

'Singing in a movie is a dream for any artist, and I am no **EXCEPTION**'

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Guarantees will ensure Cong win in LS polls

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

Even though six guarantees were not implemented in 100 days as promised in the Assembly elections, what was the reason behind the bold statement of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy that the Lok Sabha elections will be a referendum on their 100 days rule? Revanth Reddy strongly feels that the people of Telangana have a positive opinion on his government and definitely they will vote for the Congress and they will win majority seats in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. Out of six guarantees, Revanth's government has implemented four guarantees. These four schemes are directly connected to the people and will have a great impact on the Congress in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Within 48 hours after coming to power, Revanth's government has started the imple-

mentation of two guarantees. One is free bus travel for women and the other is enhancement of the coverage under Aarogyasri from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. In the month of February Revanth Reddy government has launched the implementation of two more guarantees. One was supplying of LPG cylinders at Rs 500 each and free power supply up to 200 units per month. These four schemes are directly connected to the people and give a great relaxation to the people. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is very confident that the schemes of "guarantees" will ensure the guarantee winning of majority seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections. Without knowing how the Congress will rule, the people have given a mandate to Congress in the recent Assembly elections. Now the people have tasted the Congress government rule in

the last 100 days and they are satisfied with the State government and will support their candidates in the Lok Sabha elections, said a senior Congress leader.

The government is taking steps for the implementation of remaining two guarantees after the Lok Sabha elections. The opposition parties BRS and the BJP are criticising that the State government failed in keeping its promise on the implementation of six guarantees within 100 days. However, Revanth Reddy is daring enough to tell that the Lok Sabha elections are a referendum on their 100 days' rule. In the last 100 days, Revanth Reddy has created a positive impact towards Congress by implementing four guarantees. At the same time, Revanth Reddy succeeded in creating a negative impact on the BRS among the people by exposing the misdeeds of the previous BRS government.

Unemployment defining issue in LS polls: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi can keep trying to "distort, distract, and divert", but youth unemployment is a defining issue for the country in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and it has a concrete plan to deal with it.

The opposition party claimed that the country is sitting on a "ticking bomb" of joblessness with the youth bearing the brunt of the Modi government's "apathy".

Citing the India Employment Report 2024 released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Institute of Human Development (IHD), Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge urged people to remember before voting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to provide 20 crore jobs in 10 years but "snatched more than 12 crore jobs from the youth".



Dynasty politics integral to India's fabric: Tharoor

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Amidst unrelenting attacks from Prime Minister Narendra Modi over dynasty politics in the opposition INDIA bloc, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor staunchly defended it, claiming that it is ingrained within India's cultural fabric and its prevalence was not only within the grand old party but also within the BJP.

Working to ensure money looted from poor returned to them: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that he is working to ensure that nearly Rs 3,000 crore "looted" from poor people in West Bengal and attached by the Enforcement Directorate is returned to them.

Modi made this assertion in a telephonic conversation with Amrita Roy, a member of erstwhile royalty and BJP candidate against TMC's Mahua Moitra in Krishnanagar Lok Sabha constituency, and claimed that power and not country is the priority of opposition parties.

"PM Modi told 'Rajmata' Amrita Roy that he is exploring legal options to ensure that the money looted from the poor goes back to them through whatever assets and money the ED has attached from the corrupt," a BJP leader said.

According to the details of the conversation shared by the party, the prime minister put the amount of money,



which was paid by people in the state as bribe for getting jobs, at Rs 3,000 crore.

He told her to inform people about his stand and asserted that soon after coming back to power he will find a way, including making legal provisions if needed, to do so.

Modi also took a swipe at the Congress for its support to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal following his arrest by the ED in a corruption case, saying those who made complaint against the AAP have now changed track to help it. He, though, did not name anyone.

"This shows that their priority is not country but power,"

he said, asserting that the BJP-led alliance is fighting for a corruption-free country for the bright future of the youth while all the corrupt have come together on the other side to save each other.

With Roy tracing her lineage to 18th century local king, Krishnachandra Roy, Modi hit back at those who have targeted the erstwhile royalty for its alleged support to the British after the BJP named her its candidate.

She told Modi that her family is being called traitors and noted that Krishnachandra Roy worked for people and joined hands with other kings to save "Sanatan Dharma".

He asked her to not take any pressure, saying that they (TMC) practice vote bank politics and will make all kinds of wild allegations. They do so to hide their sins, he said.

On the one hand, they seek evidence of Lord Ram's existence while on the other they cite incidents dating back to two and three centuries to defame others, he said.

Cong announces 4 candidates for LS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress announced its 8th list with 14 MP candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in which four candidates are from Telangana. The candidates are as on expected lines. They are Suguna Kumari (Adilabad), Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy (Bhongir), T Jeevan Reddy (Nizamabad) and Neelam Machu (Medak). The Congress has to announce four more candidates in Telangana. Those constituencies are--Khammam, Warangal, Hyderabad and Karimnagar.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, CEC member N Uttam Kumar Reddy and AICC in-charge general secretary Deepa Das Munshi participated in the CEC meeting held on Wednesday.

BRS deprived 14 lakh...

Continued from page 1

The then government, which released loan waiver funds in installments for five years, finally waived off the loans relating to only 23 lakh farmers.

Sources indicated that in the past, BRS, which had come to power by saying that crop loans up to 1 lakh rupees would be waived off, had put various restrictions on the loan waiver. "For five years, BRS had been playing with false promises. In the first year up to Rs 25,000; in the second year, up to Rs 50,000, in the fourth year, up to Rs 75,000, and before the election up to Rs 99,999 in four installments, funds were released from time to time for loan waiver and teased farmers", sources said.

Reacting to BRS' call on

farm loan waiver and the move to lay siege to the Secretariat, sources said: "Now that the power is gone, they are showering fake love".

"As promised to the people, the Congress government is committed to waive off crop loans up to Rs 2 lakh. The exercise has started within the first hundred days on the proposals to waive off the loans of all the eligible farmers to avoid the mistakes of the past".

It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, when he visited Medaram Sammakka Saralamma on February 23, had announced that he would soon give good news to farmers. It is known that the Chief Minister said that discussions were going on with the bankers on loan waiver of Rs 2 lakh.

Records tumble..

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Heinrich Klaasen (80 not out off 34 balls) provided the fireworks in the end to help SRH break an 11-year-old record. The previous highest total in IPL was 263 for five achieved by Royal Challengers Bangalore back in 2013. It was also the highest total recorded in a T20 league. Mumbai bowlers were left shell-shocked by SRH's six-hitting spree but their batters came out with a purpose and made a match out of what looked like a one way traffic at the innings break. Eventually, they ended at 246 for five in 20 overs. A record 38 sixes were plundered in the game and it was the first time 500 runs were scored in a T20 match. "The wicket was good but 277, no matter how good or bad you bowl, if the opposition get 277 that means they batted very well.

Cops may have...

Continued from page 1

Speaking at the Malkajgiri parliamentary segment meeting held at Telangana Bhavan, KTR highlighted Revanth Reddy's avoidance of his challenge to contest from Malkajgiri and pointed to the 'silence' maintained by the Chief Minister on this matter.

Furthermore, KTR criticized Revanth Reddy's political affiliations, noting his tendency to switch parties. He reiterated that Revanth Reddy would align with the BJP along with several Congress MLAs after the Lok Sabha elections, considering his history of changing allegiances like ABVP, TRS, TDP, and Congress. KTR reiterated his allegation that Revanth Reddy's actions resembled those of a BJP leader and cited the Chief Minister's stances on

BJP and Modi in contrast to those of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party.

KTR also commented on Etna Rajender's candidacy in Malkajgiri. He pointed out that, after facing rejection in Gajwel in Huzurabad, Etna Rajender was now contesting in Malkajgiri. KTR urged Rajender to clarify the developmental initiatives undertaken by the BJP or Modi in the last decade before seeking votes. He criticized the BJP for prioritizing corporate loan waivers over farmers' loans, and wanted Rajender to respond to the issue of farm loan waivers before expressing sympathy for farmers in the state. KTR criticized the Congress government in the state for failing to fulfil electoral promises, particularly the Rs 2 lakh farm loan waiver.

Harish Rao's office denies involvement

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Health Minister T Harish Rao's office has condemned the news that Harish Rao's PA has cashed CMRF cheques.

Jubilee Hills police arrested Nareish along with three others, in connection with the theft of CMRF cheques on Wednesday. This was based on a complaint from Patloth Ravi Nayak, a farmer from Peerla Thanda in Medak district, that the case which was cleared under his name was used by Nareish illegally. As per the statement, "The fact is that Nareish

is not a PA to Harish Rao. He was a computer operator working in Harish Rao's office as a temporary employee. After completion of tenure as Finance and Health Minister, Government Orders vide letter no. 2290 dated 05-12-2023, the Minister's office was closed the next day on 06-12-2023 and the staff was dispatched. Harish Rao's office had no connection with Nareish from that day."

"But during the closing of the office, it came to our attention that he took some CMRF cheques with him without any information.

No relief to Kejriwal

Continued from page 1

The court, however, rejected his contention that no reply is required to be filed on behalf of the respondent. "This court deems it appropriate to issue notice of the main writ petition as well as application for grant of interim relief, returnable on 03.04.2024," the court said.

"The Directorate of Enforcement will ensure that replies are filed to the

main petition as well as the application for interim release of the petitioner by 02.04.2024," ordered the court. Kejriwal, who was arrested on March 21 and

subsequently remanded to the ED's custody till March 28 by a Delhi court, sought immediate release on the grounds that his arrest was illegal.

Kavitha spends one night...

Continued from page 1

"She ate dal and rice, which was also served to other inmates on Tuesday night, and Wednesday morning, she had tea with snacks," a jail source said. Kavitha was taken to Tihar jail on Tuesday evening after a Delhi court sent her to judicial custody till April 9 on the ED's plea that if released, the "highly influential" arrestee was likely to influence witnesses and tamper with evidence.

"Following her medical examinations, she was directly sent to her cell. Her blood pressure was slightly low during the medical checkup but later it went back to normal," the source said. Kavitha was given a mattress, slippers, clothes, a bedsheet, and a blanket as per the jail rules, the source said, adding she was also provided with her medicines.

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When they checked his phone, police got the information about these constituency-wise Whatsapp groups and their chats which revealed the phone-tapping of political leaders and other prominent persons. Also, one by one, the politicians and businessmen are complaining about their phone-tapping to the DGP office and CM's office. On Monday, a businessman named Saran Chowdary filed a complaint against former minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao. Mahabubnagar MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy, Maheshwaram MLA contestant A Sriramulu Yadav and BJP MP candidate for Medak constituency Raghunadhan Rao complained to DGP Ravi

Gupta about tapping of their mobile phone during the Assembly elections.

However in the court proceedings, defence lawyers have said that most of the Congress party leaders' phones had been tapped. The police custody of Praneeth Rao was over on March 23. The Panjagutta police arrested Bhujanga Rao, Thirupatanna 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. The public prosecutor asked the court to give the three accused to police custody to get more information. During the investigation, Praneeth Rao confessed some activities while he was working in SIB.

'I do not have...

Continued from page 1

It's also going to be a question of various other winnability criteria that they use...Are you from this community or are you from that religion? Are you from this? I said no, I do not think I am going to be able to do it," she said.

Sitharaman was speaking at the TIMES NOW Summit 2024 here.

"I am very grateful that they accepted my argument...So I am not contesting," she added.

When asked why even the finance minister of the country does not have enough funds to fight Lok Sabha elections, she said that the Consolidated Fund of India does not belong to her.

'Ranjith's selfishness...

Continued from page 1

While claiming to regard Kavita as his sister, Ranjith Reddy chose to join the Congress with a smile on the very day when the central government agencies targeted Kavita under the guise of searches. In view of the significance and freedom given to Ranjith Reddy within the party and in his constituency, his departure prompted widespread discussion about his motives.

KTR criticised Ranjith Reddy for abandoning the party in pursuit of power and to safeguard his businesses. Although he was a political newcomer during the 2019 parliamentary elections, the entire party and cadre had worked tirelessly for his victory,

elevating him to the status of parliamentary member. Still, Ranjith Reddy defected.

KTR remarked, "No individual is above the party. If that were the case, we would only have independent candidates in parliament, not parties." He recalled the example of Vishweshwar Reddy, who left the party and subsequently lost the election in the Chevella constituency.

Addressing the selfish agenda between Ranjit Reddy and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, KTR dismissed the notion that BRS party workers would support the Congress, calling such expectations politically naive.

KTR highlighted the confusion within the Congress party regarding selection of candidates for the LS elections. In

ABVP opposes HC complex...

Continued from page 1

The land allotted for the High Court building is related to the Biodiversity Park which is useful for farmers and students' research. The park consists of animal and bird species, medicinal plants' species, and several lakhs of plant resources. Even though the ABVP has taken several programmes to draw the attention of the government since January

demanding that land for the building be allotted somewhere else, the Telangana government turned deaf ears to our pleas." She said that the government, instead of supporting students of Telangana, was doing great injustice to the student community. "If someone is wronged in society, they go to the court and fight for justice. But here the injustice being done to students is really shocking", Jhansi observed. The

ABVP members alleged that some officials were trying to establish that there was no garden there. The state government was bent upon destroying the university land, they said. Mentioning that preparations were being made for the foundation laying ceremony for the proposed HC building, they forewarned that ABVP would oppose it and asked the state government to be prepared for the consequences.

TPCC singles out VHR for...

Continued from page 1

It may be mentioned here that former MLA K Laxma Reddy too had openly criticised the party and that too in the presence of CM Revanth Reddy.

The party's move to go soft on VHR is seen as an attempt to put the house in order in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Sources indicated that VHR

had high hopes on getting the Khammam ticket. After getting to know that it is not possible for him to get the Khammam ticket, VHR had been staying away from party activities. Besides, VHR had felt bad that when he was hospitalised some time back, the CM did not enquire about his health. VHR had ruffled feathers by commenting: "CM is not giving appointment to me. CM is going to opposition

(BRS party) leaders' houses and welcoming them to join Congress". Further, VHR commented that Revanth Reddy had lowered his CM status by going to their residences. VHR slammed CM for giving tickets to leaders switching to Congress party from BRS party and thereby doing injustice to real Congress activists.

Prior to VHR's outbursts, TPCC senior vice-president G Niranjan had addressed a

letter to AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge criticising the party for giving tickets to BRS leaders-Danam Nagender, Patnam Sunitha Mahender Reddy and Gaddam Ranjith Reddy. The very next day Mahesh Kumar Goud had warned of disciplinary action without naming any leader.

Subsequently, K Laxma Reddy criticized the party, picking from where VHR and Niranjan had left.

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Startup comes up with paperless structure for global trade

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

T-Hub startup launched a paperless structure for international trade, to overcome hurdles in international trade transactions and to emerge as a frontrunner in the global economy. Automaxis, a pioneering startup supported by T-Hub, announced advancements in its mission to transform international transactions. With its flagship product, FDP Connect, Automaxis is poised to streamline, automate and digitise transactions related to freight, documents and payments.

This platform tackles longstanding challenges in international trade, fundamentally reshaping how businesses navigate the difficulties of global commerce.

Cross-border trade often encounters inefficiencies and bottlenecks, hindering seamless transactions. Automaxis comes out as a beacon of efficiency and reliability, leveraging blockchain technology and artificial intelligence to bridge the gap between stakeholders operating in silos.

By fostering interoperability



and perfect collaboration within the supply chain, Automaxis sets the stage for enhanced efficiency and reduced paperwork in international trade. With over 5,500 exporters already onboard, Automaxis continues to make waves in key sectors such as agri exports, recycled paper exports, marine exports, engineering exports, gems and jewelry.

The government's initiatives under the Digital India initiative and Ease of Doing Business are further paving the way for smoother international trade. Automaxis, with its

total approach, offers a comprehensive suite of tools to guide users through every stage of the international trade process, particularly the recent commitment by the Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA) transition to 100% electronic bills.

A significant achievement for Automaxis is its integration with TradeTrust, MLETR compliant framework by IMDA, Singapore. The recent live paperless transaction between India and Singapore, handled using the TradeTrust platform, highlights the success and rel-

Automaxis, a pioneering startup supported by T-Hub, announced advancements in its mission to transform international transactions

evance of Automaxis's solution in today's digital economy.

Pratik, chief operating officer of Automaxis, said, "We are providing a one-stop-shop for all the digital needs of the exporting and importing companies in India. Our smart tool navigates users through the total process of international trade, ensuring efficiency and compliance.

Looking ahead, Automaxis projects robust revenue growth for the upcoming fiscal year, driven by growing order books and an expanding customer base."

Mahindra varsity gets pledge of Rs 500 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mahindra University announced a landmark personal pledge from Anand Mahindra and his family of Rs 500 crores over the next five years (starting from FY25 till FY29) on Wednesday. This generous pledge will be pivotal for the university as it continues to expand into new disciplines.

It will help propel varsity's mission to strive for interdisciplinary academic excellence and train multi-skilled leaders committed to inclusive and sustainable progress.

