He performed the groundbreaking New Jazz Meeting for SWR 2, a national radio station in Baden Baden, in the fall of 2006, at the invitation of British experimental guitarist Fred Frith. Rudresh Mahanthappa sent an invitation to him in October 2007 so he could play with Samadhi at the *Festival of the Firsts* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Anantha. R. Krishnan, a rare occurrence in the world of music, who began his musical journey with the ‘Mridangam’, transmits *The Pioneer* into the world of divine harmony through his music, in this exclusive chat, about his journey, music, and more.

## COMPARISON: THE THIEF OF JOY

TEJAL SINHA

No matter how skilled you are, how excellent your grades are, or how gorgeous you are, there will always be someone who is better than you and appears to be having a better life. But how do we determine who is greater? And why should the fact that someone is better than you in any given sector detract from your happiness?

As humans, undeniably, we do have this inherent habit of comparing ourselves with others. Comparison is a double-edged sword; the way it will impact you depends on your perception of it. Sadly, most of us fail to use comparison to boost ourselves or grow our strengths!

We would rather end up demeaning ourselves, feeling miserable, and lowering our self-esteem, confidence, and whatnot. And this comparison starts from the day one is born.

Sakshi Maheshwari, clinical psychologist at Niyama Digital Healthcare, clearly points out that parents start looking at other children and comparing how pretty their kid is or how quickly other kids are achieving their milestones. “As children grow a little older,” she says, adding, “They also start having these desires to own identical toys or backpacks as their buddies. As children become older and reach school, almost every time their grades and performances are compared by the teachers, we never get to see when that comparison starts choking them every day. With the advent of social media, easy access to surmount information, and ever-changing trends, this generation of teenagers has especially become more susceptible to being hit by comparison, to the point that some of them fall into a trap of anxiety, depression, and even have thoughts of suicide. I have come across so many teenagers during my therapy who come with issues of low self-esteem, deteriorating self-confidence, and no one to confide in. They feel so pressured by their caregivers’ expectations of doing good that they forget to explore, feel happy, and feel excited.”

However, unhealthy comparisons can have a significant negative effect on a young person’s development, particularly on their mental well-being. Smitha Rahul, a rehabilitation psychologist, student counselor, academic coordinator, and psychology lecturer at St. Clare’s P.U. College, examines a few consequences of these harmful comparisons:

**Mental health:** This never-ending loop of comparison can erode general mental health and lead to unfavourable thought patterns.

**Confidence and self-esteem:** Unhealthy comparison frequently leaves one feeling less confident and worthless. People who constantly compare themselves to the unattainable standards that other people set for them may internalise emotions of inadequacy and failure, which can lower their self-esteem.

**Behaviour:** Harmful comparisons may lead to the display of behaviours like perfectionism, avoiding difficult situations, or looking to other people for approval. These behaviours may impede a child’s ability to grow and develop personally and may be maladaptive.

**Social skills:** By encouraging rivalry, resentment, and jealousy, comparison can have a detrimental effect on interpersonal relationships. Students who are always comparing themselves to others or who are jealous of

the accomplishments of their peers may find it difficult to connect with people on a real level.

**Personality:** Unhealthy comparing habits have the potential to negatively alter a child’s personality over time. It could result in a persistent need for approval, a fear of failing, or a propensity to gauge one’s value more by extraneous characteristics than by fundamental ones.

- Encourage students to practice gratitude for their own accomplishments and blessings.
- Create a safe space for students to express their feelings of inadequacy or insecurity without fear of judgment.

Family is the first place where we receive messages from significant others. It provides us with feelings of adequacy and inadequacy, acceptance and rejection. Even before children can speak, people make evaluations of them. The earliest months of life are full of messages that shape the self-concept.

Deanna Fugle, a licensed counsellor working at JAIN International Residential School (JIRS), highlights the same as she shares: “The amount of time parents allow their children to cry before attending to their needs communicates, non-verbally to the children over a period of time, just how important they are to their parents. The parents’ method of handling infants speaks volumes.”

**Children learn what they live with:** If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. Listening is the first step in tackling any situation and getting a solution to it.

**Offering unrequested advice:** Sometimes parents believe that when students bring problems up, they are seeking advice, which isn’t true, but they actually want a listening ear. Advising is an appropriate response, but not when it’s unrequested.

**Passing judgment is usually not encouraging to hear:** “You know”. It’s your own fault. You really shouldn’t have done that. This type of response suggests that the listener is playing judge rather than walking in your shoes.

An important aspect of authority versus submission problems is when and how parents exercise discipline and administer punishment. Scolding appears to be the most frequent form of punishment, and comparing their children with others or with their peers is harassing and damages the growth of children both physically and mentally.

Parents are also important as comrades for adolescent children. Another role is that of the mother or guide. When the parents do not fulfill their roles, the adolescents may feel let down and fall prey to unhealthy influences outside the home.

On a concluding note, Nandini Ghatak, Principal of Modern High School International, shares that it is inherently human to measure ourselves “up” with people who are apparently doing “better” or are seemingly “smarter.” However, “this kind of comparison makes young teens feel a sense of self-deprecation, and in the long term, it is highly likely that they will end up as adults who lack self-worth. Constant comparisons to other “better performers” contribute significantly to making adolescents feel incapable, frustrated, and thereby unhappy about who they are and what they have accomplished. Young adolescents wanting “glass skin,” “eight-packs,” or “zero sizes” are often pushed into making uninformed and risky decisions detrimental to their physical and mental well-being. Parents and teachers ideally should be encouraging young children to focus on self-improvement instead of engaging in unnecessary comparisons.”

