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**Dynasts scared of
contesting LS
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**Congress accuses
MODI GOVT
of helping the rich**

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**Rising from the
SCHOOL
of hard knocks**

Dil se



QUOTE OF THE DAY
Even though I tease some people (KTR) as management quota products, it works only the first time. Sridhar Babu, the son of Sripada Rao, came into politics and turned out to be a merit candidate. As a Minister, he is continuing his father's legacy in politics. Sridhar Babu is running the show in the new Congress government of Telangana. He decides whether someone's voice should be allowed or not in the Assembly

- A. Revanth Reddy, CM TS

P4

DON'T MISS...

Historic Queen Victoria Pavilion...

The Queen Victoria Pavilion, a historic monument in Visakhapatnam meticulously restored by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) in 2016, now faces an uncertain future due to neglect and environmental factors. Originally built in 1904, the Pavilion underwent extensive restoration work in 2016, including sandblasting of walls, meticulous cleaning of the statue, repair of steps, and a fresh coat of paint on the dome. The result was a shining testament to the...

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India eliminates extreme poverty...

India has eliminated extreme poverty, a commentary authored by economists Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin in a leading American think-tank The Brookings Institution said, citing the just released consumption expenditure data for 2022-23. In the article, the two noted economists cite the data to say real per capita consumption has grown 2.9 per cent per annum since 2011-12, with rural growth at 3.1 per cent being significantly higher than urban growth of 2.6 per cent. Also, there has been an unprecedented...

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Jal Shakti Ministry introduces...

In a bid to enhance sanitation practices across India's tourism sector, the Centre has introduced the Swachhata Green Leaf Rating initiative to elevate aesthetic and sanitation standards at popular destinations. The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, in conjunction with the Union Ministry of Tourism, has introduced this concept, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in a statement. Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised the need for all tourist facilities to...

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WHO calls for awareness on...

On the eve of the World Birth Defects Day 2024, the World Health Organization on Saturday highlighted the need to raise awareness about birth defects and accelerate actions to prevent, detect and manage congenital anomalies which occur during intra-uterine life of infants. "We are reminded that every journey matters and the journey of health indeed begins before birth," Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia said in a statement. A regional guidance document on screening newborns for three conditions -- hearing impairment, eye abnormalities, and neonatal hyperbilirubinaemia -- is being released on this occasion to facilitate capacity-building of member states, Wazed said. She pointed out that...

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YSRCP suffers big blow

PNS ■ NELLORE/NARSARAOPET

The Jagan Mohan Reddy headed ruling YSRCP continues to suffer blows ahead of elections as three YSRCP leaders including two MPs and an MLA have quit the party and joined the opposition Telugu Desam party.

YSRCP MP and Nellore district YSRCP president Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy quit the YSRCP and joined the Telugu Desam party in Nellore on Saturday. Narsaraopet YSRCP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu quit the YSRCP and joined the TDP on Saturday. TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu admitted them into the TDP. Nellore city deputy mayor Roop Kumar, a large number of corporators and village sarpanches also joined the TDP along with Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy in Nellore today.

Telugu Desam party chief and former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu admitted them into the TDP by wrapping scarves at a programme organized in Nellore on the occasion.

Addressing the cadres on the occasion, Chandrababu Naidu said that Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy's joining the TDP would bolster the party in the Nellore region and it would help winning a large number of seats in the region. He said that all leaders in the TDP were welcoming him into the TDP.

"Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is harassing those who questioned his misdeeds and massive cor-

Two MPs, an MLA quit the party; join TDP



ruption. Jagan Reddy harassed his YSRCP leaders also for questioning the misdeeds," Naidu criticized.

The YSRCP should be defeated for the progress of AP, Naidu told the cadres, stating that Jagan Mohan Reddy did not deserve to be the

Chief Minister. Naidu predicted some more YSRCP leaders would quit the party after elections notification was issued.

Expressing confidence that the TDP-JSP combine will win 10 Assembly segments in the combined



Nellore district where the voters have high political awareness, Chandrababu Naidu said that Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy too is going to win the Lok Sabha seat here.

2

YSRCP to field Mudragada's son against Pawan in Pithapuram?

It is a do-or-die situation for Pawan Kalyan

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena party chief Pawan Kalyan, who has been eagerly waiting to step inside the Legislative Assembly after the 2024 general election win, is all set to contest the upcoming elections

from Pithapuram Assembly segment that has more Kapu voters. If the hints going round the media are to be believed, Pawan is likely to announce his name in the second list of the candidates in a few days.



It is a do-or-die situation for Pawan Kalyan. The JSP chief floated the party around 10 years ago and has been struggling to win his own seat. In 2014, JSP did not contest in the elections but supported the TDP alliance.

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Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad joins TDP

Several of his followers switched sides, too

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad of YSRCP joined the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) at a programme held in Hyderabad on Saturday. He was accompanied by several of his followers and people's representatives, who also switched sides to TDP in the presence of party chief N Chandrababu Naidu. Chandrababu welcomed Vasantha Krishna Prasad by draping a party scarf around his neck.