In addition, Mahindra has made a dedicated pledge of Rs 50 crore endowing the Indira Mahindra School of Education in FY25. Named in memory of Indira Mahindra, a teacher and Anand Mahindra's mother, the school aspires to be a centre of excellence in educational research, practice, and innovations.

This combined pledge of Rs 550 crore is the latest of many education initiatives that Mahindra supports around India.

Political parties targeting iftars for poll campaigning

MOHAMMED BALEEGH ■ HYDERABAD

With the Lok Sabha polls to be held in May, political parties in Telangana are making efforts to initiate their election campaigns through Iftar parties in the month of Ramadan.

The Congress government organised a State Iftar on March 15, the annual event was expedited since this is an election year. The Congress attributed its successful campaign during the Assembly elections last year to the Muslim population. Congress leader and advisor to Telangana government on SC, ST and Minority affairs Shabbir Ali on March 26 attended an Iftar party at a mosque.

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimen (AIMIM) leaders every year organise 'iftar' programmes during Ramzan in all its constituencies and elsewhere as well. In this year's Ramzan, it is likely that Iftar get-togethers at residential colonies will be organised on a grand scale by local leaders and corporators.

The Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT), which gave a close fight to the AIMIM in the Yakutpura constituency during the



BRS working president KT Rama Rao attending an iftar party in Hyderabad on Wednesday

Assembly elections last year, has been organising iftar get-together at various levels. The party will organise a "Youmul Quran" programme at the Mecca Masjid on March 29. MBT President Majeed Ullah Khan will address the public.

The Bharat Rashttra Samithi (BRS) working president KT

Rama Rao on Wednesday attended an Iftar party at the Gunbazar area in Rasoolpura. Following the Iftar, he interacted with the residents in order to understand their issues. In a statement, the BRS party announced that it would conduct iftar parties during the reminder of Ramzan.

BITS Pilani to host meet on 'Work integrated learning' on April 15-16

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Work Integrated Learning Programmes (WILP) division of Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani will be hosting an International Conference on Work Integrated Learning (ICONWIL-2024) at its Hyderabad campus on April 15 and 16, 2024.

With focus on developing constructive directions for the future in the critical and specific domain of "work integrated learning," the conference aims to bring together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers from across the globe. The aim is to provide a thought-provoking common platform, where they can exchange their research findings and innovative ideas, share best practices, experiences, and insights on diverse aspects, and discuss solutions for various practical challenges that are encountered by professionals in the field of teaching and learning.

Prof. (Dr) TG Sitharam,



the Chairman, All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Government of India, will be the Chief Guest for the opening ceremony of the conference.

The conference will have paper and case study presentations from researchers and practitioners on five engaging tracks i.e. perspectives on future directions for work integrated learning, pedagogical practices, assessment models, innovation and learning technologies, and industry-academia collaboration.

A student's competition, "EduForge," focusing on tech-powered solutions for "work

integrated learning" will also be held as part of the event. The competition will challenge participants to conceptualize, design, develop and present innovative technological solutions that can help enhance the learning experience of students. A hands-on workshop on leveraging Generative AI in teaching and learning will also be facilitated by Keshava Rangarajan, co-founder and Chief Innovation Officer, Spanda AI, USA.

Prof. G. Sundar, Director, Off-Campus Programmes & Industry Engagement, BITS Pilani, said, "In today's dynamic world, where working professionals around the world are required to continuously learn and adapt to the ever-evolving requirements of their organisations and industry sectors, the work integrated learning serves as an appropriate model of education to update and upgrade their skills and knowledge, while helping them continue their professional career."

IDPL pays Rs 16 crore property tax to GHMC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Representatives from Kukatpally IDPL company handed over a cheque of Rs 16 crore, representing property tax dues, to GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose through the One Time Service (OTS), on Wednesday.

The Commissioner expressed gratitude to IDPL for settling their dues via OTS and encouraged other government companies, offices and property owners with arrears to take advantage of the OTS offer by March 31, availing a 90 per cent interest concession.

He requested to settle down the dues and suggested considering payment of house tax arrears for the year 2023-24 as well.

Additional Commissioners Jayaraj Kennedy, Geetharadhika and Valuation Officer Mahesh Kulkarni were among those present.

Centre for diabetes research set up at AIG hospitals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Centre on Endocrine Pancreas for diabetes research was on Wednesday inaugurated at the AIG hospitals.

The research facility aims to study the endocrine function of the pancreas, with the objective of understanding and developing personalised treatment algorithms and solutions for management of diabetes in our population.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman AIG hospitals said, "There is an urgent need to address the diabetes epidemic gripping our nation. With over 10 crore diagnosed cases and counting, India stands in the forefront of this global health crisis. It's imperative that we establish a dedicated research facility to delve into the intricacies of diabetes from an Indian perspective. Extremely glad that our team of researchers got the

ENDOCRINE FUNCTION OF THE PANCREAS



Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG hospital, at the Centre for Endocrine Pancreas for Diabetes Research set up at AIG hospitals

grant from DBT-Wellcome Trust India Alliance involving four other institutions of repute. By harnessing our collective expertise and resources, we can pioneer novel therapeutics tailored to the unique genetic, dietary and lifestyle factors prevalent in our population with respect to diabetes."

Shedding light on the nature of studies taken up at the centre, Dr M Sasikala, Principal

Investigator for this project said, "The elementary step was to create an interdisciplinary team consisting of endocrinologists, pancreatologists, molecular biologists, bioinformaticians, epidemiologists and other key experts who are working in diabetes research. Under the Asian Centre for Endocrine Pancreas Research (AC-EPR), we will integrate all such expertise from across the

world under one roof and study the mechanism (pathogenesis) of insulin deficiency in our population. The centre will also facilitate the storage of islet cells (cells which are responsible for insulin production in the pancreas) in a BioBank to help future research purposes."

"One of the most fascinating aspects of this collaborative research project is the objective to find metabolic markers for progression of glycemia, which means that through various scientific analysis we can identify factors via simple blood examinations and would get to know who will develop diabetes, which individual will respond to certain drugs, diabetes intervention (endoscopic or surgical) will work or not, etc. This will lead to a completely personalised and precision medicine-based approach for diabetes treatment in our country," Dr Reddy further added.

People should not respond to suspicious calls or messages

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the FedEx cyber fraud cases are increasing, on Wednesday the FedEx has clarified that it does not seek personal information through unsolicited phone calls, mail, or email for goods being shipped or held, unless requested or initiated by customers. So people should not respond to fake calls and messages and do not get into the fraud trap.

On Wednesday the FedEx released a media statement where it mentioned, "If any individual receives any suspicious phone calls or messages, they are advised not to provide their personal information. Instead, they should immediately contact the local law enforcement authorities within the vicinity or report to the cybercrime department."

FedEx parcel scam cases in the State have increased from 64 in 2022 to 645 in 2023, whereas more than 90 cases have been reported in the year of 2024.

According to the Telangana State police annual report 2023, the top five cyber crimes in the year 2023 were Business Investment Fraud, FedEx Courier Fraud, Advertisement Portal Fraud, Cards Fraud and Loan Fraud.

TSRTC MD VC Sajjanar said that around 90 per cent of total frauds of drug parcel cases are occurring in India. The cyber police advised that to tackle this, self-awareness is the only way to check these scams and do not respond to phone calls of unknown persons. Contact the police on 1930 or cyber-crime.gov.in to report any cyber crime.

SBI donates minibus to Manchikalalu NGO

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Challa Srinivasulu Setty, Managing Director (International Banking, Global Markets & Technology) of the state Bank of India, visited Hyderabad to mark CSR activity and witnessing MoU signing between SBI Foundation with ICAR-IIRR.

At the SBI local head office in Koti, a CSR activity was undertaken for donation of Tata Winger Minibus to Manchikalalu - a home for needy children, Marredpally, Secunderabad. CS Setty handed over the key to Sarath Kumar Puppala, founder president, Manchikalalu. The Tata Winger minibus was flagged off by SBI managing director and other top executives of the SBI.

Speaking on the occasion, managing director CS Setty acknowledged the great service done by Sarath Kumar and Bhavani of Manchikalalu



organisation and thanked them for giving SBI the opportunity to support them. He expressed his dream of providing Mobile Hospitals to each one of the 112 aspirational districts through SBI Foundation.

Rajesh Kumar, Chief General Manager, SBI, Hyderabad Circle, said that it was a great honour to support Manchikalalu as it is doing

great service to orphans and underprivileged boys. The donation of minibus will be of great help to the 48 orphan children for their transportation needs and medical emergencies.

Meanwhile, an MoU was signed between SBI Foundation and Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR)-Indian Institute of Rice

A CSR activity was undertaken for donation of Tata Winger Minibus to Manchikalalu - a home for needy children, Marredpally, Secunderabad

Research (IIRR), Hyderabad under Gram Seva initiative of SBI foundation, for "Promotion of direct seeded rice" in the presence of CS Setty.

A cheque of Rs 4,50,00,000 from SBI Foundation (CSR wing of SBI) was handed over by CS Setty to ICAR-IIRR for "Promotion of direct seeded rice for sustainable rice production."

Traffic diversions in IT corridor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad police have issued traffic diversions in the areas of IT corridor on Wednesday. The police said that the commuters proceeding towards Kothaguda flyover from all routes, the diversions have been planned on an experimental basis to mitigate potential traffic congestion, which starts from March 29.

Traffic coming from Hafeezpet towards Gachibowli will be allowed on Kothaguda flyover from Monday to Friday during 8 am to 12 pm from RTA office, Kondapur to Gachibowli.

Parents confused over change in age limit

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY ■ HYDERABAD

With the implementation of a new age limit among CBSE schools in Hyderabad for the Class I admissions, there was confusion among the parents. Apart from the new age limit, the hike in admission fees added to the burden on their shoulders due to the absence of regulation of school fees in the State.

The authorities of CBSE schools said that they have implemented the new age limit rule in regards to Class I admissions. The fees was hiked by 10 per cent.

MINIMUM AGE LIMIT FOR CLASS I

Murali Radha, a member of Hyderabad Parents Association said, "Admissions usually begin in March or April. However, nowadays a majority of private schools, especially CBSE schools, complete their admissions by November and December. About 75 per cent of schools complete their admissions by November and December while 25 per cent of schools are left for admission. According to a report submitted by Tirupati Reddy Committee, the admission fees was hiked by 10 per cent. There are some schools where they hiked admission fees by 20 per

cent to 30 per cent. But, the State government is not taking any action on them. The current fees for Class I admission is Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000. We are boycotting the report. No matter how many protests or complaints are raised against the authorities, they are not concerned about the issue. We have also requested the education department stating that all schools for all communities should take uniform action. But, it is not implemented. With regards to age, there is one year gap between CBSE and ICSE students compared to SSC stu-

dents, as the new age limit for Class I admission in CBSE school is six year age while for SCC students it is five years. As a majority of parents prefer CBSE schools compared to SSC, it has become an additional burden to them."

Venkat, a member of Hyderabad Parents Association said, "Majority of schools are converted into CBSE and these schools are think that the State government doesn't have a hold on them. Also, six year as the minimum age limit for Class I admissions is not a new rule. It is introduced now by CBSE schools."

Social media posts which expose people violate IT Act

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Just like any other social activist or influencers, Sagar Goud, a social media influencer, had uploaded an incident where a Muslim mob attacked a group of women through his Twitter account. However, he received an email from Twitter stating that the tweet content violates Information Technology Act (IT Act) and was reported by Cyber crime officials, Rachakonda.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 is an Act of the Indian Parliament notified on

17 October 2000. It is the primary law in India dealing with cybercrime and electronic commerce.

Speaking to the Pioneer Correspondent, Sagar said, "I have not manipulated or edited the video but just uploaded the original footage of the incident. I don't know why Twitter sent an email stating that the content violates IT Act. This is not the first time, but previously I received several such emails. Not only me, even my friends who posted such kind of footage received such emails from the Twitter."

Responding to the case why people who posted footages in social media platforms receive mails stating violation of content, Narendra, ACP, IT Cell, Cybercrime Bureau, Rachakonda, said, "Whatever video or footage you post in social media platforms which showcases accused or criminals, is in violation of the Information Technology Act as the content exposes people thereby violating the law. Hence, Twitter sends emails to those who post such content on the platform to remove the footage."



Jagadish blames govt for drought-like situation in State

PNS ■ PENPAHAD

Former minister and MLA of Suryapet Jagadish Reddy has alleged that a drought-like situation is prevailing in the undivided Nalgonda district and the crops are withering away. It was a man-made drought, he said.

Addressing media here on Wednesday, the Congress rulers rendered the Kaleshwaram project ineffective out of vendetta against former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao.

Not less than 5,000 cusecs of water are available in the Kaleshwaram project, he said, but the Congress government is in no mood to release water for irrigation.

The Congress assured the farmers to provide irrigation facility under SRSP Phase-2 and advised them to sow their crops in the ayacut lands, but, he alleged.

He dared ministers to visit the farmers and gather information about crop loss suffered by them. The crops withered away due to the negligence of the rulers. It was not he the natural calamity, he felt.

In the undivided Nalgonda district, the standing crops withered away in three lakh acres pushing farmers deep into debt. In Suryapeta district, the crops dried up in at least 25,000 acres.

As the government failed to waive crop loans of farmers, the farmers are forced to borrow money from moneylenders, he said.



Former minister assessing the crop loss at Ravi Cheru in Nalgonda district on Wednesday

Women celebrating Holi attacked on eve of festival: Bandi Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tension prevailed at Chengicherla, on the outskirts of the city, on Wednesday when the police tried to prevent the BJP national general secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar from visiting the place which witnessed a skirmish between two groups of people.

Sanjay Kumar visited Chengicherla to console the tribal women, who were injured in the skirmish. A large number of BJP activists too converged on the place on knowing that Sanjay Kumar came there.

Chengicherla is under Medipally mandal in Medchal-Malkajgiri district

Later, the police allowed Sanjay Kuamr to visit the place and speak to those who were injured in the incident.

He alleged that poor women involved in organising festivities on the eve of Holi were attacked by anti-social elements.

Sanjay Kumar, who visited



BJP activists staging a protest at Chengicherla when police prevented Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar from visiting the place on Wednesday

Changicherla where the clash occurred between members of two groups belonging to different communities on the eve of Holi, alleged police high-handedness against the women and others.

He alleged an attempt by police and government to portray as if the residents of the locality were at fault.

"The programme with devotional songs was going on that day. Some people came and

asked it to be stopped. It was stopped. The problem was solved. Even then about 300 to 500 of those related to Rohingya and anti-social elements came and attacked them. Who was at fault? Who came," he told reporters.

The "attackers" came to the place where Holi was being celebrated, he alleged.

He demanded action against police officers who behaved in a high-handed manner.

Members of two groups belonging to different communities clashed and pelted stones at each other following arguments over "playing loud music" near a religious place at Chengicherla on the city's outskirts, police said on Monday.

Mild tension prevailed in the area on Sunday evening after a scuffle broke out between the two groups, in which four persons suffered minor injuries as the police dispersed the crowd.

Later, Bandi Sanjay along with a few activists went to the houses of the victims amid police restrictions. He inquired about the reasons for the attacks.

After consoling the injured women, he demanded that the Congress explain whether the attack on Hindus was its "minority declaration."

Sanjay Kumar demanded the government suspend the police responsible for the Chengicherla incident. He demanded the state government initiate stringent action against the attackers.

Weavers protest by begging in streets

The powerloom workers demand that the State government release dues immediately

PNS ■ SIRICILLA

Weavers here staged a protest by begging in the streets of textile town of Siricilla here on Wednesday.

The weavers, affiliated to the CITU, resorted to the novel protest to highlight their "plight."

Powerloom workers' union Siricilla district secretary Kodam Ramana said that the weavers were forced to take to the streets because of closure of powerloom units for the past three months.

On a number of occasions, memoranda were submitted to Ministers and MLAs seeking resolution of their problem, but in vain, he said, alleging that the government has been causing problems to powerloom owners by not releasing the pending dues to the tune of Rs 290 crore.



The weavers have been starving for want of work, he pointed out.

He appealed to the state

government to show mercy on weavers. He demanded payout of Rs 10,000 towards compensation to each weaver.

Raghuandan Rao alleges KCR govt tapped phones of judges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former BJP MLA M Raghuandan Rao alleged that the previous BRS government also tapped the phones of the High Court judges. Raghuandan Rao said that there is a need to inform the Supreme Court Chief justice DY Chandrachud.

Speaking to the media after submitting a complaint with the DGP on Wednesday, Raghuandan Rao demanded the DGP to conduct a phone-tapping case impartially or else he will approach the High Court. He alleged that the phone-tapping took place in a manner to extend help to AP Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Karnataka former CM Kumaraswamy. He demanded that the government include the names of former CM KCR and former Minister T Harish Rao and MLC C Venkatrami Reddy in the case.

On the other hand, Congress MLA from Mahabubnagar Yennam Srinivas Reddy alleged that former Intelligence chief Prabhakar Rao tapped the phones of the opposition lead-

ers during BRS government following the directions of the former CM KCR. Srinivas Reddy alleged that BRS leaders Naveen Rao and Sravan Rao had purchased equipment to tap the phones.