It is to no surprise that students frequently compare themselves to one another. But how do these harmful comparisons affect a student’s life? *The Pioneer* speaks with specialists and provides a full examination for a feature story.



### COMBATTING THE EFFECTS OF UNHEALTHY COMPARISON

- Encourage students to recognise when they are comparing themselves to others excessively.
- Help students identify and appreciate their own unique strengths and talents.
- Encourage students to set goals based on their own aspirations and values, rather than trying to measure up to others’ standards.
- Foster an environment where students support and celebrate each other’s successes rather than viewing them as threats.
- Teach students to challenge negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves.
- Social media can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy by showcasing curated and often unrealistic portrayals of others’ lives. Encourage students to limit their time on such platforms and focus on real-life connections.

## Dive into the captivating history of impressionism

Impressionism was a major movement in painting and music that emerged mostly in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Impressionist painting refers to the work created between 1867 and 1886 by a group of artists who shared similar methods and techniques. The most notable aspect of Impressionism in painting was an endeavour to properly and objectively depict visual reality in terms of fleeting effects of light and colour. In music, the goal was to express an idea or emotion through a wash of sound rather than a precise formal structure.

As the art world marks 150 years since Impressionism burst onto the canvas in a blurry riot of colour, here are five little-known facts about the wildly popular movement.

### WALLPAPER PATTERN

Impressionism was never meant as a compliment. While today works by artists such fetch eye-popping sums at auction, reviews after their inaugural 1874 exhibition in Paris were scathing. “A preliminary drawing for a wallpaper pattern is more finished than this seascape,” wrote critic Louis Leroy about Monet’s “Impression Sunrise”. It was Leroy who coined the name for the movement, intended as an insult. But the epithet stuck, and came to represent a revolutionary movement that no longer set out to accurately depict the world but to offer fleeting impressions of its beauty.

### FREEDOM IN A TUBE

John Goffe Rand, a relatively obscure US painter, had a key influence on the movement when he had the idea of putting ready-to-use paint in small tin tubes. It may seem obvious today but for artists in the mid-19th century, the innovation made it significantly easier to take painting outside the studio.

Before, artists seeking the great outdoors carried their paints in pig bladders sealed with string, which had the unfortunate tendency to burst. Equipped with tubes, artists could sit for hours on the banks of the Seine, in a garden or a field and capture the fleeting plays of light and colour. “Without tube painting, there would have been no Cezanne

or Monet, Sisley or Pissarro,” Renoir said at the end of his life.

### SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE

The venue of the 1874 exhibition -- in the studio of photographer Felix Nadar -- reflected the strong influence cameras had on the movement. Impressionism came of age at the same time as still photography, with tripods and cameras being set up next to painters’ easels. Some artists dabbled themselves. Degas was an amateur photographer and Paul Cezanne used photographs as studies for some of his works. Monet’s “Boulevard des Capucines” was painted from Nadar’s balcony, with the blurred silhouettes of the crowd capturing the influence of early photographs.

### THE MUSE WHO PAINTED

Impressionism was dominated by men but the inaugural 1874 “Anonymous Society of painters, sculptors, engravers, etc” included one woman -- Berthe Morisot. Her paintings drew little attention at the time but Morisot -- today celebrated as an artist in her own right -- was a famous face on canvas, as the muse of her brother-in-law, Edouard Manet.

Manet, for his part, always refused to be identified with the Impressionist movement, though he had a huge influence on it and is widely considered one of its key painters.

### MONET, ARTIST AND PATRON

Cezanne holds the record for the most expensive Impressionist painting ever sold at auction but in the beginning he struggled to shift any at all. His luck changed at the 1874 exhibition, with his dark, tormented “The Hanged Man’s House” finding a home. Two decades later, when he had his first solo show in Paris, a curious thing happened -- he sold three paintings before the gallery even opened.

A mysterious stranger turned up and asked if he could take a sneak peek. After inspecting each piece closely, he picked three and handed over a wad of cash without haggling. It was only after he had left that the buyer was revealed as Monet, not only an Impressionist star but also an early patron.







The American Corner at St. Francis College for Women, Hyderabad, organised a two-day workshop on media literacy and countering misinformation, drawing the participation of over 32 students enrolled in both BA and MA Mass Communication programs. Day one, led by Sudhakar Reddy Udumula, Editor, Investigations at the Times of India, focused on combating misinformation in the digital age. Meanwhile, the second day featured an interactive session by Satya Priya, a fact-checker from Telugupost, concentrating on practical fact-checking tools for media students.



US-based Storable Inc. announced the inauguration of its new office space in Knowledge City, Hyderabad. Storable launched its first Asia GCC in Hyderabad last April and plans to expand its R&D presence in India to increase engineering capacity and support the company's aggressive growth plans.



Fernandez Hospital celebrated World Doula Week with a fun-filled Doula Open House and Belly Mapping activity for expectant couples. In line with this year's World Doula Week theme, Doulas Support You, the Doula team organised an open house to show all the tools and ways Doulas make pregnancy, labour, and childbirth a blissful experience. Through different stations, Doulas showed birthing tools and techniques such as Rebozo, birthing balls, acupressure and massage, aroma therapy, and counselling.



Faculty from Oakridge International School, Bachupally (OISB) played a leading role in the groundbreaking Nord Anglia Education Teaching and Learning Conference held recently in Hanoi, Vietnam. This prestigious global event brought together over 200 educators from 15 countries, fostering collaboration and exploring innovative teaching methods to advance educational standards worldwide.