Ibrahimpatnam Mandal Parishad President Paladugu Jyotsna, along with several municipal councillors and sarpanches, also joined TDP.



TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu welcoming YSRCP's Vasantha Krishna Prasad, Mylavaram MLA, into the party in Hyderabad on Saturday

Vasantha Krishna Prasad had defeated former MLA and former minister Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao in the 2019 elections. Devineni Uma has been in charge of the party, but Vasantha is

likely to be chosen as the TDP candidate for the ensuing elections. Devineni Uma and his followers did not attend the welcome event.

Continued on Page 2

LOK SABHA POLLS

EC for action against officials indulging in favouritism

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Election Commission of India on Saturday directed all the district magistrates and superintendents of police to take strong action against officials, who are indulging in favouritism. The poll body's move comes in a bid to ensure "temptation free (prahlohan-mukt)" Lok Sabha elections and provide a level-playing field to all the political parties.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said that directions have been issued to all the DMs and SPs to ensure level playing field for all the political parties, and to take strong



action against those officials indulging in favouritism.

"Ensure impartiality with junior officials working at cutting-edge level for level playing field. All the DEOs (District Election Officers) have been asked to immediately act on the complaint lodged by the political parties," Kumar told reporters in Lucknow.

YSRCP expects a record 1.5 million turnout at Bapatla Siddham

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party is all set to conduct the fourth and final Siddham cadre meeting in Addanki in Bapatla on March 10. The party leaders are making elaborate arrangements for a massive gathering of 1.5 million (15 lakh) leaders, cadre and supporters. With this meeting, the party plans to make a big political statement in the central zone after having hijacked the narrative in both Uttar Andhra as well as Rayalaseema.

Elaborating on the arrangements being made for the event, regional coordinator and Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy informed the media that the party was expecting a footfall of 1.5 million (15 lakh) people this time, superseding the Siddham Anantapur turnout of one million. He said that the surveys conducted before and after the Siddham meetings stated that the YSRCP graph has increased.

"Considering the response of the people to the meetings, we believe that we will win 175 out of 175 Assembly seats and 25 out of 25 parliament seats in the elections," he said.

2

PM conducts Bhoomi Pujan for IIPE campus

Indian Institute of Petroleum & Energy holds the status of an Institute of National Importance

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually laid the foundation stone for the greenfield permanent campus of the Indian Institute of Petroleum & Energy (IIPE) in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. Over 500 individuals, including dignitaries, government officials, and stakeholders, witnessed the ceremony via video-conferencing, heralding the dawn of a new era in energy education and research.

The groundbreaking ceremony symbolised a pivotal stride towards realising India's energy aspirations



and fostering socio-economic development. Established in 2016 under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, the IIPE embarked on a significant mile-

stone as it initiated construction on its permanent campus.

IIPE, born in accordance with the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, and later fortified by the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy Act, 2017, holds the prestigious status of an Institute of National Importance.

Serving as the nation's solitary energy-centric academic institution, Prof Shalivahan, Director of IIPE, said this institution aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, situated strategically in the heart of Visakhapatnam. Its core objective lies in nurturing skilled human

resources capable of addressing India's burgeoning energy demands through comprehensive educational programmes spanning Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees.

Prof. Shalivahan, emphasised the institute's wide-ranging research spectrum covering vital energy domains such as biofuels, hydrogen production, renewable energy, and carbon capture. Collaborations with industry giants like NTPC and HPCL underscore IIPE's dedication to technological innovation and sustainable development.

Continued on Page 2

Health a glaring hole in election discourse, say experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Every year, crores of Indians are pushed to the brink of financial ruin by medical emergencies, but as India gears up for the Lok Sabha polls, health remains conspicuously absent from the election discourse, feel experts.

Not only are most parties seemingly uninterested in prioritising commitments on health in their poll agenda, even the voter on the street appears to be unaware of healthcare rights, the public health experts say.

The result is that election after election, medical infrastructure and services leave a lot to be desired.

"Public health issues have traditionally not been a prominent poll agenda in India due to various fac-

tors. The most vocal sections of society 'the educated middle class' often do not access public health services, instead preferring the private sector. Hence, demands to improve government health services are not raised strongly," Dr Abhay Shukla, national co-convenor of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, said.

Healthcare has suffered in the absence of adequate allocations in the Union budget under successive governments, the experts said.

India has a heavy disease burden with a WHO report stating that the country accounts for one-fifth of the total deaths occurring from stroke and ischemic heart disease, especially in younger adults.