Srinivas Reddy alleged that both Naveen Rao and Sravan Rao collected hundreds of crores of rupees threatening the private persons through phone-tapping.

Srinivas Reddy alleged that hundreds of acres of land had been transferred in the name of Naveen Rao in Dharani Portal. He alleged that Naveen Rao and Sravan Rao misused the intelligence system.

Srinivas Reddy said that he did not understand as to why the Centre maintained silence even while knowing about BRS government's activities. He alleged that the BRS and BJP attitude is like thieves sharing villages. He alleged that phone-tapping took place across the State and hence the government has to set up centres to receive complaints.

Srinivas Reddy demanded that the government conduct a comprehensive probe in this regard.

Arms licence-holders told to deposit weapons in police stations

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Superintendent of Police Chandana Deepti on Wednesday ordered owners of licensed weapons to deposit their firearms in jurisdictional police stations in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

She said that a total of 130 persons have held arms licences in the district. She asked the license-holders of the weapons to deposit their firearms immediately in the nearest police station.

The Superintendent of Police said that the orders were passed as per the election rules to facilitate free and fair polls. The orders were issued



Chandana Deepti

under Section 21 of the 1959 Arms Act. She warned that those who violated the orders shall be liable to punishment under the election rules. The license-holders can take back their firearms once the election process is completed.

Multi-level marketing: Housewife attempts suicide

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

A housewife attempted suicide here a month ago unable to withstand the pressure tactics exerted by a chain marketing agency. She has been hospitalised.

Succumbing to campaign blitzkrieg by a nutrition center to use its herbal products to lose weight, a housewife approached the organisers and first used the herbal products. Subsequently, the nutrition centre apparently mounted pressure on the housewife to sell its products also.

The housewife felt cheated



as she trusted the words of the herbal product marketers and attempted suicide. A suicide note purported to have been written by her revealed the cause for taking the extreme step.

The family members of the victim resorted to a protest in

front of the herbal products office here.

In fact, three persons, named Madhav alias Mudasar, Raju and Manisha Samreen, floated a nutrition center. They assured the customers that their herbal products would help lose weight.

Vishweshwar on Praja Asirwada Yatra from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chevella Lok Sabha BJP candidate Konda Vishweshwar Reddy is all set to embark on a transformative journey, resonating with the essence of people's blessings and aspirations through his Praja Asirwada Yatra.

The Yatra will begin on Thursday at 7 am from the Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swami Temple at Ammapalli, Narkhoda village Shamshabad and will pass through Malkaram, Shabad, Parigi, Tandur, Vikarabad, Chevella, Rajendranagar, Maheshwaram constituencies. The Yatra will traverse through all the villages under all the Assembly segments that constitute the Chevella Lok Sabha constituency.

Addressing the media on the eve of the Yatra, Konda Vishweshwar Reddy said that the BJP completed one round of campaigning of the Chevella Lok Sabha constituency ahead



BJP candidate for Chevella Lok Sabha constituency speaking to the media in Hyderabad on Wednesday

of the announcement of election dates. "We visited every home in every village and disbursed Ram mandir prasad, did bhajan programs, health camps, volleyball and cricket tournaments and several other programs. BJP is a cadre-based party and is strengthening our

party network further. To accomplish this, I am starting a yatra by the name Praja Asirwada Yatra tomorrow morning from Sri Seetha Ramachandra swami Temple, Ammapalli.

During the 14-day yatra we will cover all the constituencies

under the Chevella parliament constituency except the urban Sherlingampalli assembly constituency, the yatra will conclude on April 12th, 2024. We will later cover the voters of Sherlingampalli through road shows.

We are reaching out to peo-

"We visited every home in every village and disbursed Ram mandir prasad, did bhajan programs, health camps, volleyball and cricket tournaments and several other programs. BJP is a cadre-based party and is strengthening our party network further."

ple to assure that we will solve the problems they are facing. I have extensively covered the entire constituency in the last 10 years, visited every village 7 to 8 times during this period, no MP has such track record of visiting the constituency so intensely," he said.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Oppn stands for lies & deceit: Jagan

PNS ■ PRODDATUR

Describing the TDP, Jana Sena, and the BJP alliance as conspiratorial, deceitful, and prone to falsehoods, Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has called upon the people to bless the ruling party with a clean sweep victory of 175 assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats to teach a fitting lesson to the opposition in the forthcoming elections.

Launching the party's poll campaign at a mammoth public meeting 'Memantha Siddham' in Proddatur on Wednesday, the Chief Minister

said that unable to withstand the backing of crores of people for YSRCP, the TDP and Jana Sena have directly joined hands with a national political party and indirectly roped in another national party.

As if that is not enough, they have instigated his two sisters besides launching a malicious campaign against him on the murder of his uncle YS Vivekananda Reddy and the seizure of a drug container by the CBI at the Visakhapatnam Port, he said, adding that they have ganged up to malign him with the support of their friendly media.

They want to make political gains by politicising deaths and character assassination against Jagan while openly encouraging the proclaimed killer with the support of their media, but people know who the real culprits are, as Chandrababu Naidu and his foster son have no political credibility or ethics.

It is an open fact that the relatives of BJP State president Purandheshwari and Chandrababu owned the company that imported the seized material, but they want to blame Jagan for making political gains, the Chief Minister said.



INDIA CORNER

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev discharged from hospital after brain surgery

Spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev was discharged from a private hospital here on Wednesday, days after he underwent an emergency brain surgery after suffering a "life-threatening" bleeding in the skull, the Isha Foundation said. The foundation issued a statement that quoted joint managing director of the Apollo Hospitals Group Sangita Reddy as saying that doctors have expressed satisfaction with his recovery and healing. "Even as he is recovering, Sadhguru has maintained the same spirit. His commitment to the global good, his sharp mind, and his sense of humour are all intact. I think this is good news for all the millions of people who have been inquiring about his health," Reddy said in the statement. According to the Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, the surgery was carried out on March 17. Several of Sadhguru's followers gathered at the hospital gate as he was being discharged.



Daylight theft of Rs 50 lakh from private vehicle in Kerala

In a huge daylight robbery, Rs 50 lakh in cash was stolen from the vehicle of a private agency at Uppala near Manjeshwar here on Wednesday. An officer of Manjeshwar police station said that the incident occurred due to a security lapse on the part of the private agency's staff. "There was no grill on the rear windows of the vehicle. The staff had to fill Rs 20 lakh in a bank ATM, but they took out two bundles of Rs 50 lakh each. They took one bundle to the ATM and left one on the back seat of the vehicle. 'Though the vehicle was locked, there was no one inside it,' the officer said. The thief broke the right side rear window and took away the cash bundle kept there, he said. A man wearing blue pants, white-soled sports shoes and a light khaki coloured shirt was seen leaving the site carrying a bag, police said, adding that the person is suspected to have committed the robbery.



Temperatures cross 40-degree mark in parts of K'taka, Gujarat

Temperatures crossed the 40-degree-Celsius mark in parts of Karnataka, Gujarat and Rajasthan on Wednesday, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warning of heatwave conditions over these places for the next two days. The mercury touched 41.6 degrees Celsius in Bhuj, 41.1 degrees Celsius in Rajkot, 41.5 degrees Celsius in Akola and 41.4 degrees Celsius in Washim. An IMD official said the maximum temperatures were two to three notches above normal over these regions on Wednesday but did not meet the criteria for heatwave conditions. The threshold for a heatwave is met when the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees Celsius in coastal areas and 30 degrees Celsius in hilly regions, with a departure of at least four-and-a-half notches from normal. In a statement, the IMD said heatwave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over North Interior Karnataka.



Jaishankar calls on Malaysian PM; discusses cooperation

PNS ■ KUALA LUMPUR

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday called on Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and the two leaders exchanged views and discussed cooperation in the areas of trade, science and technology, education, agriculture, tourism, defence and also on regional issues including Myanmar.

Jaishankar, who is here on a two-day official visit, met Anwar at the Prime Minister's Office and the meeting lasted about an hour, the official Bernama news agency reported.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the Prime Minister's Office said that Anwar and Jaishankar exchanged views and discussed cooperation in the areas of trade, science and technology, education, agriculture, tourism, defence and digital, and also on regional issues including Myanmar.

Anwar gave his commitment



to facilitate the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) branch campus in Malaysia, it added.

The Prime Minister also expressed appreciation to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi for assisting Malaysia when the country was hit by a shortage of rice and hoped for further facilitation on the import of agricultural produce from India.

"May the Malaysian-Indian

relationship continue to grow and blossom for the benefit of the people of both friendly countries," Anwar said.

The Prime Minister looks forward to visit India soon, the statement said.

Jaishankar, who is in Kuala Lumpur on the third and last leg of his three-nation tour to Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia, conveyed the warm greetings of Prime Minister Modi.

"Honour to call on Prime Minister @anwaribrahim of Malaysia. Conveyed the warm greetings of PM @narendramodi," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

Praising the Malaysian prime minister's vision for a stronger bilateral relationship, he said, "His vision for stronger India-Malaysia ties, both in traditional and new-age areas, will help us craft a more ambitious agenda for the relationship."

"Benefitted from his guidance and insights on regional developments," he added.

Earlier, Jaishankar met his Malaysian counterpart Mohamad bin Haji Hasan.

The two foreign ministers held a "productive and frank discussion, including exchanging views on the multifaceted dimensions of Malaysia-India bilateral affairs as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest," the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in an official statement.

Ex-IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt convicted in drug seizure

PNS ■ PALANPUR

A sessions court in Palanpur town of Gujarat's Banaskantha district on Wednesday convicted former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt in a drug seizure case dating back to 1996.

The court is expected to pronounce the quantum of punishment on Thursday afternoon.

The sessions court held Bhatt guilty of falsely implicating a Rajasthan-based lawyer by claiming that in 1996 police had seized drugs from a hotel room in Palanpur where the lawyer was staying.

Bhatt, who was sacked from the Indian Police Service in 2015, was then serving as the superintendent of police of Banaskantha district.

The district police under him had arrested Rajasthan lawyer Sumersingh Rajpurohit, claiming they had seized drugs from a hotel room in Palanpur where he was staying.

TAKES A DIG AT AAP DISPENSATION

Delhi govt will not be run from jail, says Lt Governor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will not be run from jail, Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena said on Wednesday in the backdrop of statements by AAP leaders that Arvind Kejriwal will continue as chief minister even if he is behind bars.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on March 21 in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case and subsequently remanded in the agency's custody till March 28 by a court here.

AAP leaders on several occasions ruled out Kejriwal's resignation, insisting that he will run his government from inside the jail.

Replying to a query at the Times Now Summit, the Delhi LG said, "I can assure the people of Delhi that the government will not be run from jail." Kejriwal issued his second



work order from ED's custody on Tuesday instructing Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj to ensure that medicines and tests are available to people at all government hospitals and Mohalla Clinics.

Earlier on Sunday, the Aam Aadmi Party supreme gave instructions to Water Minister Atishi to solve water and sewer-related problems in some areas of the city.

In an apparent attack on the AAP dispensation, Saxena said, "As kids, we all have heard the proverb 'lohe ke chane cha-

bana' (to face great difficulty). After coming to Delhi I actually realised the meaning of this proverb.

"In this city to get any work done it feels like 'lohe ke chane chabana'. Whatever you try to do, there are some forces that put their entire strength into stopping that work. And if you are able to successfully complete that work, then these forces try to take credit."

After Kejriwal's arrest on March 21st, Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi said that he would continue as the chief minister and run the city government from prison if needed. Kejriwal's Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann also said that the party's supreme cannot be replaced.

Meanwhile, AAP and the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders have been holding protests with Kejriwal's party demanding his release while the latter is pressing for his resignation.

Kejriwal has challenged his arrest in court.

PMLA NA if charge not related to scheduled offence

Says SC dismissing review plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has dismissed a petition seeking review of its verdict which held that a person cannot be booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) by invoking Section 120B of the IPC if the alleged criminal conspiracy was not related to a scheduled offence under PMLA.

Section 120 B of the IPC provides for punishment for a criminal conspiracy.

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Pankaj Mithal dismissed the petition seeking review of the November 29, 2023 verdict that also said it is not necessary that a person against whom the offence under Section 3 of the PMLA is alleged must have been shown as the accused in the scheduled offence.

"Applications seeking hearing



of the review petitions in Open Court are rejected. Delay condoned. We have perused the judgement and order dated November 29, 2023, which has been sought to be reviewed. There is no error apparent on the record. Even otherwise, there is no ground for review. Review petitions are dismissed," the bench ordered in its recent order.

On November 29, the top court held, "The offence punish-

able under Section 120 B of the IPC will become a scheduled offence only if the conspiracy alleged is of committing an offence which is specifically included in the Schedule."

In the verdict, the top court had interpreted the provisions of the PMLA and said while giving effect to the legislature's intention, if two reasonable interpretations can be given to a particular provision of a penal statute, the court should generally adopt the interpretation that avoids the imposition of penal consequences.

In other words, a more lenient interpretation of the two needs to be adopted, it had said. "The legislative intent which can be gathered from the definition of the scheduled offence under clause (y) of subsection (1) of section 2 of the PMLA is that every crime which may generate proceeds of crime need not be a scheduled offence.

RK Mission chief Swami Smaranananda passes away

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Ramakrishna Mission president Swami Smaranananda died on Tuesday night due to age-related ailments, doctors treating him said.

Swami Smaranananda, 94, was the 16th president of Ramakrishna Mission, which was founded by Swami Vivekananda.

"Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, most revered President Maharaj of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission attained Mahasamadhi today at 8.14 pm," said a statement issued by the organisation.

The monk was admitted to the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan in Kolkata on

January 29 with an existing urinary tract infection. He later developed respiratory failure for which he was put on a ventilator on March 3, doctors said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee paid rich tributes to Swami Smaranananda.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "He left an indelible mark on countless hearts and minds. His compassion and wisdom will continue to inspire generations." "I had a very close relationship with him over the years. I recall my visit to Belur Math in 2020 when I had interacted with him. A few weeks ago in Kolkata, I had also visited the hospital and enquired about his health," he added.

The chief minister said the



monk would remain the source of solace for millions of devotees across the globe.

"This great monk during his lifetime has given spiritual leadership to the world order of the Ramakrishnaite and remains the source of solace for millions of devotees across the globe," she said.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba to visit India today: MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba is slated to arrive here on Thursday for a two-day official visit during which he will have meetings with his Indian counterpart and others to discuss matters related to the bilateral relationship.

His visit comes at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

During his visit, Kuleba will have "a number of engagements, including official meetings with External Affairs Minister and Deputy NSA to



discuss matters pertaining to the bilateral partnership and cooperation on regional and global issues of mutual interest," the statement said.

He is also expected to interact with the business community.

Kuleba's visit comes amid the Russia-Ukraine war.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 20 had held separate conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and asserted that dialogue and diplomacy were the way forward for the resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Modi had spoken to Putin over a telephone call to congratulate him for winning a fifth term in office in the recent elections, and followed it up with a phone call to Zelenskyy to convey India's "consistent support" for all efforts for peace and bringing an early end to the ongoing conflict.

Garba's global popularity on the rise: PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Garba is a celebration of life, culture and devotion and it is gladdening to note that its global popularity is on the rise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday.

The traditional dance form of Gujarat was inscribed in the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' in December.

"Garba is a celebration of life, culture and devotion. It also brings people together. It is gladdening to note that

Garba's global popularity is on the rise!

"Some time ago, Garba found a place in the @UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

I am glad that Certificate of Inscription was presented a few days back in Paris.

At the same time, a memorable Garba Night was also held in Paris, which was attended by the Indian community in large numbers," Modi posted on X.

He also shared some photographs of people enjoying garba and a copy of the UNESCO certificate.



AAP's lone MP Rinku joins BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The lone Lok Sabha member of the AAP, Sushil Kumar Rinku, joined the BJP on Wednesday along with Punjab MLA Sheetal Angural, dealing a blow to the party that is already facing a crisis following the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Rinku, the MP from Jalandhar, said he decided to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the development of Punjab, especially Jalandhar, and accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the state of not helping him in development endeavours in his constituency. Thus, he could not honour the promises he had made to the voters, Rinku added.

He said he was impressed by the working style of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and lauded the BJP-led Centre for its development initiatives, including the boost in flight services and launch of new trains to Jalandhar.

"I have no greed for power. I am doing a new experiment for the betterment of Jalandhar," Rinku told reporters at his joining ceremony here.

He and Angural, who was elected to the Punjab Assembly from Jalandhar West, joined the BJP in the presence of Union minister

Hardeep Singh Puri, the party's national general secretary Vinod Tawde and Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar.

Rinku quit the Congress to join the AAP last year to contest the bypoll to the Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat. He was a vocal critic of the BJP in the Lower House of Parliament. Rinku was even suspended from the Lok Sabha for his unruly protests.

The BJP is likely to field him in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls as it inducts a number of influential leaders from different political parties in Punjab to emerge as a strong force in the state that has 13 parliamentary constituencies.