In a recent case at Arete Hospitals, a 12-year-old girl with severe scoliosis and neurofibromatosis type I presented a unique challenge to the medical team due to the multiple complexities and associated complications. Under the expert guidance of Dr. Venkata Ramakrishna, which included neurosurgeons, anesthesiologists, and neuro-monitoring specialists, as well as backup support from the ICU team and cardiothoracic and gastrosurgeons, an 11-hour surgical procedure was conducted successfully.

### LISTINGS

#### Shine in Soch's new Spring Summer Collection 2024

Soch has launched its latest Spring Summer Collection 2024. This new collection features an array of fabrics and styles promising to elevate your summer wardrobe with unique ethnic flair. This collection is a curated palette of themes including Indigo Hues, Schiffl Chic, Kota Couture, Ivory Elegance, Breezy Threads, and Vivid Blooms. Each collection promises a fresh perspective on ethnic wear, designed to cater to the modern wardrobe essentials for the present-day woman. Apart from this curated collection, designs from Soch are complemented by a thoughtful range that extends across sarees, churidar sets, dresses, kurtas, kaffans, and lehengas. With this comprehensive collection, Soch continues to be the one-stop destination for every woman's ethnic and contemporary fashion needs. Priced at INR 1498 onwards, the summer collection is available at all Soch outlets and online at [www.soch.com](http://www.soch.com)

#### Springtime with H&M

For Spring 2024, H&M celebrates the season of rebirth with soft tailoring and effortless ease. There's sculptural volume and clean lines of refined suits, sophisticated shirts and shirt dresses. Workwear-inspired pieces give a utilitarian edge, while embroidered details, pleats and textures a delicate touch. A minimal colour palette of silver, light blue denim, white and ecru keeps the tone sharp. The collection is available in selected stores worldwide and online at [hm.com](http://hm.com). The womenswear collection is a love letter to wardrobe treasures and modern femininity. Timeless suiting that's both tailored and relaxed includes not only the blazer and trousers, but also waistcoats and hot pants. The kidswear collection this season has a distinct sweetness. Prices for the H&M Spring 2024 collection range INR 1499 onwards.

#### Right time to invest in a pension product

Several market experts are of the view that interest rates in India will decline over the next few months from the current levels of approx. 7% giving customers an opportunity to now lock-in their investment in an annuity product at the current interest rate. So how does investing in an annuity product now benefit customers? Pension or annuity products which are only offered by life insurance companies provide a guaranteed regular lifelong income. The rate of interest is locked-in at the time of purchase. Retirees prefer a steady income not affected by interest rate movements, annuity or pension products are the best option, which offer regular income enabling them to be financially independent. Let's take the example of Mr. Prajapati, who initially invested his savings of Rs. 1 crore in deposits at 8% interest, earning him Rs. 67,000 monthly, which supported a comfortable lifestyle. However, when he tried to renew his deposits after a few years the interest rate dropped to 6%, his monthly income reduced to Rs. 50,000, affecting his standard of living. The ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi stands out among annuity products as it helps customers build a retirement fund by making systematic investments. This ensures a sure and stable income after retirement, which is particularly beneficial in a market like India where interest rates are predicted to decline.

#### Eggstatic Baskets @NHCC

Indulge in the blissful spirit of spring with Eggstatic Baskets at Le Café. Treat yourself to a vibrant assortment of springtime delights that will tantalize your taste buds and elevate your mood. From fudgy eggless chocolate brownies to melt-in-your-mouth cheesecakes, our baskets are bursting with Flavors and sweetness. Whether you're craving something rich and decadent or light and refreshing, we have something to satisfy every palate. Join us to add a touch of sweetness to your springtime celebrations. Where: Le Café Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, Hyderabad, Telangana. When: Ongoing till March 31, 2024 Time: 9 am to 9 pm

#### Samsung to bring AI, hyper connectivity to tech-savvy consumers

Jong-Hee (JH) Han, Vice Chairman, CEO and Head of the Device eXperience (DX) Division at Samsung Electronics, visited Samsung BKC at Jio World Plaza, Mumbai for the first time since the store's opening and underlined the Company's commitment to the Indian market by bringing AI and hyper connectivity to its tech-savvy consumers. He also invited consumers to come and experience Samsung's latest AI innovations across its product portfolio, from televisions and digital appliances to smartphones. Earlier this year, Han unveiled Samsung's 'AI for All' vision at CES, showcasing how AI will enable people to experience their devices more intuitively and conveniently than ever before. As part of its 'AI for All' vision, Samsung in January unveiled Galaxy AI in its new Galaxy S24 smartphone series.

#### CARE Hospitals named official medical partner for Sunrisers Hyderabad

CARE Hospitals announced its partnership with Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) as the official medical partner for the upcoming T20 cricket League 2024 season. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in the realm of sports and healthcare, emphasizing the commitment to player well-being and ensuring the highest standards of medical support throughout the tournament. As the official medical partner, CARE Hospitals will provide comprehensive medical services, injury management, and healthcare expertise to the players, officials and staff. With a shared dedication to excellence, this partnership is set to enhance the overall health and performance of the team, reinforcing the importance of top-notch medical care in the competitive landscape of professional cricket.

#### Event Needz unveiled!

Kompalli Data Solutions Pvt Ltd., a dynamic startup, has unveiled a game-changing innovation platform for the event industry - Event Needz, at T-Hub. This revolutionary online marketplace serves as a comprehensive aggregator, seamlessly connecting users with a diverse array of service providers, event-related rentals, and sales vendors, all under one roof. This immensely beneficial platform for the entire events ecosystem, was formally inaugurated by Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, IT, I&C, Government of Telangana; and was graced by eminent dignitaries including Mr Anish Anthony, COO of T-Hub; Dr S. Glory Swarupa, Director General, National Institute MSME; and Mr Balaram Babu Alla, President, TCEI. With an impressive network of over 4000 vendors and a fan base exceeding 10,000, spanning across Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, and Bengaluru, this platform caters to over 30 types of events across 50 service categories.

#### ARUN ICECREAMS PARTNERS with SUNRISERS Hyd

Arun Icecreams announced its partnership with Sunrisers Hyderabad as the official Ice Cream Partner for the T20 Cup 2024 season. This collaboration marks a significant milestone for Arun Icecreams as it seeks to reinforce its presence in the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana markets. The partnership between Arun Ice-creams and Sunrisers Hyderabad exemplifies a shared vision for excellence and diversity. Just like the dynamic team of Sunrisers Hyderabad, led by the formidable Pat Cummins, Arun Ice-creams offers a wide range of flavors and specialties to cater to diverse tastes and preferences. As part of the collaboration, the Arun Ice-creams logo will be prominently displayed on the Lead helmets and caps of the Sunrisers Hyderabad players throughout the T20 Cup 2024 season. This visibility will further enhance the brand's reach and recognition among cricket fans across the country.

#### Tata AIA Life launches Tata AIA Rising India Fund

Tata AIA Life Insurance (Tata AIA) has launched the Tata AIA Rising India Fund, a fund that opens a unique avenue for consumers to participate in India's growth story. The New Fund Offering (NFO) will remain open until March 31, 2024, with units being offered at an NAV of Rs. 10 per unit during the NFO period. The Rising India Fund will invest in key sectors and companies that are driving the Atmanirbhar Bharat story. These include infrastructure, manufacturing, banking, digital, defense, etc. The fund will invest in companies across market caps and would be sector agnostic, enabling the fund manager to harness diverse opportunities driving India's growth engine.

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD

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#### Yesterday's solution

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

#### Rules

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

#### ACROSS

- Something chewed but usually not swallowed (7,3)
- Change
- With lots of sunshine
- A stand for an artists painting
- Straight away
- Tossed
- Put words on paper
- Daily publications

#### DOWN

- Part of your face
- Absent
- One time
- Hens lay these
- People who work for a business

#### SOLUTION

R	E	P	A	I	R	P	O	L	L
S	E	A	M	K	I	N	E	D	
T	H	E	G	S					
S	T	O	R	I	E	S			
U	E	V	E	N	I	N	G		
S	K	E	S	V	H				
H	U	N	G	R	Y				
E	O	V	E	R					
D	A	T	E	B	R	E	E	Z	E



## Kaliyugam Pattanamlo actor Vishva Karthikeya: I like people who give negative feedback

K. RAMYA SREE

Director Ramakanth Reddy has recently informed us in an interview that his upcoming film *Kaliyugam Pattanamlo* has a good message for the youth and that he wrote the story taking inspiration from the events that happen in real life. Now, we have the lead actor of the film, Vishva Karthikeya, talking about the film, a unique crime thriller produced by Nani Movie Works and Raamaa Creations, all set to hit the big screens on March 29.

Also, starring Ayushi Patel as a female lead, it is safe to say that this film is about a bunch of passionate movie lovers all set to taste their luck in the industry.

Vishva wants to create a name for himself in the industry by showing that he can do any kind of role; he chose the film as his role has different shades. While his previous films

Actor Vishva Karthikeya, who is coming up with his next film, *Kaliyugam Pattanamlo*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing some details about the upcoming film, the key concept of the film, and more.

Kalaposhakulu, Allantha Doorana, and Jai Sena belong to different genres like comedy, melodrama, and commercials, this film has a very new point besides thrilling and suspenseful elements, which attracted him to come on board the project.

While he doesn't want to reveal at the moment that his role has two shades or if he plays a dual role, Vishva informed us, "My character will be very new in the movie. We have done many workshops for this character. We have done workshops for each emotion, such as how to behave when one is angry and how to react when one is anxious. This movie also has a motherly sentiment. There seems to be a new genre for every two to three scenes. It will appeal to all sections of the audience. It stands out in my career." This movie has a key concept that focuses on let-

ting the audience know what happens if parents do not raise children properly. He expressed, "We have shown how parents should not raise their children. We have shown how children should be raised. Children grow up the way their parents raise them. Nurturing makes children good and bad. Every human being has a psychic feeling. But parenting can reduce it."

Vishva also confessed that he was initially not interested in listening to the story, but he was impressed by the way it was narrated by his director, Ramakanth Reddy. "The way it was narrated with the tight screenplay. I couldn't figure out what was going on until the climax. A storyboard has also been prepared beforehand. Our director has a very clear vision. I simply did what he told me to," told the actor, adding that the entire film was shot in live locations without erecting any sets. He is also happy that Annapurna Banner has come forward to release the film in Telugu-speaking states.

Although the film is getting good feedback from fellow actors and others from the industry, the actor had an interesting thing to say, which was: "I like people who give negative feedback more than people who give positive feedback. We can learn from negative feedback."

Moreover, he also has an Indonesian project in the pipeline, which will see his *Kaliyugam Pattanamlo* co-star play the female lead. Having said that, Vishva concluded the interview by saying he wants to create an impact in the industry and that "whatever Vishva does will have a good message".