Puri and Tawde said the joining of the AAP leaders will boost the BJP following its decision to go it alone in Punjab, which is set to witness a four-cornered poll contest, with the AAP, Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal being the three other main forces.

Jakhar slammed the AAP, alleging that the excise scam in Punjab is many times bigger than the one in Delhi in which Kejriwal has been arrested. The AAP has failed to fulfil its promises made to people, the BJP leader said.

He said Rinku resigned from the Lok Sabha and AAP before joining the BJP. While Angural has quit the AAP, he will tender his resignation from the Assembly, Jakhar added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Political zealotry

Leaders indulge in blabbering and frenzied talk as election fever grips the nation

An avoidable political controversy has erupted after certain derogatory remarks against Kangana Ranaut, the BJP nominee from Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, were attributed to two Congress leaders. Supriya Shrinete, one of the two offending Congress leaders, has pulled down the X post and apologised, pleading that somebody with access to her Meta account had written the “extremely inappropriate post”. Kangana, meanwhile, is breathing fire: “... Mandi is being used in sexual context everywhere, just because it has a young woman candidate...”. In response to the controversy, it is encouraging to see condemnation from across the political spectrum, with many leaders calling for restraint and civility. This collective outcry underscores the broader recognition of the need to uphold standards of respectful dialogue in politics. In the age of digital communication, words carry immense weight and have the potential to shape public perceptions; naturally, political leaders need to exercise caution and mindfulness. Therefore,



the leaders involved in making disparaging remarks against others must be held accountable. As public personalities, they bear the responsibility to uphold standards of decorum and refrain from engaging in language that is inflammatory or derogatory. Political differences should be debated based on ideas and policies, rather than resorting to personal attacks. Though not the first such occurrence, the latest incident underscores the delicate balance between freedom of expression and the responsibility to maintain respectful dialogue, especially during poll campaigns. A quick recap of similar incidents will take us back to 2005 when the then Railways Minister Lalu Yadav famously likened the good condition of roads in Bihar to Hema Malini’s cheeks (though he later claimed the simile was wrongly attributed to him!). During campaigning for the 2009 Rampur Lok Sabha elections, BJP candidate Jaya Pradha alleged that her former colleague and SP leader Azam Khan was circulating her morphed photos and proclaiming that she “wears khaki underwear.” His rebuttal: “Tell me, if I entertain this ‘naachne gaane wali’, how will I concentrate on politics?” In 2012, Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam had this to say to Smriti Z Irani during a TV debate: “Aap to TV pe thumke lagati thi, aaj chunavi vishleshak ban gayi!” Another senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh was praising his party colleague Meenakshi Natarajan in Mandsaur in July 2013: “Main puraana jauhari hu, ye 100 tunch maal hai.” During the 2018 Rajasthan elections, JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav fat-shamed the BJP leader: “Let Vasundhara rest, she is too tired. She has become fat.” Former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath said about then BJP Minister Imarti Devi during Dabra bypoll campaign in October 2020: “Yeh kya item hai!” So, the lesson is that while individuals have the right to express their opinion, such expression must remain within the boundaries of decency. Also, fostering a culture of empathy and understanding can contribute to a more conducive environment for political discourse.



People with disabilities take part in a voter awareness campaign rally, in Bengaluru PTI

The dilemma of an arrested Chief Minister

The arrest of a Chief Minister presents a formidable challenge not only to the leader but also to the principles of democratic governance

The recent arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, has thrust into the spotlight a complex web of legal, constitutional and ethical considerations. As pundits dissect the ramifications of this unprecedented event, one question looms large: should an arrested Chief Minister resign? This inquiry delves deep into the heart of democratic governance, probing the delicate balance between legal accountability and executive authority. At the heart of this debate lies the presumption of innocence, a fundamental tenet of any democratic legal system. Yet, the recent legislative amendments in 2019, which shifted the burden of proof onto the accused, have muddied the waters of legal discourse. Amidst these changes, media attention has swirled around the fate of Kejriwal’s tenure, overshadowing discussions on the intricacies of his legal case and the broader issues of electoral integrity. Historical precedents offer some insight into this conundrum. The resignations of



Lalu Prasad and Hemant Soren in Bihar and Jharkhand, respectively, following legal proceedings, illustrate the complex interplay between executive authority and legal accountability. However, the absence of explicit constitutional provisions or precedents regarding the resignation of an arrested Chief Minister necessitates a nuanced examination of parliamentary conventions and legal principles. Central to this discussion is the concept of holding office at the pleasure of the appointing authority. In the case of NCT Delhi, where the Chief Minister is appointed by the President, Kejriwal’s refusal to resign may jeopardize the pleasure of the President, potentially leading to his removal from office. However, the possibility of legal reprieve through bail proceedings could mitigate the necessity for resignation,

albeit temporarily. Unlike the immunity enjoyed by the President and the Governor, a Chief Minister is not shielded from criminal proceedings during their term in office. This underscores the imperative for ethical conduct and accountability in public office, even in the face of legal challenges. The constitutional mechanisms available, including the appointment of a new Chief Minister by the President or the suspension of legislative functions, underscore the flexibility of our democratic framework in addressing such exigencies. Nevertheless, the overarching principle of constitutional propriety and democratic norms suggests that an arrested Chief Minister should consider resigning from office. While innocence, until proven guilty, remains a cornerstone of jurisprudence, the spectre of prolonged legal battles and the potential disruption to governance warrant careful consideration. The recent legislative amendments empowering law enforcement agencies necessitate vigilant judicial oversight to safeguard fundamental liberties and uphold the

rule of law. In conclusion, the resignation of an arrested Chief Minister reflects not only a commitment to democratic values but also a recognition of the practical challenges inherent in governing amidst legal controversies. As constitutional custodians, both the judiciary and the executive must uphold the principles of equality, liberty, and justice in such sensitive issues. In the broader context of democratic governance, the arrest of a Chief Minister poses profound questions about the interplay between legal accountability and executive authority. While the presumption of innocence must be upheld, the practical realities of governance demand a delicate balancing act. Ultimately, the decision to resign in the face of legal challenges is not merely a matter of individual choice but a reflection of our collective commitment to the rule of law and democratic principles. (The author is a former Additional Secretary of Lok Sabha and a practising advocate, views expressed are personal)



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

Transforming Indian higher education

The proposed binary accreditation system is set to revolutionise the assessment, accreditation and ranking of higher education institutions

Indian education system saw a revolutionary change with the arrival of New Education Policy 2020 also known as NEP 2020. While the previous education systems i.e. Sarva Shiksha were based on numbers, the Samagra Shiksha gave more attention to inclusivity and equitability. Along with it highlighted quality over quantity thus extending its support towards universal and holistic education. The concept of “Access, Equity, Quality, and Affordability & Accountability” under this was also applied as a pillar for NEP 2020 for implementation in higher educational institutions (HEIs). The motto is to enhance the quality of education in HEIs and to compete Indian HEIs with the best institutions in the world. Based on this notion another transformative reform has been done by the Ministry of Education, Government of India through the formation of Dr. Radhakrishnan’s committee for revisiting the NAAC accreditation. Dr. K. Radhakrishnan who is the Former Chairman of ISRO and Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the IIT Council proposed a new binary accreditation system for assessing HEIs where the assessment will be more technology-driven. It is a trust-based, transparent, and integrated ‘Unified Elicitation Tool’ where higher academic institutions will provide their information on the “One Nation One Data” platform. It will reduce the annual visits of the teams in HEIs and validation of the data will be transparent over the digital portal. A system of high penalties is also proposed for those providing wrong information. Besides, two major features of this accreditation report were Binary Accreditation and Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation. While the Binary Accreditation will segregate the HEIs based on “Accredited” and “Not accredited”, the Maturity-Based Graded Accreditation will customise it in five different levels i.e. Level 1 to Level 5 where the HEIs have to cross each level to go up to Level



4 “Institutions of National Excellence” and Level 5 “Institutions of Global Excellence for Multi-Disciplinary Research and Education”. It will also create a roadmap for aligning ranking and accreditation bodies like NAAC, NBA, and NIRF by providing them with a centralised database. The new accreditation system has suggested various categories of HEIs including Multi-disciplinary Education and Research-Intensive Institutions, Teaching-Intensive Institutions, Specialised Institutions, Vocational and Skill-Intensive Institutions, Community Engagement & Service related Institutions, Institutions of Rural & Remote location under its “one-size-fits-all model” where the levelling will be done on the orientation of the particular HEI. Further, the aim is to convert the present Score-based, Multiple Grade Accreditation with Binary Accreditation, Portal Self-Disclosure with Public Self-Disclosure, Single Accreditation institutions with Approved Accreditation institutions, One-Size-Fits-All Model with University-Type-Based process, and Input-Process-Limited-Outcome approach with Majorly Outcome-Based approach. All these actions will convert HEIs

“SINCE THE DR RADHAKRISHNAN COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS WERE PUT TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE CALIBRE AND REPUTATION OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, THEY REPRESENT A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

from a Generic policy to a Universal policy. Since the Dr. Radhakrishnan Committee’s recommendations were put together to improve the calibre and reputation of Indian higher education institutions, they represent a paradigm shift in the accreditation process. The Committee while preparing the report has gone through numerous procedures from putting the suggested draft on the ‘MyGov’ portal and ‘MoE’ website for soliciting public opinion/stakeholder engagement. The workshop featured 34 panellists, more than 250 diverse HEIs and 950 participants from HEIs around the nation. This report discusses establishing criteria and policies for these accrediting organisations, choosing specialists, creating self-assessment report formats, and growing the Accreditation Network to reach the HEIs located in rural areas, remote areas, tribal areas, and other smaller territories. To achieve its goal the report has also done a comparative analysis of the existing accreditation system and the visions of NEP 2020. It has also studied the best global practices of education to understand their model of education and to establish the Indian education system on the same platform.

Based on the suggestions received while formulating the draft, the committee has also classified the accreditation system into three different parameters. They are Pre-Accreditation, Accreditation Process, and Results and Post-Accreditation Incentives. The Pre-Accreditation includes processes like training the institutions, data collection, uploading the self-disclosure guidelines, etc., the Accreditation Process and Results as the name suggests focuses on validation and credit given to the HEI by the peer team. The Post-Accreditation Incentives are important for providing priority status to the institutional body. Care has been taken for step-by-step reforms to ensure the creditability of the system. Thus, the vision is to implement the new accreditation policy proposed by Dr Radhakrishnan’s committee by December 2024. This new policy is aimed at creating futuristic universities for future generations. It will bring a transformative change in the HEI-Approval, Accreditation and Ranking System to make Bharat Vishwaguru. (The writer is Vice-Chancellor at Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KEJRIWAL SHOULD RESIGN
Madam — Apropos editorial “Much ado about nothing,” published on March 27, this is my response. Kejriwal has been taken into custody by the ED in the Delhi Liquor scam. He was a crusader against corruption in the corridors of power. He participated with Anna Hazare many times. He ignored the latter’s advice to frame the liquor policy. ED had issued nine summons already. He kipped all. Two of his ministers and a BRS lady MLC are in Custody. Without any prima facie evidence, the ED cannot frame charges. Now he is officiating as CM of Delhi from jail. Is it not constitutional too? First Germany now the US had asked to give Kejriwal a fair trial. It is our internal affairs and law will take its course and they must restrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. This big brother attitude needs to be condemned. Secondly, Lalu and Jayalalitha resigned from their posts soon after being imprisoned. Decency demands his resignation. How long will he officiate from prison? In the best interest of things and upholding constitutional moral ethics, Kejriwal must resign from his post and prove his innocence.
N R Ramachandran | Chennai

CONGRESS CAN BE WIPED OUT
Madam — Apropos news article “A show-down of arch-rivals,” published on March 27, this is my response. Every general election is no-holds-barred election in the country but this one is going to be crucial because INDIA bloc has realised that if they do not succeed in throwing the BJP out of power on 4th June, then it is going to be a serious uphill battle for them going ahead. If Congress leader Supriya Shrinete’s obnoxious and misogynist remarks against BJP candidate from Mandi, Kangna Ranaut are any indication then we know that both sides will not know any boundaries in pursuit of winning the elections. The fact that Congress is no longer the glue around which opposition revolved and sadly it has not been able to keep region-

Mumbai beats Beijing
Apropos news article “Mumbai surpasses Beijing as billionaire hub,” published on March 27, this is my response. The report by Hurun Global Rich List 2024, brings evangelism for every Indian as two Indian cities book their place in the top 10 cities of holding the maximum billionaires. This time New York topped the list followed by London and Mumbai at the second and third position respectively. Mumbai managed to beat Beijing with just a small margin of one billionaire, as Mumbai held 92, whereas Beijing had a count of 91 billionaires. It is a moment of extreme pride that Indians today are no longer afraid of putting their hand in entrepreneurship. The start-up ecosystem in India today is so supportive that Indian start-ups are ending up becoming unicorns and clinching worldwide popularity. Now that Mumbai has beaten Beijing and secured the third rank with the most number of billionaires, we can estimate us to be on the right path of economic development and entrepreneurial enthusiasm. New Delhi also stood at the month position with the most billionaires. This positive shift from an employment seeker population to an employment generator category will give a thrusting push to our economy. And we hope that more and more Indian cities add themselves to this Rich list ranking of billionaires. Meanwhile, the beating of Beijing by Mumbai despite a small margin is a point of celebration and pat for India, as we are facing better than China as well as other Asian partners.
Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

al parties tightly under the umbrella of the INDIA bloc and show a united front has not lost on anyone, TMC in West Bengal is the best example of this. Gandhis still seem to be living in the 80s when their surname used to attract voters in throngs. BJP is not called an electoral machine for anything, they are always ready to fight elections be it, local, state or national elections. It would not be an exaggeration if we say that for Congress this election is a battle for survival so they are up against a strong force and they will have to up their game to prove that they still have it in them to win.
Bal Govind | Noida

NARCISSISTS DON’T HAVE A SOUL
Madam — Narcissism is a matter often neglected, but it demands discourse and recognition. Narcissism is not only an individual concern; it influences a wider society. In the United States, the tendency of narcissism among adolescents saw a significant increase from 12 per cent to

80 per cent from 1962 to 1990, respectively. When someone starts perceiving themselves as incomparable and equates themselves to God, they are experiencing narcissistic disorder. A narcissistic person commonly starts with love bombing, then progresses to gaslighting. During this process, they induce unwarranted guilt in their partner and unjustly accuse them. If narcissism is in control of an individual and is related to social goals, it is healthy narcissism, but if a person has no sentiments for others, it becomes sadism. They are resistant to hearing anything about themselves when faced with criticism. “Narcissists don’t have a soul. That’s why they try to kill yours. Your beautiful personality is the very core of your being, and they will try to steal as much of it as they can.”
Shreeya Acharya | Ujjain

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FIRST COLUMN

CHALLENGES TO THE HOLISTIC IDEAL

We often overlook the crucial dimensions of social and moral well-being



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Since ancient times, the medical profession has been considered a noble profession, for its members render a valuable service to mankind by preventing, alleviating, controlling or eliminating disease, pain and suffering. Through the knowledge of the physical body and the laws of health and hygiene, doctors provide patients with measures of great relief and recovery when they are passing through a great physical or mental crisis, are facing the worst of physical troubles or mental tensions or are fighting for life. So, the members of the profession truly needed to be complimented by the society. However, it has been observed lately that many members of the medical profession in this era of increasing urbanisation and the spread of industrial civilisation and technological culture also face the great pressures of materialism and are hard-pressed for time. Being always in a hurry and with the object of providing medicine to the largest possible number of patients within the set time limits, they are now more and more preoccupied with only the physical well-being of their patients, almost overlooking the changes required in the outlook or personality traits of the patients. Even though they know that most diseases are psychosomatic and that the lifestyle, personality traits and behavioural patterns of a person also play a major role in causing stress or trauma or in aggravating the disease, they, for various reasons, do not or cannot pay adequate attention to the social and moral dimensions of health and disease.