## PRASHANTHI HARATHI ROOTING TO RETURN TO TOLLYWOOD SOON

K. RAMYA SREE

Actress Prashanthi Harathi, with her stint in films like *Pellam Oorelithe* and *Indra*, has gained a good fanbase for herself in a very short time; however, she could not enjoy all the attention that she was getting from the industry at that time as she got married and moved to America with her family, where she started a Kuchipudi dance school named Omkara.

However far one might go, passion always draws them to do what they love the most. The same is happening with Harathi, as she now wants to return to Tollywood with some good projects.

The actress was in Hyderabad, and she interacted with the media here on Tuesday, where she expressed that she is now making a re-entry in the industry as there is more exposure to acting now with the advent of OTT and more.

She expressed, "In most movies, we remember some characters who are more important to the story than the heroine. For example, look at the character of Sunil's wife that I played in *Pellam Oorelithe*—she is very innocent. Still, the innocent wife character is what she is known for. I want to be pivotal in such stories and act in important roles. There is a lot of innovation in movie content compared to the past. Web series and movies are innovative. If I get good character offers like this, I want to act in OTT web series and short films along with movies. I am available in Hyderabad for good work now."

"There were only movies and serials then. There were no OTTs. Now, young actors are getting a lot

of opportunities with web series and OTT content. Seeing these opportunities, I felt that I should come back to Tollywood. I want to showcase my passion as an actress," she expressed. She also runs a dance school in the US, which has been receiving great response from the people there. Harathi shared that it was her wish that our dance forms reach the future generation as well, and she started the dance school with the same ambition.

"I have been teaching 'Kuchipudi' dance to children interested in classical dance. Children there do not know Telugu. I used to explain the meaning of classical dance songs in English. My daughter Tanya learned Kuchipudi dance from me. With our daughter Tanya, we made a music video titled *Telugu Culture*. The music video was conceptualised and produced by noted director V.N. Aditya. Tanya is now 16 years old. "Our family has no objection to sending Tanya to the film industry if there is a good opportunity suitable for her age."

Actress Prashanthi Harathi, who is all set to make her re-entry in Tollywood, speaks to the Hyderabad media here, sharing her feelings on the comeback, teaching Kuchipudi dance, and more.

## Banita Sandhu commences shooting for G2 in Bhuj

Banita Sandhu, known for her stellar performances in films like *October*, *Sardar Udham*, and *Adithya Varma*, is gearing up for an exhilarating new adventure as she begins shooting for *G2* in Bhuj, Gujarat. The eagerly anticipated sequel to the 2018 hit *Goodachari* promises to be an electrifying cinematic experience, and Banita Sandhu is thrilled to be a part of it. *G2* marks Banita's first pan-India project, set to be released in multiple languages, showcasing her versatility to audiences nationwide.

Expressing her excitement about the project, Banita has earlier stated, "This is my first pan-India film, and I'm so excited to collaborate with such an incredible, visionary team. It is a role unlike anything I've ever done before, and I can't wait for audiences to see me in a completely fresh avatar. Working on this movie will be a creative delight for me." Banita Sandhu's foray into the international arena has been met with resounding acclaim, setting her apart as a talent to watch on the global stage.

Joining Banita in this exciting endeavour is her co-star Aditi Sesh, who warmly welcomed her to the *G2* world, expressing anticipation for an amazing collaboration. The camaraderie between the two actors promises to bring an extra dimension to the sequel, enhancing the overall viewing experience for the audience. As shooting commences in Bhuj, anticipation for *G2* continues to soar, with fans eagerly awaiting updates and glimpses from behind the scenes.



## Manjummel Boys to entertain the Telugu audience on April 6

Taking inspiration from a real event that occurred back in 2006, the Malayalam survival thriller movie *Manjummel Boys*, which tells the story of a bunch of pals hailing from Kochi, made history by becoming the first Malayalam film to amass Rs 200 crore in the global market. The film, directed by Chidambaram S. Poduval and featuring Soubin Shahir, Ganapathi, Khalid Rahman, and Sreenath Bhasi in the lead, was an instant hit among the Malayali audience. The film received a landslide reception from other language audiences as well.

Pan India production house Mythri Movie Makers is bringing this Indian box office sensation to the Telugu audience. The production and distribution company acquired the Telugu rights, and they have now announced the release of the movie in AP and TS on April 6 as a summer attraction.

The Telugu version is presented by Naveen Yerneni and Ravi Shankar Yalamanchili. Shyju Khalid cranked the camera, while Sushin Shyam provided the music. Vivek Harshan is the editor, and Ajayan Chaliserry is the production designer.

*Manjummel Boys* will be released in Telugu with the same title.



## Nani to strengthen Tollywood ties with UK

Actor Nani is known for making unique films that not only appeal to the youth but also the family audience. From his debut film to the latest *Hi Nanna*, he is one actor in Tollywood who has a huge fan base from all sections and categories of the audience.

While the actor is busy with his huge line-up of upcoming films, British Deputy Commissioner of the Telugu States, Gareth Wynn Owen, met Nani in his Hyderabad office to discuss strengthening UK links with Tollywood.

Sharing the pictures, Gareth wrote on his X handle: "Absolute pleasure to meet @NameisNani to talk about his

career behind and in front of the camera and how we can strengthen UK links with #Tollywood."

He also asked netizens to suggest to him some movies about Nani that he must watch. To this end, many netizens began to tell him to watch *Hi Nanna*, *Ashta Chamma*, *Jersey*, and others.

That being said, the exact discussions from the meeting have not yet been revealed. However, his fans are very happy that Nani will only make Tollywood even more proud of this tie-up.