The reason for this is that their main attention is on the symptoms and on prescribing suitable medicines. But, if we think deeper, we find that, without controlling, reducing or eliminating the psychic or the behavioural causes, there cannot be any lasting cure for many diseases. Another serious thing that occurs as a result of moral or social ill-health of a person but which is not given serious attention is that not only does the person himself suffer from its evil effects on his body but, as a result of these psychic factors, he causes ill-health to many others also who live with him, work with him or deal with him. For example, a person of an irritable nature, or one who easily loses his temper or is prone to anxiety, not only suffers from avoidable worry and tension but often causes mental tension and anxiety to others also. Worse still is the social strife, family turmoil or political upheaval the moral and social ill-health of a person creates. Hitler, for example, was socially and morally ill and mentally sick. Most of our present-day problems are due to the moral and social ill-health of our citizens, most of them generating a chain reaction and contributing peacelessness to the total atmosphere. So, while doctors talk of holistic health, hypertension, psychosomatic diseases, drug addiction or AIDS, we wish that due attention is also paid to the turmoil caused by one's moral sickness or social illness in the socio-political or socio-economic atmosphere of society. (The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

From addiction to artistry: Painting a new future

Decorative wall painting is transforming the lives of substance users in Manipur and beyond, giving them a purposeful life to the fullest extent

M a n g l e m b a

Ningombam was 29 when he started experimenting with drugs like many of his friends in his village in Imphal, Manipur. When it started to impact their lives, some of them were able to give it up. Ningombam wasn't one of them. Over the next 15 years, this addiction would spin his life into a vicious cycle of highs and lows. Personal crisis and the death of his parents exacerbated his loneliness, leading him to consider ending his life. Fortunately, a local NGO was able to reach out in time and admit him to a drug addiction and rehabilitation centre. This was to change his life forever. While admission to a reha-



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

bilitation centre provided the medical and counselling support to wean him off drugs, it was an innovative intervention conducted here that catalysed the transformation. Implemented jointly by Makers Foundation, a Manipur-based not-for-profit working to empower the alcohol and drug user community, and CADAP, a community-based organisation of drug users, the initiative

Mechanisation needed to tackle farm issues

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing underscores the importance of mechanisation





AS MITTAL

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THE AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS, LIKE LIVESTOCK FARMING, DEMAND CONTINUOUS MODERNISATION. THE DIVERSITY IN FARMING, WHETHER LARGE SCALE OR SMALL SCALE, AND RURAL LABOUR SCARCITY NECESSITATE A BROAD SPECTRUM OF AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food Processing insists on the urgent need to increase the mechanisation of farms for small and marginal farmers in India. Their recent report highlights that wholesome mechanisation is not only essential but crucial to overcoming the multifaceted challenges faced by the farming sector, which plays a pivotal role in the country's economy. Despite India's accounts for only 2.4 per cent of the world's geographical area and 4 per cent of its water resources, its farming sector supports 17 per cent of the global population and 15 per cent of the livestock, contributing 20 per cent to the nation's GDP and creating employability to 65 per cent population. Therefore, there is a dire need to enhance productivity and profitability through increased mechanisation among small and marginal farmers and in low mechanisation areas to revitalise Indian agriculture and boosting farmers' incomes requires moving beyond traditional practices to advanced mechanisation. **Status of Mechanisation:** Our country's agriculture mechanisation level is below 40 per cent lower than developing nations such as China 60 per cent and Brazil 75 per cent. It is worth noting that agrarian states like Punjab and Haryana had led the green revolution having mechanisation levels around 40 per cent, while in other areas such as the north-eastern states of India, it is negligible. The Committee has pointed out that 86 per cent of the total land holdings are in small and marginal size groups, which require special efforts for their mechanization. They have emphasized that small farmers face significant difficulties in purchasing machinery unless machines appropriate for small holdings are made available or farmland consolidation takes place. It is expected to take another 25 years to reach the level of 75 per cent mechanization. A Catalyst for Growth: The imperative

role of farm mechanisation is instrumental in reducing cultivation costs and enhancing productivity through efficient resource utilisation. Experts and committees have highlighted that agricultural mechanisation in India contributes to making judicious and cost-effective use of inputs, leading to savings in seeds by 15-20 per cent, in fertilisers, an improvement in germination rate by 7-25 per cent, savings in time by 20-30 per cent, in weed by 20-40 per cent, in labour by 20-30 per cent, an increase in cropping intensity by 5-20 per cent, and an increase in crop yield by 13-23 per cent. This also helps in the conservation of natural resources like water, soil nutrients, etc. **Farm Machinery Landscape:** The agriculture and allied sectors like livestock farming demand continuous modernization. The diversity in farming, whether large-scale or small-scale and rural labour scarcity necessitates a broad spectrum of agricultural equipment. From basic tractors to sophisticated combine harvesters, the sector requires a nuanced understanding of the equipment's specific applications and requirements, spanning feeding equipment, poultry tools, corral systems for cattle and more attributed to the Indian agricultural machinery market is estimated to be worth a whopping US\$16.73 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach an impressive US\$25.15 billion by 2029. **Steps to Propel Mechanisation:** First, Establishment of the Directorate of Agricultural Engineering: The parliamentary Committee recommends that to monitor and implement the Government's mechanisation policy effectively and efficiently, a Directorate of Agricultural

Engineering is needed in each state. Currently, it only exists in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, but the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) is working towards establishing it in all states. Agricultural Engineers are also needed at Block and District Levels as there is no engineering manpower to demonstrate, train, help in repairs/maintenance and guide farmers at their doorstep. Second, Farm Machinery Banks: Since farm machinery is expensive, small farmers find it difficult to purchase it. To address this issue, the Government has introduced custom hiring centres and farm machinery banks in almost all states, where farmers can share machines. However, the benefits of these schemes have not reached the gram panchayat level. Third, Full-fledged Scheme: In September 2022, the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation was merged with Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, which diluted its mandate. Therefore, the Government should establish a full-fledged Agriculture mechanisation scheme to speed up the process. Fourth, Funding for R&D: The budget allocation for the Research and Development (R&D) of the Farm Mechanisation Scheme has been declining steadily over the past four years, with a significant decrease of 30 per cent from 2019-20 to 2023-24. Fifth, Tax and Duty Incentives: To promote low horsepower tractors, which are mostly used by small and marginal farmers and orchard growers, the tractor and its components attract 12 per cent GST. This means a small tractor costing about Rs 5-7 lakh leads the farmer to pay Rs 60-84 thousand as GST. GST can be reduced to nil or 5 per cent to make it more

affordable for small farmers. Tax and duty incentives are also essential to support manufacturing units in low-mechanisation areas for sustainable growth. **In conclusion we can only agree with the Standing Committee.** The Parliamentary Standing Committee stresses the urgent need for enhanced farm mechanisation to support India's small and marginal farmers. Despite its significant agricultural contribution, India's mechanisation levels lag behind global counterparts, hindering productivity and profitability. With 86 per cent of land holdings in small and marginal categories, targeted efforts are crucial. Mechanisation not only reduces costs but also enhances productivity and conserves resources. To drive mechanisation, the committee recommends establishing agricultural engineering directorates, expanding access to farm machinery through banks, revitalising existing schemes, boosting funding for research and development, and offering tax incentives. These measures are essential for revitalising Indian agriculture, increasing farmers' incomes, and ensuring sustainable sectoral growth. By embracing comprehensive mechanisation, India can overcome multifaceted agricultural challenges and secure its position as a global agricultural leader while empowering its farming community. -The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet Minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President, of Tractor and Mechanisation Association (TMA). Views expressed are personal.

to provide training in decorative wall painting has opened new doors. This skilling has given them a source of livelihood and income and the confidence to overcome stigma, a big barrier to recovery. Most importantly, it has brought hope and belief that a meaningful life without drugs is possible, thus also reducing the chances of drug abuse relapse. Ningombam, who was a part of the first batch of 400 trainees of this decorative wall painting programme started in 2022, is now its salaried lead trainer. Just how life-saving this journey has been can be gauged by the fact that there are more than 1.2 lakh psychoactive substance dependants in



Manipur. The state's proximity to the Golden Drug Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam) and its large-scale poppy cultivation means easy availability of drugs. It has given Manipur the dubious distinction of having one of the highest prevalence rates in opioid use and an increasing number of drug addicts in the state's rehabilitation centres. Internal conflict and lack of employment opportunities have compounded the problem, leading to a high percentage of relapse among those undergoing rehabilitation. It was this challenge that led to the focus on skill-building as a means to break the chain. Makers Foundation began exploring ways to

build the capacity of the substance-dependent community to become economically empowered once they had completed the treatment course. It hit upon the idea of decorative wall painting and partnered with AkzoNobel, a leading paints and coatings company, to

provide the training. Besides providing the monetary resources for the programme, AkzoNobel, which also runs paint academies for training in decorative painting, joined hands to provide the necessary skills. At the end of the 16-day training in decorative wall

painting, those with potential are selected for an advanced course of 30 days at AkzoNobel Training Centre in Kolkata. It is not just the self-confidence that this intervention has been able to restore among the trainees. It has also been accepted by their families. For Bhimo, 37, learning a new skill and getting a job as a trainer at Makers Foundation helped him not only to stay off his addiction to alcohol but also helped regain the trust, respect and support of his family. When positive impacts like this and the encouraging feedback from the community led to the scale-up of the intervention to Assam last year, Bhimo was sent as a trainer. This

was also in keeping with their Therapeutic Community Model based on the premise that a rehabilitated alcohol/drug user was better equipped to inspire other users to achieve their potential. Though it has been challenging, with 44 per cent of the 6.7 million substance users being adolescents, the initiative has so far trained 200 persons admitted to rehabilitation centres in Assam's Tinsukhia district. Hopefully, this initiative will now be able to empower the many invisible substance-dependent women and girls in need of a helping hand. (The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Renault to launch four products, expand product portfolio

The Renault Nissan Alliance, a joint venture between automakers Japan-based Nissan and France headquartered Renault would launch four new products in the near future, a top official said here on Wednesday. Renault Nissan Alliance Chairperson Jean-Dominique Senard said India is at the heart of the alliance and every part of car manufacturing happens at the India plant. Renault Nissan Automotive India Pvt Ltd is a joint venture company between Nissan and Renault in India and currently retails five products with two being sold under the Nissan platform and three with the Renault badge. On a short visit to the city, Senard, flanked by Nissan Motor Corporation President and CEO Makoto Uchida and Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo, said March 27th marks the 25th anniversary of the alliance in India. "This is our first visit to India and India will continue to have a major role in our alliance. The alliance has invested USD 1.8 billion so far", he told.



Gold rises Rs 150; silver declines Rs 250

Gold price rose Rs 150 to Rs 67,000 per 10 grams in the local market on Wednesday in line with firm trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 66,850 per 10 grams. However, silver prices declined by Rs 250 to Rs 77,250 per kg. In the previous close, it had settled at Rs 77,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 67,000 per 10 grams, up by Rs 150 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,180 per ounce, up by USD 7 from the previous close. Gold fluctuated within a range as traders avoided fresh directional bets prior to the release of US inflation data later this week, which could potentially influence the country's trajectory towards monetary policy easing, Gandhi added.



Crizac files draft papers for Rs 1,000 cr IPO

Student recruitment solution provider Crizac Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi to garner Rs 1,000 crore through an initial public offering. The initial public offering (IPO) is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) by promoters, Pinky Agarwal and Manish Agarwal, with no fresh issue component. The OFS consists of sale of equity shares worth Rs 841 crore by Pinky Agarwal and up to Rs 159 crore by Manish Agarwal. The offer includes a reservation for subscription by eligible employees, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Tuesday. Since the issue is an OFS, Crizac will not receive any proceeds from the IPO. The Kolkata-based company offers international student recruitment solutions to global institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. Crizac has established partnerships with leading universities in the UK.



'India can push growth by implementing more reforms'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India can realistically push its economic growth close to 9 per cent from the current 7 per cent or so, by implementing a few more reforms in the next five years, Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission Arvind Panagariya said on Wednesday.

Panagariya said Prime Minister Narendra Modi worked hard over the past 10 years to make India a friendly place for businesses, so investment is coming in.

"Today, the economy is open. In the next 2-3 decades, we can sustain a very rapid growth," he said, while speaking at the Times Now Summit. India's economy grew at better-than-expected 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of FY24 -- the fastest in the past one-and-a-half years.

"India is currently growing in real rupees at about 7 per cent or so per year.

"Certainly with a few more reforms in the next five years,



"Certainly with a few more reforms in the next five years, we can realistically push it to close to 9 per cent, certainly somewhere at 8-9 per cent and that can be sustained easily for a couple of decades."

we can realistically push it to close to 9 per cent, certainly somewhere at 8-9 per cent and that can be sustained easily for a couple of decades," the economist said. Responding to a question on former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian saying India's latest gross domestic product (GDP) numbers are 'absolutely mystifying' and difficult to comprehend, Panagariya said, "If you are mystified, then first you have to check, (whether) mist is on your own glasses... or somewhere else."

Panagariya said the methodological change for calculating GDP during the Modi government was recommended by bodies appointed by the previous administration (UPA government).

"Nobody... has questioned the integrity of those who actually do these (GDP) numbers. This is a new kind of phenomenon, which I don't understand," he said.

Panagariya said if critics are saying there is some fault with the methodology of calculating GDP, "they have to come in

and point out about the fault so that we can talk about how to make the improvements".

Subramanian had recently said India's latest GDP numbers are "absolutely mystifying" and difficult to comprehend.

"I want to be honest with you that the latest GDP numbers, I just simply can not understand them.

"I say that with genuine respect and things. They are absolutely mystifying. They don't add up. I don't know what they mean," Subramanian had said.

DLF plans to raise Rs 600 cr through issue of debentures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm DLF Ltd is raising Rs 600 crore through issue of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) to investors for refinancing of its existing debts.

In a regulatory filing on Wednesday, DLF informed that the company's wholly owned subsidiary DLF Home Developers Ltd has raised this amount. The Securities Allotment Committee of the Board of Directors of DHDL has approved the allotment of 60,000 NCDs, having face value of Rs 1 lakh each, for an aggregate principal amount of Rs 600 crore on a private placement basis to eligible investors. DLF, the country's largest real estate developer in terms of market capitalisation, did not mention where the amount would be utilised. Sources said the amount will be utilised for refinancing its existing debts.

DLF Group has 215 million square feet of development potential across residential and commercial segments. The group has an annuity portfolio of over 42 million square feet.

Govt plans to borrow Rs 7.5L cr from market

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is planning to raise Rs 7.5 lakh crore through market borrowing in the April-September period of 2024-25 to fund the revenue gap to push economic growth, the finance ministry said on Wednesday.

Out of gross market borrowing of Rs 14.13 lakh crore estimated for 2024-25, Rs 7.5 lakh crore, or 53 per cent, is planned to be borrowed in the first half (H1), an official statement said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in interim Budget proposed to borrow Rs 14.13 lakh crore by issuing dated securities to meet revenue shortfall in the next financial year.

This is lower than last year's gross borrowing estimate of Rs 15.43 lakh crore, which was the highest ever.

"The gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.13 lakh crore and Rs 11.75 lakh crore, respectively. "Both will be less than that in 2023-24. Now that private investments



The gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.13 lakh crore and Rs 11.75 lakh crore, respectively.

are happening at scale, the lower borrowings by the central government will facilitate larger availability of credit for the private sector," she had said. There are signs of private investment picking up in the steel and cement sector due to massive capital expenditure by the government.

Against the estimate of Rs 10 lakh crore for 2023-24, the government has earmarked Rs 11.11 lakh crore during the next year.

2 new platforms for retail, e-commerce players

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Retail software firm ETP Group on Wednesday announced the launch of two new platforms - Ordazle and ETP Unify- in the retail and e-commerce spaces.

Built for both online-only and online-offline retail businesses of all sizes, the two platforms offer capabilities to streamline multiple operations for seamless and consistent customer experiences to drive business growth, the company said.

Stating that the platforms are aimed at tapping the global retail and e-commerce market, ETP Group said it plans to make Ordazle and ETP Unify a key contributor to the USD 3.22 billion global retail and e-commerce software.

"Ordazle and ETP Unify are being simultaneously launched in India. The cloud-native, AI-powered SAAS platforms are built for scale. The platforms offer unmatched scalability and an intuitive user interface that ensures rapid adoption with minimal training time," said Naresh Ahuja, the Chairman and CEO of ETP Group.

REC board approves overall borrowing of Rs 1.6 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned REC Ltd on Wednesday said its board has approved an overall borrowing limit of Rs 1,60,000 crore for 2024-25.

The board in its meeting held on Wednesday approved a borrowing limit of Rs 1.6 lakh crore, including Rs 1,45,000 bonds and term loans, Rs 5000 crore of short-term loans and Rs 10,000 crore of commercial papers, REC said in a filing.

Funds under the proposed borrowing programme for 2024-25 shall be raised for different maturities, through different instruments, depending upon the actual requirement of funds, asset-liability position and prevailing market conditions, with the approval of Competent Authority, the filing stated.

The Board has approved the amendment in 'Policy on Criteria for determining Materiality of Events or Information for disclosure to Stock Exchanges'.

REC, a non-banking finance company, provides financing to power infrastructure projects in the country. It meets the funding requirements through borrowings.



Sensex rises 526 pts, Nifty ends above 22,100

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex climbed 526 points while Nifty closed above the 22,100 level on Wednesday following buying in banking, auto and oil shares after positive macro data.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 526.01 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 72,996.31 with 18 of its stocks advancing and 12 closing lower. During the day, it jumped 668.43 points or 0.92 per cent to 73,138.73. The broader Nifty of NSE rebounded by 118.95 points or 0.54 per cent to close at 22,123.65. As many as 22 Nifty shares gained while 27 declined and one closed unchanged.

Auto, banking and energy shares supported the recovery while FMCG and IT shares declined due to profit taking.

Among Sensex shares, Reliance Industries rose the most by 3.6 per cent, adding more than 312 points to the upside. Maruti, Bajaj Finance, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank,

Stock-specific actions and positive undercurrents due to a healthy economic growth forecast led the market towards a positive closure.

HDFC Bank, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro were among the major gainers.

Wipro, HCL Technologies, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

"Stock-specific actions and positive undercurrents due to a healthy economic growth forecast led the market towards a positive closure. However,

due to the holiday-led truncated week, investors are now focusing on US GDP data tomorrow and next week's RBI policy announcement to gauge market direction.

90% of employees in India highly motivated

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With work seen as a source of meaning and fulfilment, 89 per cent of employees interviewed in India claim to be highly motivated by challenges and extra responsibility, claims a study.

Over 89 per cent of respondents in India claim to be highly motivated by challenges and extra responsibility at work while 84 per cent believe that their managers care and have empathy for them, according to a global study by HR think tank UKG Workforce Institute.

The study was conducted across 10 countries, including India, surveying more than 4,000 employees, including managers and C-suite (top-level) executives.

In India, about three in four employees (72 per cent) respondents say their manager's support, encouragement, and their leadership directly motivate them to go above and beyond in the workplace, the study stated.

Two-fifths of employees (40 per cent) say having a good manager - one who's accessible but doesn't micromanage - makes them feel the most productive at work, it added.

'Growth in range of 7% good for India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India should be satisfied with the current growth rate unless the external environment improves, Member of Economic Advisory Council to the PM, Sanjeev Sanyal, said on Wednesday, terming economic expansion in the range of 7 per cent perfectly good.

Sanyal further said it was necessary to protect the hard-earned macroeconomic stability. "Now look, it is possible for us to hit double-digit growth, but I would actually be rather careful about it. This whole game is about compounding growth," Sanyal said

while speaking at the Times Now Summit.

India's economy grew at better-than-expected 8.4 per cent in the final three months of 2023, logging the fastest pace in the past one-and-a-half years. The growth rate in October-December helped take the estimate for the current fiscal to 7.6 per cent.

"We should not attempt to grow this economy by anything more than what it is growing now. If the external environment does not dramatically improve, because what will happen then, is that our external accounts will begin to overheat, our inflation will



begin to overheat and so on," Sanyal said.

He noted that the key is not to lose control of macroeconomic stability as it was a very hard-earned thing. "You can only generate very high

rates of growth if the external environment is conducive, otherwise we should be satisfied with what we are doing or even something in the range of 7 per cent is perfectly good," Sanyal said.

According to him, India will choose stability over growth because this game is about compounding this growth rate over 25 years and in fact, 8.4 per cent in the final three months of 2023 is a wonderful surprise.

"Our own forecast was 6.5 per cent to 7 per cent. And if it grows at 7 per cent, we would have been perfectly happy," he said.

DPIIT plans to engage consultant to prepare logistics report for 3 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is planning to engage a research firm to prepare the Logistics Ease Across Different States and Union Territories for the next three years.

Every year, the department releases a Logistics Ease Across Different State (LEADS) report, ranking states and Union Territories (UTs) on the basis of their logistics ecosystem and highlights the key logistics-related challenges faced by stakeholders and includes suggestive recommendations.

The index is an indicator of the efficiency of logistical services necessary for promoting exports and economic



growth. The DPIIT has floated a request for proposal for the appointment of consultant for ranking of states on the basis of their logistics efficiency (LEADS report for 2024, 2025, and 2026). "The DPIIT intends to engage a research organisation/consulting or market research firm/academic institution (Consultant) with experience in preparing national/international level reports

based on robust data based analysis in the logistics/transport/infrastructure sector for the period of 36 months to prepare, LEADS reports for 2024, 2025, and 2026," according to the request for proposal document.

The objective of the current assignment for the consultant is to prepare the reports taking into account the methodology developed in the previous versions of LEADS.

The consultant, it said, is expected to review the LEADS methodology, identify potential enhancements, and propose a plan for data collection; and conduct perception-based surveys across the logistics ecosystem in India, developing a sampling frame, survey instruments, and objective data sets.

FLO REPORT ON TRANSFORMING INDIA

'Investment of 2.2% of GDP can generate 11 mn jobs'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Direct public investment of 2 per cent of India's GDP can potentially generate 11 million jobs, nearly 70 per cent of which will go to women, according to a report released by Ficci Ladies Organisation (FLO) on Wednesday.

The FLO also unveiled a roadmap for transforming India's care economy, including five key areas, leave policies, care service subsidies, investment in care infrastructure, skill training for care workers, and quality assurance mechanisms.

"In India, the Ministry of Labour and Employment can consider supporting MSMEs and startups financially for maternity leave, revising parental leave policies, and promoting care work leave and flexible work options. This could include introducing market-based financing for leave, such as parental leave insurance. Employers are encouraged to adopt gender-neutral care work leave and flexible work options," Ficci Ladies Organisation (FLO) stated.

It said collaboration between government agencies and



industry bodies can promote these initiatives, especially among smaller businesses, with a focus on monitoring and sharing success stories.

"Evidence from the International Labour

Organisation suggests that increasing investments in the care services sector have the potential to generate 475 million jobs globally by 2030. For India specifically, direct public investment equivalent to 2

per cent of GDP can potentially generate 11 million jobs, nearly 70 per cent of which will go to women," the report said.

In India, care service subsidies and incentives are typically offered through government schemes like Mission Shakti, focusing on women's safety, security, and empowerment. Enhancements to these schemes could involve wider financial support for child-care, elderly care, and long-term care services, particularly in rural and under-served areas.

Underlying the importance of the paid care sector, FLO President Sudha Shivkumar

said, "The paid care sector has to be regularised, it has to be organised, it has to be institutionalised. We need more skilled workers in that space, we need policies, we need very fair norms that govern them, we need insurance to support them".

According to her, the undervaluation and invisibility of care work, predominantly performed by women, has resulted in a market failure, where skilled and talented women are unable to realise their economic potential, leading to a misallocation of resources at the macroeconomic level.

RBI announces MPC schedule for FY25, first rates decision on April 5

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced the schedule for the bi-monthly monetary policy committee meetings for the new fiscal.

The first meeting will be held from April 3-5, while the next will start on June 5, as per an official statement.

Typically, the six-member panel votes on a resolution on the third day of the meeting and the governor announces the decision in

the first half of the day after the vote is completed.

The first two days of the meeting are devoted to deliberations and pre-sentations by subject matter experts to the panel.

The second bi-monthly policy review meeting will end on June 7, the statement said, adding that this will be followed by three-day meetings in August, October, December, and February.

The six-member panel headed by the governor has three external members.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

As the globe struggles with environmental issues, Goodeebag steps forth as a trailblazer determined to transform garbage management and encourage environmentally friendly living. It was founded with a deep vision and steadfast dedication, and is a movement that speaks up for the voiceless people and creatures impacted by toxic waste, including our planet, animals, and the air we breathe.

The founder, Abhishiek Agarwal, is a visionary leader guiding this toward meaningful and sustainable trash management. With a degree from Hyderabad's G. Pulla Reddy Degree College, his journey demonstrates his spirit of entrepreneurship! "Our sustainability movement was born out of a deep-seated desire to solve the urgent problem of waste management in our neighbourhoods in Hyderabad and across. Having seen the harm that traditional garbage disposal techniques cause to the environment and public health, we were motivated to come up with a novel solution that reduces waste while also promoting a sustainable lifestyle. Our approach to garbage management mixes convenience, community involvement, and environmental conscience, setting us unique from traditional waste management options. We want to bring about a paradigm change towards responsible waste management practices by offering educational activities, and doorstep rubbish pickup services."

The goal, he says, is to lead the sustainability movement and speak for the voiceless. Informing all the citizens about the dangers of plastic and simplifying the disposal of waste by raising awareness and providing a digital platform is what the founder is trying to do. Beyond waste management, their vision looks forward to a day when people understand that their garbage can be used as a valuable raw material by industry! "Through community-focused programs, we elevate the voices of those impacted by toxic waste and are translated into concrete actions. By means of seminars, awareness campaigns, and collaborations with grassroots organisations, we proactively involve ourselves with local communities, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and resources to address waste-related issues. Furthermore, we put inclusion first by making sure that under-



served communities have fair access to our resources and networks of support, which encourages a feeling of community ownership and shared accountability for environmental stewardship."

Passionately, Abhishiek ventured into the waste management industry in 2022, hoping to reach important milestones in his mission to teach one crore families about sustainability! "There were several obstacles, such as cultural quirks to overcome when we decided to expand from Hyderabad to other major cities. However, we were able to overcome these obstacles and reach important benchmarks by using flexible management techniques. We collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including public and corporate organisations, through advocacy campaigns, policy discussions, and cooperative collaborations. To solve systemic difficulties in waste management, we encourage information exchange, resource sharing."

Goodeebag, which is now having a big impact in Hyderabad, plans to expand to three major cities in the next eight months.

To meet its ambitious target of gathering 2000 tons of plastic, they hope to have an impact on the lives of at least two lakh families by 2024. "As part of this, a proprietary mobile application will be created, allowing users to plan waste pickups, monitor their recycling efforts, and access instructional materials. We also use data analytics and will soon be using IoT devices to track recycling trends in real-time. To further our goals and increase our impact, we have formed a number of alliances. These associations, which involve talks and are almost finalised, are with government agencies, businesses, non-profits, and educational institutions. They

are in different phases of development. We want to increase our influence, share resources. Our continuous collaboration with the Vidya Jyothi Institute of Technology (VJIT) to advance waste management



research and teaching is one noteworthy example. We can empower upcoming sustainability leaders and reach new people by forming such coalitions."

Although there have been few official reactions from the government, private organisations recognise the importance of the program. The challenge is not so much in comprehending the issue as it is in turning aspirations into concrete action! The organisation is unfazed and continues to pursue its goal of bringing about significant change. "We use a combination of community empowerment, and educational programs to solve behaviour change obstacles and encourage eco-conscious behaviour. This includes distributing educational materials, launching campaigns to alter behaviour, and setting up incentive schemes for people and groups who embrace sustainable lifestyles. In order to promote positive behaviour change and establish a sustainable culture, we also use peer-to-peer learning networks, gamification components, and social norms marketing strategies."

As they look to the future, they want to revolutionise waste management on a broader scale and spark a fundamental shift toward sustainable living patterns! In addition, they hope to enable communities to take up the mantle of environmental stewardship. In the end, they see a time when trash is seen as a precious resource that can be recycled, repurposed, and reused within the framework of a circular economy, rather than as an issue that needs to be controlled.



'Oo Antava's feminist take roused Nachiket to design Samantha's costume

TEJAL SINHA

You name a celebrity, and Nachiket Barve would have worked with them. But he has certainly had an exciting journey, of course.

Being grateful for all the steps that have come his way, he had absolutely no fashion background to kind of speak with—not one of those kids who grew up with privilege and luxury or exposure to fashion. It was a very different upbringing. But fashion was something that he had a deep interest in. With luck and hard work, a lot of opportunities opened doors for him. We're also talking about a time about 15-16 years ago when fashion was not so prevalent, but today it is much more ubiquitous, and there is much more understanding and acceptance.

"My family was very supportive of my choices," he recalls as he further adds, "There were many steps along the way—whether it was showcasing at *Fashion Week* for the first time, the conception of the launch of the label, or being able to work in Paris before the big international boom happened in India. It was a bit of risk-taking and a lot of hard work. I think what has helped me along the way is to stick to my own signature and discover and hone my style. The national award was a very big moment because, you know, there are plenty of wonderful awards, but to get one from the President of India herself is a memorable and very proud moment."

But again, at the same time, he feels this is just the beginning of a journey in a certain way because India is changing rapidly, the future is changing rapidly, and one will have so much more to offer to the newer generation, whether they are young millennials or Gen Z. To our surprise, he revealed that he has been very privileged because his first day ever on a film set was with Amitabh Bachchan and Jaya Bachchan. "I think once you've gone to deal with people who have 100 years of cinematic experience together, it really teaches you a lot. I've learned a lot from them, and it sets you up for the road ahead because you learn from the best. I've been very lucky because all the big stars that I've worked with, whether on *Tanhaji* or with Prabhas, and so many others, have all been wonderful professionals and very warm human beings. Whether it is the biggest task or the smallest, I believe in approaching both with the same level of commitment and



attention to detail," adds the national award-winning fashion designer.

As a designer, the journey that he has had with his label is what he showcased at the recent *Blenders Pride Glassware Fashion NXT Festival*.

His career began to gain momentum after he designed for the senior Bachchans, a Tanishq advertisement! Something that we informed you about earlier in this interview. But you know what? There has been another connection to the work he has had with Big B. His father was the personal physician of the *Shahenshah* of B'town. Thus, there was added pressure on him: "You don't want to disappoint and underperform at the task given to you, and for any creative professional, when you're working with stars of a certain stature, there is definitely added pressure, especially on a costume designer,

because on a set, if that doesn't work, then the whole shoot stalls, so it's a lot of expectation, but it's also wonderful because you step into it as a student and you learn so much about the craft, angles, lighting, and what works on camera with the best teams available and also with stars of such magnitude. I kind of treat that as my introduction to costume design and my first step there."

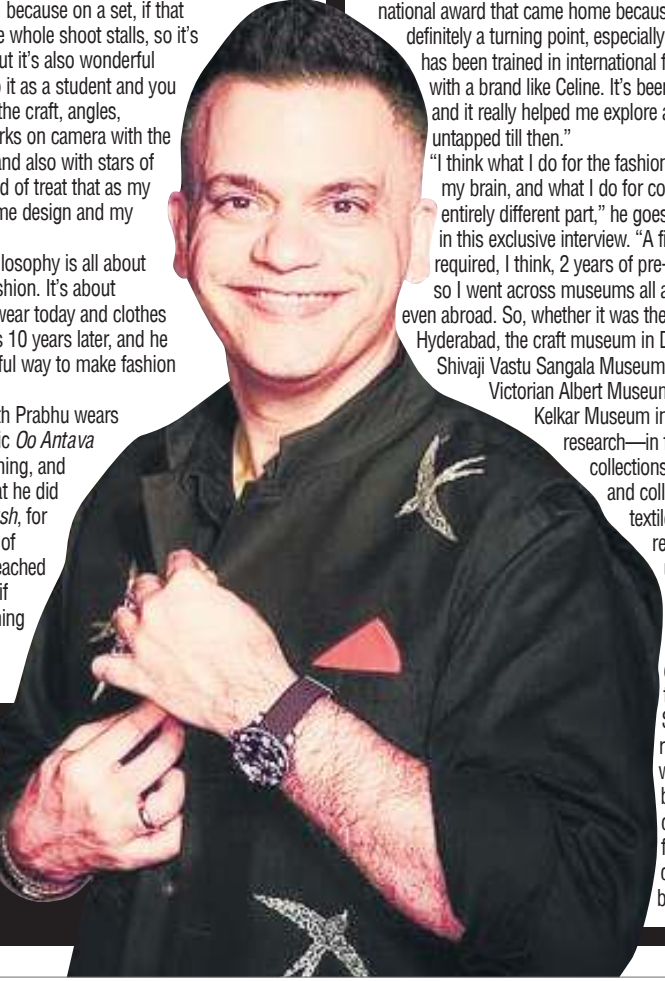
Nachiket's fashion philosophy is all about timely yet timeless fashion. It's about clothes that you can wear today and clothes you can wear perhaps 10 years later, and he feels that is a wonderful way to make fashion sustainable.

In fact, Samantha Ruth Prabhu wears his design in the iconic *Oo Antava* song. She looks stunning, and it's a far cry from what he did in *Tanhaji* or *Adipurush*, for that matter. The team of *Pushpa*, he reveals, reached out to him and asked if he'd like to do something for Samantha. Who'd say no, after all? "I

think that's been the attitude that has kept me in good stead. I was inspired by the song and the lyrics. It was about a feminist take on an special song and how you empower women in that way. So, the inspiration started from a peacock, which is strutting around proudly, taking the colours of that and exploring them on the screen. I am a firm believer in the philosophy of the Gita that says, '*Karm karo fal ki iccha mat karo* (Do your job, but don't do it expecting a certain benefit out of it).' When you're doing a costume for a big star, an outfit for a bride, or something for a song shoot, it's with the intention of doing that job to the best of my ability, as opposed to what I would get out of it. You can't do a job working backward, saying this is the appreciation I'm going to get out. Also, a song like this lets me explore a more 'filmy' side of my personality, which otherwise would not have been brought to the fore with the work I do in the fashion industry," shares the couturier, adding that fashion can empower you, strengthen you, and can also be a mood lifter. True that! Moving ahead, Nachiket was fortunate to work not only in the Hindi film industry but also in regional industries. He feels that when we talk about something being a turning point, each of them has been turning points in their own way. But to name one, "I'd say *Tanhaji* and the national award that came home because of that film was definitely a turning point, especially for a designer who has been trained in international fashion or working with a brand like Celine. It's been a very different take, and it really helped me explore a side of me that was untapped till then."