## JANHVI KAPOOR FINISHES DEVARA SCHEDULE IN GOA

Bollywood diva Janhvi Kapoor seems to be becoming a Tollywood favourite now with impressive looks in traditional attire, be it in *Devara Part 1* or the launch of *RC 16*. While the actress is making her Tollywood debut with *Devara* alongside Jr. NTR, she already bagged her second film opposite another big star of South cinema, Ram Charan.

As we recently mentioned, Janhvi Kapoor was in Goa shooting for *Devara*, which also includes a song. She posted on Instagram stories on Tuesday, announcing that she had wrapped up shooting for the film. Sharing a picture of a sunset from Goa, the actress wrote: "Can't wait to come back and be #Thangam again. #Devara." As the first look poster for the actress suggests, Janhvi plays a village belle in the movie, directed by Koratala Siva. The film, which is almost done with its shooting, will release in theatres on October 10 this year.



## Vijay Antony's Love Guru offers a lighthearted, engaging story

Actor Vijay Antony became very popular among the Telugu audience after the massive success of his film *Bichagadu*. It was after that film that the actor began to release most of his films in Telugu. He is making his first romantic film in his career now. Titled *Love Guru*, the film stars Mrinalini Ravi as the female in this Vinayak Vaidyanathan directorial. Being released by Mythri Movie Distribution in Telugu states, the film had its trailer released on Tuesday in Telugu. In the trailer, Priya, the girl, is shown as someone who, unable to defy her father, grudgingly consents to an arranged marriage. When it comes to marriage, she does, however, place certain requirements on her potential spouse. A young man who likes Priya and, out of love, accedes to all of her demands is the protagonist of the novel. He quickly learns that after marriage, they provide difficulties, despite his one-sided devotion and acceptance of her rules. Insinuating that *Love Guru* will be appealing to both young and family audiences, the trailer offers a lighthearted and engaging perspective on whether he really knows how to love his wife. The film will be released in the theatres of the Telugu-speaking states on April 11.

## PRITHVIRAJ SUKUMARAN AS THE MYSTERIOUS MAN BEHIND THE MASK IN BADE MIYAN CHOTE MIYAN

Celebrated as one of the most gifted and powerful performers in Indian cinema, Prithviraj Sukumaran is widely known for his versatility and brilliant big-screen portrayals. Currently gearing up for his next film, *Aadujeevitham (The Goat Life)*, the actor is all set to win audiences with his devilish avatar in the action thriller *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*. Present at the film's trailer launch on Tuesday, he essayed the character of Kabir and received immense love for his voice-over and presence in the trailer.

Introducing Prithviraj Sukumaran as the mysterious man behind the mask in the film's trailer, co-star Akshay Kumar said at the launch, "You will become his fan after watching him in the film." Written and directed by Ali Abbas Zafar and produced by Ali Abbas Zafar, Jacky Bhagnani, Vashu Bhagnani, Deepshikha Deshmukh, and Himanshu Kishan Mehra under the banners of Pooja Entertainment and AAZ Films, *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* also stars Sonakshi Sinha, Manushi Chhillar, Alaya F, and Ronit Roy in pivotal roles. The film is scheduled to hit screens on Eid, April 10, 2024.





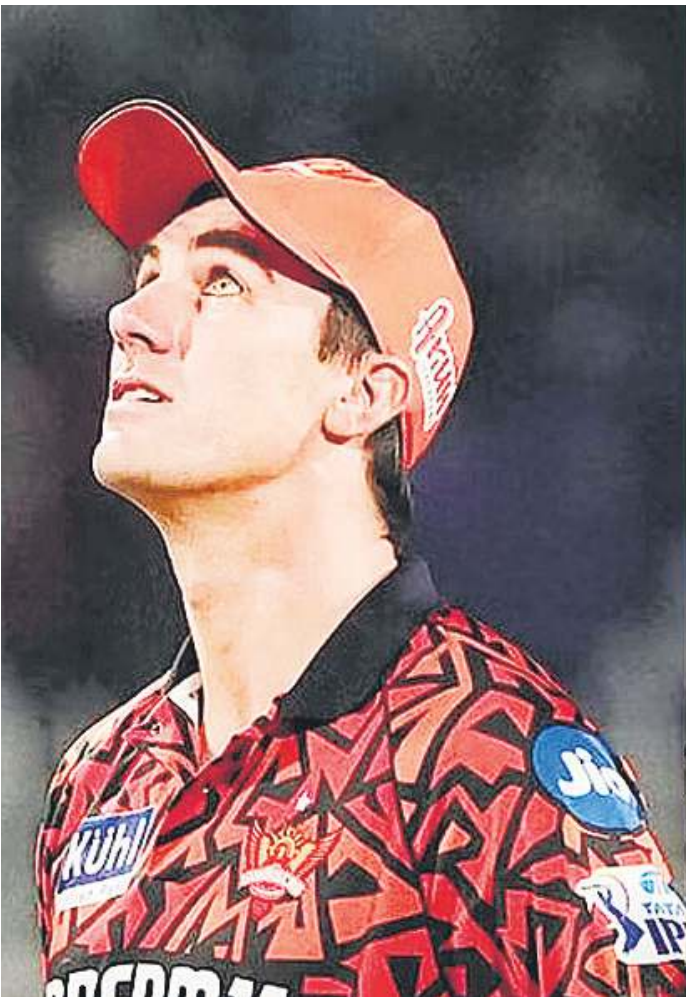


# MI, SRH LOOK TO MAKING WINNING COMEBACKS

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Mumbai Indians will aim to land the killer punch after fluffing an easy run-chase in their opener when they meet a dangerous Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday. Five-time champions MI had a lot going for them in their tournament opener against the Gujarat Titans, whether it was the incisive spells from pacer Jasprit Bumrah, Dewald Brevis' impactful knock or Rohit Sharma's fireworks at the top of the order. But MI, who have built a reputation of slow starters over the years, could not manage 48 runs off 36 balls with seven wickets in hand. With the 10-team event being more competitive than ever before, Mumbai cannot afford more such lackadaisical performances going forward. In his first game as Mumbai captain, Hardik pushed himself down the order at number seven to accommodate the likes of Tim David and Brevis higher up. Considering he batted much higher for the Gujarat Titans last year, there is a case for him to bat higher up the order. Opener Ishan Kishan, back to action after a long break, could

only last four balls against GT. With the T20 World Cup in mind, his performances will be tracked closely and have added significance. He needs to be at his best with the bat and behind the stumps to make the national squad. Hardik will also be expecting an improved performance from spinners Shams Mulani and Piyush Chawla. They face SRH on their home turf and the Pat Cummins-led side showed against Kolkata Knight Riders what they are capable of. The big-hitting Heinrich Klaasen almost got them over the line from a hopeless situation though the rest of the batters put up below par performances. The opening duo of Mayank Agarwal and Abhishek Sharma has shown promise but would also need to be consistent if SRH are to do well in the competition. SRH have invested heavily in pinch hitter Abdul Samad and it is high time he delivers on the promise. The seasoned Bhuvneshwar Kumar was Andre "Russell" on Saturday night and will look to bounce back strongly. "Tough job in cricket to bowl to someone like him (Russell). It's one of those ones which goes one way or the other. Who would have thought we



would have got that close? Unfortunately, a bit too much. Lots to be encouraged by. A couple of points to work on also," Cummins said after the narrow loss at Eden Gardens.

**SQUADS:**  
**Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan, Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Vishnu Vinod, Nehal Wadhera, Luke Wood, Suryakumar Yadav.  
**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Travis Head, Wanindu Hasaranga, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav, Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

## Mahipal adds depth to RCB batting

PTI ■ BENGALURU

On a balmy Monday night, Mahipal Lomror gave Royal Challengers Bengaluru two tantalising options — an 'Impact Player' who can yank the match away from the opposition and a potential successor to Dinesh Karthik, their designated finisher who is playing his last IPL season. Lomror, who replaced Yash Dayal during the chase of 177 as Impact sub, made an eight-ball 17 and assisted Karthik (28, 10b) in knocking off 47 runs in 22 balls that powered RCB to a four-wicket win over Punjab Kings. But his maiden foray into the world of 'Impact Players' taught Lomror how "weird" that role could be, particularly because of its hurried nature. "To be honest, it (being an Impact Player) was quite weird when I went into bat. The Impact Player rule is such that you have to be ready as you can get a call at any time to go in," said Lomror in the post-match press conference. However, the 24-year-old said the RCB management had communicated the possibility of him being used as the substitute player against Punjab. "As the name suggests, you have to make an impact on the game from the word go. The management had discussed it last night. They told me: 'If we are chasing, we might use you down the order.' So mentally, I was prepared." During the IPL 2023, RCB had availed the 'Impact Player' option in 12 matches out of 14,



and Anuj Rawat came in twice as the No. 8 finisher, similar to what Lomror did against PBKS at the Chinnaswamy Stadium. On the other 10 occasions, it was either a bowler or a top/middle-order batter who walked in as 'Impact Player'. However, Rawat could not make the desired impact as he could score only 16 runs off 27 balls in those two games. Perhaps, that failed experiment prompted the RCB thinktank to give that duty to the big-hitting Lomror in this IPL. The Rajasthan-born player, who joined Royal Challengers ahead of IPL 2022 from Rajasthan Royals, was ready for the grind too as it was his best chance to get a place in the eleven. "This is what the team management wants me to prepare for. They are very clear because we have a really strong batting lineup, and this is the only place where they can use me,"

he said. Lomror has been quietly upskilling himself at nets once the RCB top brass conveyed their decision. "Earlier, I used to bat up the order, and that gave me more balls to bat. But now as an Impact sub, there's not going to be many balls to play. So, whenever I'm going into nets, I just try and hit boundaries from the very first ball," he offered. But polishing the skills against your own teammates or local trundlers at nets is quite different from what a batter gets in a real match situation. Lomror, though, aced the test against proven performers like Arshdeep Singh and Sam Curran at a stadium with an unusually gripping pitch that made shot-making a tricky proposition. He, however, reduced the equation to 43 off 21 balls and thereby the pressure on Karthik

too with a first-ball boundary off left-arm pacer Curran. But Lomror soon bettered that effort against Arshdeep. On the third ball of the 18th over, he smoked the left-arm quick over the cow-corner for a six and in the next ball pulled him for a four through backward square leg. That over had started with RCB needing 36 runs from 18 balls and three balls later it became a more comfortable 24 runs from 14 balls. Lomror was not hesitant to give a slice of credit to his senior partner Karthik for keeping his pulse against racing. "I think batting with him makes things really easy. He has some 15-17 years of experience in IPL. He was telling me to stay calm and focus on the next ball, not to get overexcited or not to get too aggressive," he said. The apprentice has certainly left the master a beaming man.