"I think what I do for the fashion label is one part of my brain, and what I do for costumes in films is an entirely different part," he goes on further to explain in this exclusive interview. "A film like *Tanhaji* required, I think, 2 years of pre-production research, so I went across museums all across the country and even abroad. So, whether it was the Salarjung Museum in Hyderabad, the craft museum in Delhi, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Vastu Sangrahalaya Museum in Bombay, the

Victorian Albert Museum in London, or the Kelkar Museum in Pune, extensive research—in fact, even raiding the collections of private families and collectors who had textiles from that era—recreated jewellery using original moulds that were over 400 years old. From the family who actually designed jewellery for the court of Chhatrapati Shivaji. So, it was recreating all of that. It was a lot of work because I was very clear that I wanted the film to look cinematically beautiful but also authentic."



National award-winning fashion designer Nachiket Barve, who has worked with several celebrities, right from Amitabh Bachchan to Saif Ali Khan, Kriti Sanon, Prabhas, and Samantha, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about his journey and more about mastering the skills in the films.

Aging gracefully: Safeguarding kidney injury in the elderly

With progressing age, the risk of kidney injury increases. Kidneys play a pivotal role in overall health and well-being. An in-depth understanding of the factors that increase the risk of kidney injury and adopting proactive preventive strategies for prevention is paramount. Discussed here are the multitude of risk factors associated with kidney injury in the elderly and comprehensive tips for prevention.

Diabetes control: Regular screening for diabetes is essential to detect and manage the condition effectively. Achieving good control of blood sugar levels is crucial for preventing diabetes-related kidney complications.

Hypertension control: Regular home blood pressure monitoring aids in the early detection and management of hypertension. Following a DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) or a diet low in sodium (salts) and is rich in fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, and legumes, and fat-free or with heart-healthy oils and consistently taking prescribed medications is vital for maintaining optimal blood pressure levels.

Hyperlipidemia management: Annual lipid profile screenings help in monitoring cholesterol levels. Consistent use of prescribed medications assists in controlling lipid levels, reducing the risk of kidney injury.

Combating obesity: Weight loss strategies, regular exercise, and lifestyle modifications are instrumental in preventing kidney injury associated with obesity.

Polypharmacy awareness: Consulting physicians to identify potential drug interactions and nephrotoxic medications is crucial for minimizing the risk of kidney damage.

Addressing ischemic events: Seeking medical attention for symptoms indicative of ischemia helps preventing kidney injury.

Management of anemia: Monitoring for symptoms of anemia and undergoing relevant tests enable early detection and management, safeguarding kidney health.

Smoking and alcohol cessation: Quitting smoking and alcohol consumption reduces the risk of atherosclerosis, heart disease, and subsequent kidney injury.

Identification and management of nephrotoxic medications: Identifying and discontinuing nephrotoxic medications are vital steps in kidney injury prevention.

Avoidance of alternate medicines containing heavy metals: Avoiding of alternative medicines containing heavy metals is essential to prevent kidney damage.

Pre-existing CKD management: Monitoring pre-existing chronic kidney disease and adhering to prescribed treatments are crucial for preventing further renal deterioration.

Cardiovascular disease management: Proper management of cardiovascular diseases through medication adherence and lifestyle modifications preserves kidney function.

Liver disease management: Ceasing alcohol consumption and treating associated infections is vital for kidney health in individuals with liver disease.

Early detection of obstructive symptoms: Early detection and management of obstructive symptoms prevent kidney injury.

Vigilance for Myeloma: Suspicion of myeloma in unexplained kidney injury underscores the importance of thorough evaluation for timely intervention.

Minimising radiocontrast dye usage: Reducing the amount of radiocontrast dye used and opting for safer alternatives mitigate the risk of kidney injury.

Post-procedural monitoring: Vigilant monitoring for kidney injury post-cardiovascular and vascular procedures is crucial for timely intervention.

Addressing dementia and social factors: Addressing medication compliance issues in individuals with dementia and seeking familial support are essential for maintaining kidney health.

Nutritional awareness: Detecting signs of malnutrition and addressing nutritional deficiencies are vital for overall health, including kidney function.

(The author, Dr Krishna Reddy, is a Consultant - Nephrologist, at Manipal Hospital.)





The Shivan & Narresh *Hilma Series* embarked on a spiritual and divine voyage as it celebrated the abstract art of legendary Swedish artist Hilma Af Klint. A true abstract artist from the 19th century, ahead of her time, Af Klint explored the complexity of spirituality and connected with the universe to create a body of work that would serve as icons of modern art. The series takes a deeper and darker route with the cobalt mystery with calligraphy explored with contrasting symbols of the 'Springlie' and finally ending with a cosmic celebration of the universe in the obsidian blacks of Mysterique.




PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary


KHUSHII NGO, which cricketer Mr. Kapil Dev established in 2003, is happy to announce the Art Caravan's return to Hyderabad. Parvathi Reddy, a prominent board member of KHUSHII, co-hosted this exciting "Pop-Up Art Exhibition."

FUN


ARCHIE




GARFIELD



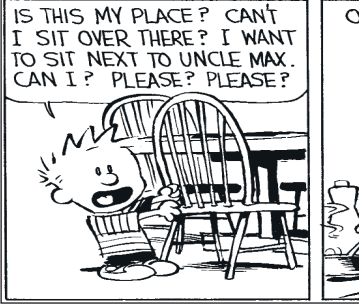
NANCY



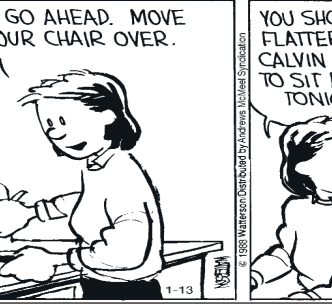
GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		8
9	10	11		
12		13	14	
		15		
16	17		18	
		19		

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Nice, enjoyable
- Decays
- An animal with a shell
- Causes pain to
- A witch's power
- Footwear
- A hot drink
- A medical professional
- Lengthy
- Inspected closely

DOWN

- Bought
- Go in
- Takes part in a play

SOLUTION

C	A	O	E	E
C	H	E	W	I
S	U	N	N	I
S	A	I	A	C
S	I	K	L	O
I	M	M	E	D
S	C	D	E	E
T	H	R	O	E
A	C	E	I	S
N	E	W	S	P
T	S	T	E	S

SINGER ANURADHA JUJU, WHO RECENTLY RELEASED HER LATEST SINGLE MITWA, GETS CANDID WITH THE PIONEER, SHARING ABOUT THE SONG, HER SOUTH STINT, AND MORE.



'SINGING IN A MOVIE IS A DREAM FOR ANY ARTIST, AND I AM NO EXCEPTION'

K. RAMYA SREE

Born into a South Indian family and having started her journey as a playback singer in the Kannada film industry, Anuradha Juju has done a solid amount of work in the South Indian film industry before doing some independent music. Her independent music scene is very lit now, with many successful songs to her credit.

Speaking to *The Pioneer* after the release of her latest single *Mitwa*, starring the late legendary Ustad Rashid Khan and Anuradha herself, the singer confessed to us that it was legendary actor Rajkumar who first heard her voice and encouraged her to pursue her music career. Narrating her journey in south Indian music, Anuradha shared, "I'm a South Indian, but I grew up in New Delhi. In 1988, I started my journey as a playback singer in a Kannada movie called *Rana Ranga*, composed by Hamsalekha. The legendary actor Rajkumar heard me sing and encouraged me to pursue playback singing in South Indian movies. Unfortunately, we left India in 1989 due to my husband's entrepreneurial journey. However, I returned to singing when I sang for a Telugu movie called *Ashita Chamma*, composed by Keeravani's brother. Afterward, I focused on South Asian music, incorporating my Carnatic music training into various performances and events."

There was a break in her career in singing for South Indian films, but Anuradha expressed that she is still willing to work in the South Indian music industry. "I'm open to opportunities if approached. However, I believe music is evolving beyond cinema, with

many independent artists creating original content. While I cherish the experience of singing for movies, I also enjoy performing live and collaborating with renowned artists like Vijay Prakash. In India, many artists are producing their own music, akin to the Western trend. This diversification is fantastic, and I encourage it. Music shouldn't solely be associated with cinema. If anyone approaches me to sing for a movie, be it Indian or South Indian cinema, I would be thrilled. I had the opportunity to perform with Vijay Prakash on stage last year, and I would love to sing for a South Indian movie. Singing in a movie is a dream for any artist, and I am no exception. So, absolutely, I am open to it," she added.

Taking us back to the 1990s and early 2000s, she recalled, "When it comes to memorable moments in the South Indian industry, recording my first playback song for a Kannada movie stands out. Initially, I was supposed to sing with SPB Bala Subramaniam, but during the recording, actor Dr. Shivaraj Rajkumar, a prominent figure in the Kannada film industry, expressed his desire to join me, despite not being a singer himself. It was quite interesting to record alongside him. Despite feeling nervous at the age of 20 or 21, I found comfort in the support of legends like Rajkumar and his son, Dr. Shivaraj Kumar. Singing in a recording studio for the first time was truly a memorable experience for me." She continued, "When it comes to South Indian directors, the top name that comes to mind is A.R. Rahman Saab, who is brilliant. Additionally, there's Arun, who directed the song *Tamma Tamma*, and he also worked on the recent Shah Rukh Khan movie *Jawan*."

She strongly believes that music shouldn't be associated with just cinema, and that is why she began doing independent music with some of the finest vocalists we have in India. The interviewee shares her experience with Ustad Rashid Khan, a talented Indian classical artist, with whom they collaborated for *Mitwa*: "I met him

last year when he performed in Boston for *Mithaz*, an MIT non-profit organisation promoting Indian classical music from South Asia, and I invited him for this song. Despite my background in semi-classical and Bollywood styles, Ustad was open-minded and appreciated the song, which was based on the classical raga *Bhin Nishadhai*."

While the very talented Ustad is not around now, his memories will live with us. It was very shocking for Anuradha as well to process the death of Ustad, and she reminisces, "Although I never imagined he would leave us so suddenly. We were eagerly anticipating the release of the song with him. He was like a bright sun shining upon me, and I felt immensely honoured and privileged. As a relatively small artist, I hoped to share in his glory. Sadly, he's no longer with us, which is the most crushing part. However, I find joy in knowing that I was part of his final project. It's now my responsibility to ensure that his last work reaches the world, and I feel the weight of this responsibility on my shoulders."

Speaking about the song, "*Mitwa* means "a friend." The song evolved to incorporate a love aspect, focusing on finding a soulmate. I aimed to depict a mature love story, not centered on young protagonists, but on dedicated artists consumed by their craft. The song's rhythms inspired the inclusion of a classical dancer and vocalist, portraying a story of how two artists meet, bond over their art, and discover love. Anuradha is next doing a project called *He Shaaarde*, a prayer dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, the deity of education and art, a fact that seems to be fading from people's memory. I aim to have this prayer sung by children and others in Indian schools to ensure the teaching of Indian classical music basics up to middle school. Another significant project of mine is an operatic movement depicting the story of 'Jatayu', focusing on his brave stand against Ravana during Sita's kidnapping, along with several others in the pipeline," she concluded.

FAMILY STAR DOP: I'VE NOT REFERRED MY DAUGHTER MALVIKA FOR ANY FILM

K. RAMYA SREE

On Wednesday, Vijay Deverakonda and producer Dil Raju performed a 'homam' at Dil Raju's office ahead of Vijay's *Family Star* release, on which the actor pinned many hopes.

Meanwhile, we have with us DOP KU Mohanan of *Family Star* speak about the making of the film. For those unaware of Ku Mohanan, he is the man behind the lens of films like *Don*, *Talash*, and *Andhadhun*. He also provided cinematography for Mahesh Babu's *Maharshi*.



He has now come on board with his cinematic prowess for *Family Star*, directed by Parasuram Patla, starring Mrunal Thakur as the female lead. And according to him, *Family Star* was a beautiful movie. "This is the story of a man from the middle class's tale. He sent a positive message with what he did for the family. The colony set is where we shot. I tried to capture the naturalness of the tale and the people in the images. Absent drone footage. For the family star, no superfluous photo shoots were shot. Additionally, the lighting is natural. However, the images appear as stunning as they should when viewing the film. It seems like our house when we watch a middle-class home on TV. The backdrop of this

film was produced by director Parasuram using a straightforward setup. Mrunal and Vijay gave me a lot of support. Filmmaking requires collaboration, therefore, crew members and artists assist one another," shared the DoP, who learned the art of cinematography from watching World Cinema. "We all watched commercial, larger than life movies. That's why we want the visuals to be more natural in terms of cinematography. I use new equipment for films only if it is necessary," he added.

Speaking of *Family Star*, he added that it is a movie that talks about family values, which we are neglecting. "India has transitioned to a nuclear family society. In this day and age, this film explores the relevance of our traditional family values. A familial tale from India. It contains a lovely love tale as well. This film was directed by Parasuram and has a distinct concept, attempted a novel approach. In it, he also demonstrated business fea-

tures. Parasuram was pleased with the way I worked. How much of a hit this movie will be is beyond me; it is impossible for the public to forecast how a movie will be regarded. Sometimes unremarkable films turn into huge hits, while other times, really good films don't do well at all." The cinematographer's daughter, Malvika, too, has made her debut as a heroine in Tollywood. She also worked with Pa Ranjith for *Thangalan*.

Speaking of it, he shared, "Malavika, my daughter, has become well-known. Her name is not one I've suggested for a film. If you believe doing so would be incorrect. She must demonstrate her acting ability. Malavika's reputation will improve thanks to the Pa Ranjith and Vikram film *Thangalan*. Although I contributed to the film *The Goat Life of Aadu Jeevitam*, I left the project because of how lengthy the film's production took."



Raashii Khanna desires to 'perform' amazing action on-screen

Young pan-India star Raashii Khanna recently delivered an intriguing performance in the Sidharth Malhotra starrer *Yodha*. While the actress is looking forward to exploring her acting prowess by delving into varied genres, Raashii wants more opportunities to perform action on screen. The versatile powerhouse said she wants to be part of actioners, where she gets to "transform through intense physical training and learn some amazing fight choreography." Raashii's wishlist doesn't stop here, as she also wants to play a mythological character on screen! "I would love to play a character like Anushka Shetty from *Baahubali*," shared Raashii, adding, "With *Yodha*, I got to be a part of an actioner but didn't get an opportunity to perform action on-screen. So, I want to be a part of an action team where I get to go through intense physical training to get the physicality of my character right. I also want to learn and perform some amazing fight choreography on-screen. I am waiting for one such opportunity to come my way. I am sure it will be very exciting."

After receiving a heap of praise for her portrayal of a government official in *Yodha*, it looks like Raashii is gearing up to deliver performances that will establish her as a rising superstar. The versatile actress, on the work front, is currently looking forward to several interesting projects. The young pan-India star will be seen in *The Sabarmati Report* and *TME* with Vikrant Massey. She also has the Tamil film *Aaramanai 4* and the Telugu film *Telusu Kada* to her credit.




'Those who don't like movies will also like Kaliyugam Pattanamlo,' says Producer

Just yesterday, we were informed about why actor Vishva has come on board the project *Kaliyugam Pattanamlo*, directed by Ramakanth Reddy. The film, releasing tomorrow, is very busy promoting itself.

Speaking at one of the promotional events on Wednesday, producer Dr. Kandula Chandra Obul Reddy said, "I'm running engineering colleges as an educationist. I founded Nani Movie Works with the intention of providing a platform for the passion of talented people. I wanted to show the town where I grew up. I really liked the story told by Ramakanth Reddy. But the director said that the budget would be high. However, we have come forward to produce the movie. Even those who don't like movies were surprised when they saw our teaser and trailer. After this movie, many producers will give a chance to Ramakanth and such newcomers. Vishva Karthikeya always thinks about cinema. This is Ayushi Patel's first movie. I said that she would fit the role well when I saw her. All the best to the entire team. Everyone should watch our film in the theater on March 29."

People Media Factory backs Gopichand's film with Sreenu Vaitla

Renowned distributor and exhibitor Venu Donepudi's first production is the high-octane action entertainment #Gopichand32, directed by Sreenu Vaitla and starring Macho Star Gopichand. Chitralayam Studios is spearheading this massively multi-trillion dollar project, which is being produced to the highest production and technological standards. For the film, Chitralayam Studios and People Media Factory, work together. TG Vishwa Prasad becomes a producing partner in the film. The film's new shooting schedule commences on March 27. In this schedule, some crucial sequences involving the lead cast will be canned. With this, the entire talkie part will be completed. Sreenu Vaitla is presenting Gopichand in a new avatar in the movie. Gopi Mohan, who was associated with various blockbusters in Sreenu Vaitla, has written the screenplay. KV Guhan will crank the camera, whereas Chaitan Bharadwaj will helm the music department. The film's heroine and other details will be revealed soon.



Naveen Chandra: I spent around 100 days working on Inspector Rishi

Actor Naveen Chandra, a renowned figure in Tollywood, is back to entertain the south Indian audience with his Amazon Prime original series, *Inspector Rishi*, also starring Sunaina, Kanna Ravi, Srikrishna Dayal, Malini Jeevaratnam, and Kumar Vale in key roles. Directed by Nandini J.S. and produced by Sukh Dev Lahiri, the series is available for streaming tomorrow in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi. Promotions for the film are in full swing.