## Rachin, Dube power CSK to 206/5 against Gujarat Titans

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Rachin Ravindra started with a bang and Shivam Dube finished with a flourish as Chennai Super Kings posted a commendable 206 for 5 against Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here on Tuesday. Rachin made full use of the Powerplay, racing to 46 off 20 balls while Dube, a nightmare for spinners, then used his long levers to whack 51 in only 23 deliveries to increase the challenge of GT batters by manifold. Dube's innings had as many as five sixes. In between, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's chiselled 46 off 36 balls also was a significant contribution in another impactful batting performance by the team on a hard bouncy track that was on offer. Not to forget CSK's Rs 7.60 crore recruit Sameer Rizvi (14 off 6 balls), who pummelled Rashid Khan (2/49 in 4 overs) for two sixes to mark a memorable IPL debut. Rachin, who has already become a darling of the CSK fans, enthralled all and sundry with his audacious stroke-play. While he missed out again on a half-century but team's 'spiritual skipper' Mahendra Singh Dhoni would be all smiles knowing that his choice was perfect to the T. The three sixes — a flick



behind the square and one over long-on off the normally profligate Umesh Yadav and one off Azmatullah Omarzai were hit with so much disdain that it did put Gujarat Titans in a spot. There were some crunchy cover drives as well as Ravindra let his skipper Gaikwad breathe a little easy at the other end. Finally, it was GT's 'Go-To' bowler Rashid, who drew the first blood but more because of smart work from Wriddhiman Saha, who

removed the bails in a flash after the Black Caps opener lost his balance and moved out of his crease trying to whip the delivery. Saha's next stumping was way easier as Sai Kishore shortened the length and drew Ajinkya Rahane out of his crease for an indiscreet loft. The ball deviated enough and the keeper completed mere formality. Gaikwad wasn't as fluent as Rachin to begin with but in his five boundaries and a six, he oozed class before

becoming Saha's third victim with the gloves, trying to pull Spencer Johnson, only to end up edging one behind the stumps. After that it was Dube, who just plonked his front-foot and bludgeoned Sai Kishore for two monstrous sixes and also sent Johnson's delivery soaring for a maximum. Dube had the composed Daryl Mitchell for company, who also chipped in with an unbeaten 20-ball 24 in a stand of 57 runs for the fourth wicket in 5.5 overs.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Not just a marketable name to promote T20 cricket, he's still got the game. This was the subtle message Virat Kohli sent out amid unfounded chatter surrounding his place in the side ahead of the World Cup's debut appearance in the United States. Kohli, who is back after a two-month paternity break, scored a match-winning 77 off 49 balls for Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday night against Punjab Kings and deservedly walked away with the player of the match honours. "I know my name is nowadays quite attached to just promoting the game in many parts of the world when it comes to T20 cricket. But, I've still got it, I guess," said the 35-year-old father of two in the post-match presentation. His comments came in the backdrop of never-ending media speculation surrounding the team's composition for the big event to be jointly hosted by the USA and the West Indies starting June 1. Former players like Kevin Pietersen have asked whether Kohli would make the Indian squad purely on merit or for being a megastar who will pull

## My name these days is attached to just promoting T20 cricket but I have still got it: Kohli

in fans. Kohli averages over 50 in the format and has a strike rate of 138.15. On Monday night, hallmark of Kohli's classy knock was the way he stepped out to dispatch the fast bowlers over the extra cover boundary. The former India captain has nothing left to prove but he realises the need for constant evolution in T20 format. "Well I mean you have to (make additions to your game)," he said when asked about going aerial against the pacers on the off-side. "People know I play the cover drive pretty well so they're not going to allow me to hit gaps and with guys like KG (Kagiso Rabada) and Arshdeep (Singh) as well, he's tall. So, I mean, if they're hitting length, you have to create some momentum in the ball. "And once you're closer to the ball, you kind of negate the bounce that's going to happen. You meet it earlier. So, I mean, you have to come up with a game plan here and there and try to keep improving your



game," he explained at the post-match presentation. **IT WAS SURREAL NOT TO BE RECOGNISED FOR**

**TWO MONTHS:** Kohli had missed the five-match Test series against England as he was overseas for the birth of

his second child. The long break allowed him to spend much needed quality time with his family and not being

recognised on the streets was something that he enjoyed the most. "We were not in the country.

We were at a place where people were not recognising us. Just time together as a family, just to feel normal for two months. For me, for us as a family, it was a surreal experience. "Of course, having two kids, things become totally different from a family perspective. So just the ability to be together, the connections that you make with your older child, it's amazing. "I mean, I couldn't have been more grateful to God for the opportunity that I got to spend time with my family." For Kohli, not being mobbed is a luxury and he loved every bit of his time away from the limelight. "And yeah, just the place that we were in, I was telling the guys (RCB teammates) that when we came back, the voices back home felt that much louder. "I couldn't look up because I was just not used to being called my name for two months. And then immediately you hear these

loud noises and then you're back in it all again. "But it was beautiful. It's an amazing experience to just be another person on the road and not be recognised and just carry on about life that normally people would on a daily basis," he said. Kohli is also forever grateful to the loyal and passionate RCB fans who keep backing the team that is yet to win the IPL. "It's been going on for years and you know, people talk about a lot of other things when you play sport. The achievements, the stats, the numbers. Look at the end of the day when you look back you're not going to think of the numbers and the stats. "It's the memories that you create. Famously, Rahul bhai (India head coach) in the change room nowadays says exactly the same to us. When you play, you play your heart out because you're going to miss these times when you're with your friends in the change room playing in front of fans. "So the relationship that's happened organically over so many years it's something that I can never ever forget. Just the love and the appreciation and the backing I've received for so many years that's been amazing," Kohli added.