Hero Naveen Chandra said, "It's been a long time since I created any scary content. I was intrigued to see why not to create the *Inspector Rishi* web series after hearing about its plot, which I believed had elements of horror, thriller, suspense, and action. Do you think you're lucky to have met someone like that? In addition to this tale, my character has other facets. This horror-thriller series is going to be unique. I spent around 100 days working on this series. Because I had so many combo sequences



Siddharth, Aditi Rao Hydari ENTER THE WEDLOCK?

Actors Siddharth and Aditi Rao Hydari's relationship has been talked out for a long time, despite no confirmation made about their relationship. Having been spotted several times together, the duo never made their relationship official. They have always kept their relationship official. Meanwhile, according to a tweet made by a Tollywood PRO, it has been learned that the actor duo have tied the knot in a temple in Telangana.

A Tollywood PRO tweeted, "Congrats to Siddharth and Aditi Rao Hydari on tying the knot today! Wishing you both a lifetime of love and happiness." On the set of the Telugu-Tamil movie *Maha Samudram*, where Siddharth and Aditi Rao costarred, love began to blossom between them. Their bond did not deteriorate, even if they did not appear on screen together again following the movie. Fans can't help but be in awe of the couple whenever they are sighted together, since they both exude happiness and serenity. However, at the time of writing this report, no official confirmation has been made.



A DIVINE TREAT ON RAM CHARAN'S B'DAY

Celebrating actor Ram Charan's birthday, the makers of his upcoming film *Game Changer* released a song from the film, *Jaragandi*. The song has gained a lot of attention on social media, as his film has long been pending after the inception of the Ram Charan-Shankar film. The song's viral success on social media has added to the excitement surrounding the film.

The song is a captivating blend of passion and excitement, expertly performed by Sunidhi Chauhan and the renowned Punjabi pop vocalist Daler Mehndi. The song has a vibrant dance

rhythm thanks to Thaman's catchy sounds, which are expertly matched by Prabhu Deva's amazing choreography—also referred to as the Indian Michael Jackson. With their incredible dancing skills, Ram Charan and the gorgeous Kiara Advani are sure to enthrall spectators.

Meanwhile, the celebrity couple Ram Charan and Upasana Kamineni Konidela have visited Tirumala to seek the blessings of Lord Venkateswara. The heartfelt lyrics, penned by Ananth Sriram, combined with the vibrant visuals and Prabhu Deva's choreography create an enchanting visual experience for fans. The star-studded cast of *Game Changer*, including Kiara Advani, Anjali, SJ Suryah, Jayaram, Sunil, Srikanth, Samuthirakani, and Nassar, further amplifies the excitement surrounding the film.





PANT AIMS TO SHAKE OFF RUSTINESS

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Skipper Rishabh Pant will look to overcome his rustiness as Delhi Capitals aim for an improved batting display in their bid for a first win of the IPL season when they take on Rajasthan Royals here on Thursday.

Pant's much-anticipated return to action 453 days after he suffered grievous injuries in a horrific car accident, lasted just 13 balls (18 runs) with Punjab Kings winning by four wickets at their new home ground in Mullanpur.

Pant, though, displayed his usual lively demeanour behind the stumps and also effected the stumping of Jitesh Sharma. Having overcome the early jitters and nervousness in his first game, Pant would be eager to regain his mojo quickly as his match-up against the likes of Trent Boult, Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal would be the highlight of the contest.

"It's exciting to have your captain back in the team. He is

our leader and heartbeat of this franchise and having him back is going to make this team a lot stronger," head coach Ricky Ponting had said of Pant ahead of the IPL.

Ponting chose David Warner and Mitchell Marsh to open the innings in the hope that the duo would score enough runs to take the pressure off Pant lower down the order. But the two failed to capitalise on good starts and the pressure soon came on Pant.

Wicketkeeper-batter Abhishek Porel's unbeaten 32-run cameo was the only bright spot in DC's batting, which lifted them to a respectable 174/9 from a precarious 138/7 at one stage.

Porel was used as an impact player as Delhi were a bowler short. The problem was worsened further after Ishant Sharma twisted his ankle. The lanky pacer could miss a few matches as well.

Delhi's spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel will have a bigger role to play after what was witnessed on a dry surface at the Sawai Mansingh



Stadium the other day when Rajasthan Royals' opening duo of Jos Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal faced some early hiccups against Lucknow Super Giants.

However, Sanju Samson struck an unbeaten 82 as the Royals won by 20 runs. By scoring a fifty in his team's first match of the season for the fifth successive time, Samson has become an early contender for the hotly-contested spot for the wicketkeeper-batter's slot in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

With Riyan Parag also among the runs, the Royals top-four will pose questions to the Delhi bowling lineup, and here's where Kuldeep and Axar's overs will be crucial in the middle.

The Royals' bowling has also hit the right notes with Trent Boult leading the charge with the new ball. Sandeep Sharma has also been superb in the death overs.

The rookie Indian dismissed KL Rahul at 58 in the 17th over and also stymied Nicholas

Pooran in the penultimate over as RR restricted Lucknow Super Giants to 173/6.

SQUADS:

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Jos Buttler, Kuldeep Sin, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Prasad Krishna, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dube, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal and Tanush Kotian.

Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, Yash Dhill, Abhishek Porel, Axar Patel, Lalit Yadav, Mitchell Marsh, Pravin Dube, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Kuldeep Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Khaleel Ahmed, Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Tristan Stubbs, Ricky Bhui, Kumar Kushagra, Rasikh Dar, Jhye Richardson, Sumit Kumar, Swastik Chikara and Shai Hope.

Want to remain fit to play all three formats for Windies: Shamar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He is only 24, has endured a tough life growing up and is currently raising two toddlers with a young partner. One can't possibly blame Shamar Joseph for wanting the best of both worlds — "play all three formats for the West Indies" and also remain fit enough to ply his trade across the globe in franchise cricket.

Joseph has logged woods in the nondescript Guyanese village of Baracara, worked as a construction labourer at building sites before spending half a day as a security guard, a secure future for his family is all that he desires.

So, like a lot of West Indies players, who crisscross the globe playing IPL one day and Big Bash the next, Joseph too wants the best of both worlds.

"Look I haven't made up my mind (if preference given)," the pace sensation, who has come in as a replacement for England pacer Mark Wood in Lucknow Super Giants team, told PTI in an interview.

The hero of West Indies' recent Test win in Australia, who played through pain with a broken toe, feels that in the next few years, it his fitness will determine the workload he can take.

"I will like to play around the world to enhance my skills but if there are other opportunities (T20 Leagues), I will make myself available," Joseph said, adding, "...And I have confidence in my fitness and that won't be a problem for me."

"Definitely my fitness will be important since I have a long career ahead of mine, I would definitely like to play all three



formats for the West Indies whenever I am available. I will definitely make that time for them," said the youngster.

He has played only two T20 matches for Guyana Amazon Warriors in his short and eventful career so far but IPL will give him an opportunity to learn the tricks of the trade.

"It is a transformation from red ball to white ball cricket. There will be other (technical) changes and I get to learn from every opportunity that I get. I enjoyed playing Tests and now I will look to improve my white ball game."

"I am talking to all the experienced players, who are seniors and have played a certain amount of IPL, learning from them and enjoying being in the moment," said the soft-spoken fast bowler.

His senior Kemar Roach, who has played a few seasons of IPL

previously, did give him an idea of what to expect in January but back then, he had gone unsold.

But after the Australia series, even legends like Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose have said good things about him.

"Definitely, Kemar and I had a lot of conversations about IPL when we were in Australia. Ambrose, after the (Australia) Tests, also gave me some good advice.

"Courtney Walsh, there have been words of encouragement from all these greats which will help me going forward," he added.

Having seen extreme poverty in Baracara to enjoying the financial windfall that comes with the IPL, Joseph has indeed come a long way.

"Life has been great so far. There has been all sorts of kind comments. It is my performance that brought me here. Happy to be here."

However, he remains a country boy at heart.

"I am always aware where I came from. I still remain a country boy and nothing changes for me. Yes, I will go with the flow but being a superstar doesn't change anything for me and it has been the same life," Joseph said.

Joseph is happy to have Justin Langer around, someone who has taken keen interest in his exploits since the tour of Australia.

"It is always great to be among legends and players who inspire you like KL (Rahul), our skipper and Justin Langer our head coach, he is an amazing person. He has talked to me and advised me from the Australian series.

Dhoni advised me to play my natural game: Rizvi

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings batter Sameer Rizvi has credited Mahendra Singh Dhoni for his brief but impactful knock in his first IPL match, saying the talismanic former India skipper advised him to play his natural game when he went out to bat against Gujarat Titans.

Against GT here on Tuesday night, Rizvi played a cameo of six-ball 14-run knock, which included two sixes against Rashid Khan.

"Bhaiya (Dhoni) told me to play how I generally play since it is all about the actual gameplay. He (Dhoni) said, 'There is nothing different. Skills remain the same, and it's all just about mindset. Never take any pressure or be



nervous, and play as per the situation," he said in a video on IPLT20.Com.

Rizvi recalled the moment he was picked up by the franchise during the auction ahead of the season for a whopping Rs 8.4 crore, as he felt that his dream of meeting Dhoni will eventually come true.

"When I was picked up during

the auction by CSK, my greatest happiness was my dream to meet Bhaiya (MS Dhoni) would be fulfilled. We also had net sessions together and got to learn a lot from him and the (support) staff. I intend to learn more and perform to the fullest."

Having played cricket for Uttar Pradesh, he has decent T20 numbers, scoring 309 runs in 10 innings at a strike rate of 137.33, including two half-centuries.

Speaking about his jersey number, the 20-year-old Meerut batter said, "My jersey number is seven, which is currently worn by Bhaiya and I can't get it. So, I liked the number 1, and I took it."

Rizvi also talked about the positive atmosphere in the CSK dressing room.

Dube no longer ducks, defends against short ball

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Mike Hussey is in awe of Shivam Dube for transforming into a batter who no longer ducks or defends when faced with the short ball, an improvement that has been monitored personally by former captain and team talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

The 30-year-old Dube was the top-scorer for CSK on Tuesday, striking a 23-ball 51 that included two fours and five sixes at a strike rate of 221.74. The side won by 63 runs against Gujarat Titans.

"Got to give a lot of credit to Dube for working



given it back to the bowlers, forcing them to try something new. It will benefit him in the IPL, and also if he gets a chance to play for his country, it will do him a lot of good," said Hussey.

tirelessly against the short ball, an area he needed to improve on. Hats off to him, and he is playing with confidence now. He is also dangerous against the spin.

"As the teams bowled short balls at him a few years ago, he would only duck and defend. Now, not only he can play the short ones, but he is also able to find boundaries.

"So, that's a testament to the work that he has put in and has given it back to the bowlers, forcing them to try something new. It will benefit him in the IPL, and also if he gets a chance to play for his country, it will do him a lot of good," said Hussey.



Any team is bound to miss a bowler like Shami: Mohit

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Gujarat Titans pace bowler Mohit Sharma conceded it was hard to replace a bowler of the calibre of Mohammed Shami as his team succumbed to a massive 63-run defeat at the hands of reigning IPL champions Chennai Super Kings here.

India's premier pacer Shami is sitting out of the IPL as he is recuperating from an ankle surgery. He is expected to make his comeback with the home Test series against Bangladesh later this year after missing the five-Test series against England. Shami will also miss the T20 World Cup to be jointly hosted by the West Indies and the USA in June.

"Any team is bound to miss a bowler like Shami, and you can't replace him with anyone. But injuries are uncontrollable, and you must see how to move ahead with it," said Sharma, who played for CSK between 2013 and 2015 and has been with the Titans since 2022, during the post-match press conference.

"As for GT, it's the first year for Spencer (Johnson) and Azmatullah (Omarzai). They haven't played much cricket yet. Therefore, we must be patient with them and not become too result-oriented.

"We must not bother about the runs leaked or the result of the contest, but how successful we are with our plans and how we are working on it backstage. These things would come in handy in the second half (of the event)," opined Sharma.

CSK posted a huge 206 for six, with openers Ruturaj Gaikwad (36) and Rachin Ravindra (46) being the stars alongside Shivam Dube (51). GT bowlers took a lot of beating with Umesh Yadav going for 27 in two overs, while the crafty Afghanistan ace spinner Rashid Khan went for 49 in four overs although he took a couple of wickets.

Sharma added that CSK milking runs in powerplay also contributed to the big loss.

"Not much of a difference (in CSK's strategy). It used to be the same when I used to play for CSK, and we usually tried to get the maximum out of the powerplay overs," he said. CSK were 69 for 1 after powerplay overs. "We knew it was going to be a similar scenario, especially with Rachin (Ravindra's) batting of late. However, we failed to execute our plans properly and also failed to judge the width and

length during our bowling.

"We failed in executing our plans properly. We began to bowl the slower ones too early and too wide off the off stump, leading to them scoring freely. It happens that the plans always don't get executed properly every time.

"But it's a big tournament, and we have ample time to go back to the drawing board, rectify our mistakes and start afresh.

"We had a target of 200 as the par score on this wicket, and CSK played just the way we had thought. They were on course for 225-230 before settling for 206, but since we failed to implement our plans, we believed we gave away 15-20 runs extra."

Sharma also defended the visitors' decision to bowl first, stating that dew is always a factor in night games, though, interestingly, there was hardly any dew on Tuesday night.

"Don't think the pitch has a role to play. Generally, if we win the toss and decide to bowl, it's because we know that the dew might play a factor later during the game."

"But, there was no dew (Tuesday). As usual, we decided to bowl and restrict them to a par total, while dew would have been an added positive for us.

"Had the wicket been drier, CSK would have moved in with two spinners. But, had the (GT) pacers bowled in the right areas, it would have been tough for them to hit," he considered.

'WON'T SAY WE FAILED TO SCORE RUNS, BUT CREDIT TO CSK BOWLERS': Despite the 63-run loss, Mohit refused to blame the batters for the poor show. CSK bowlers implemented their plan to perfection to restrict GT to 143/8 with Sai Sudharsan (37) being GT's top scorer.

"I won't say we failed to score runs, but credit to the CSK bowlers for bowling brilliantly. Deepak (Chahar) started well, and at the end of the day, it all boils down to the number of variations you possess and when and how to use them.

"Don't think it was a pressure scenario for us. The wicket was good, and 200 was a gettable total here.

"But the wickets that we lost initially, leading to lack of partnerships, followed by CSK bowlers bowling the right length, led to our inability to up the run rate, and we began lagging in every over," he signed off.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India cricketer Manoj Tiwary expects Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya to be booed a "bit louder" when the team plays its first home IPL game here on April 1 but he feels that the flamboyant all-rounder has the temperament to deal with it.

Pandya, who replaced Rohit Sharma as MI captain before the start of the season, was booed by fans in Ahmedabad when the side played against his former franchise Gujarat Titans on Sunday.

MI lost the match by six runs and will take on Rajasthan Royals in their first home game at the Wankhede Stadium here on Monday next week.

"...You have to see how he gets welcomed here in Mumbai because I think he is going to get booed a bit louder here...Because as a fan, Mumbai fan or a Rohit Sharma fan, nobody expected that captaincy will be given to Hardik," Tiwary told PTI Videos in an interview.

"And despite Rohit giving five trophies to Mumbai Indians, he has to lose the captaincy. I don't know what are the reasons but I think it has not gone down well with the fans. And that is the reaction which you see on the field," he explained.

Tiwary is, however, impressed with how Pandya has dealt with fan backlash.

"...Knowing him, whatever I have been observing of late through television, that despite getting booed, he kept his calm, he kept his nerve, which is the sign of a good

Pandya will be booed louder in Mumbai but his temperament impressive: Tiwary



temperament," he said.

The 38-year-old, who is the sports minister of West Bengal, said Pandya will have to cut out the noise and focus on his performance so that he is in good shape for the T20 World Cup starting June 1 in the Americas.

"I believe even if he was not booed, he

has to perform well to get into the Indian team to play the World cup. Because it is important for all the players to perform well and be fit as well to be available for selection.

"And him being the number one all-rounder...Obviously he has to be in form and to be in form he has to

perform," he said.

Tiwary competed for the Delhi franchise in the IPL and he is keenly observing how his former team is handling Rishabh Pant's comeback from a life-threatening car accident in 2022.

He believes the big-hitter would be

back to his devastating best very soon thanks to the unflinching support of the franchise.

"First of all, he's not going to be any burden. In fact, it's going to be more positive impact which he brings along with him because as a player, he's one of the most talented cricketers in India, in fact in the world cricket right now," he pointed out.

"Obviously in the first game, he did not look at his fluent best but that is obvious because it's not easy after coming back from injury...But the intent was good from him. With a few more matches, he will be back in his elements as a match-winner," Tiwary said.

Tiwary said the backing of coach Ricky Ponting and mentor Sourav Ganguly has been a key factor in aiding Pant's comeback.

"From last year itself, the coach of the team, Ricky Ponting, brought him into the dugout...If we all can recollect, two months ago, Sourav Ganguly said that he's going to be the captain.

"So when the mentor and the coach wants him in the team from very early, that means they are not thinking him as a burden. Even if he doesn't score runs, he is still their captain, he is their leader," he said.