Also, more than around 57 per cent of women (15-49 years) and 67



"Public health issues have traditionally not been a prominent poll agenda in India due to various factors. The most vocal sections of society 'the educated middle class' often do not access public health services, instead preferring the private sector. Hence, demands to improve government health services are not raised strongly."

per cent of children (below 5 years) are anaemic, according to the National Family Health Survey 5 data, Sourindra Mohan Ghosh, assistant professor at the Council

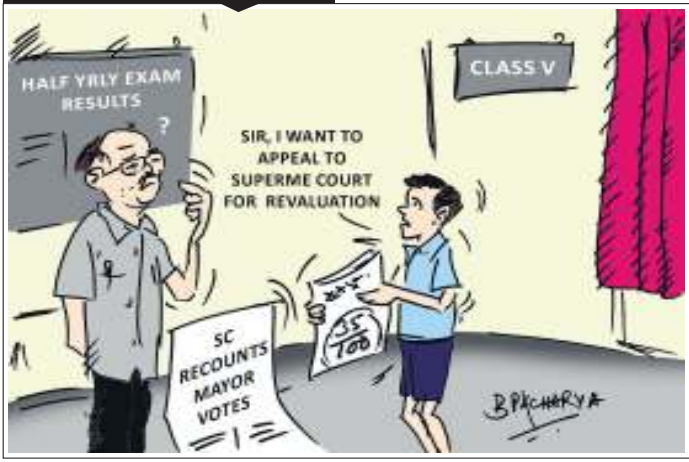
for Social Development, stated. Not only that, the NFHS data points to a wide incidence of hypertension and diabetes, while an ICMR report says that India will

have 29.8 million cancer patients in 2025.

"The Public Health System on which most poor and lower middle classes depend suffer from insufficient infrastructure and persistent shortfall of public health workforce. Private health care is unaffordable. As a result, out of pocket expenditure continues to be high," Ghosh emphasised.

Budgetary allocation for health consistently remains low and has not achieved 2.5 per cent of GDP as recommended under the National Health Policy 2017 and 15th Finance Commission. Allocation for health has remained stagnant at around 2 per cent of the Union Budget in the last few years, according to the Centre for Budget Governance and Accountability.

OBTUSE ANGLE



When ‘mogudus’ and ‘pellams’ become stuff of name-calling

Regardless of the advisories issued by the Election Commission of India to ensure decorum in public discourse, netas tend to cross their limits to assert their own manliness (or the lack of it in others) in an unseemly manner. In Andhra Pradesh, political diatribe has hit a new low with offensive innuendoes and provocative discussions over ‘mogudus’ (husbands) and ‘pellams’ (wives). At a recent meeting in Tadepalligudem, actor and Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan turned his ire at Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for repeatedly taunting him about his ‘four marriages’. Pawan Kalyan asked rhetorically: “If so, where is my fourth wife?” In the next breath, he added for good measure: “Perhaps, YS Jagan may be my fourth wife. Ask him to come to me.”

Not to be outdone, YSR Congress leader and Minister Ambati Rambabu said; “Jana Sena leader Nadendla Manohar is Pawan Kalyan’s fourth wife and YS Jagan is ‘mogudu’ to both Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan”. People are fed up with such name-calling during election speeches, with politicians choosing to not maintain dignity while addressing public meetings.

OU media relations team leaves reporters ‘jobless’

In good old days, particularly a before Telangana State was formed, Osmania University was the hot-bed of politics orchestrated by students’ unions so much so that newspapers had reporters on campus beat to record all sensitive happenings. These days, with students’ agitations fading out, OU’s media relations team seems to have gained an upper hand so much so that dedicated reporters appear to have become redundant. With students hardly waging battles against OU or other authorities over their rights and entitlements, the media relations team seems to have succeeded in silencing student unrest in its own way. Media houses too have begun relying only on handouts from Osmania University’s PRO. This way, OU’s media wing has become so strong that news relating to other universities get eclipsed by the sheer number of its press notes. Not a single happening, be it small or big, is missed by OU’s media team. The notable exception is the occasional failure to conduct classes by the

university. Disturbingly, reporters have stopped validating information or digging for additional facts when something comes from the OU PRO.

Putting media on the wrong scent

On hindsight, media persons are saying there was ‘zameen-asmaan ka farak’ between the ways in which media persons were taken on conducted tours by the ruling and principal opposition parties to the site of Medigadda barrage, where sunken/cracked pillars have rendered the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project unviable. Reporters who were part of the ‘inspections’ organized by the ruling Congress and the opposition Bharat

Kothapet during her visit to Dr B R Ambedkar Konaseema district in Andhra Pradesh, no matter the unpalatable remarks her father and ex-CM K Chandrasekhar Rao had previously made about biryani prepared in Andhra Pradesh. Kavitha reportedly had mut-ton biryani, crab, prawns, etc. The hotel owner effusively shared the details of her lunch. Kavitha appreciated the food. However, reporters wondered how Kavitha could muster the nerve to attend a consecration ceremony just a day ahead of questioning by CBI in the Delhi liquor scam case.

Modi pats Annamalai, followers of BJP TN unit worried

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a public meeting at the conclusion of TN BJP president K Annamalai’s ‘En Mann En Makkal’ yatra in Palladam, near Tirupur. Apparently happy with the crowd and huge response, Modi literally patted Annamalai on his back. ‘Strikingly,’ this exactly is what had happened to Bandi Sanjay, at a meeting the former BJP TS unit chief had organised at the Parade grounds. Connecting dots, a section of the party cadre prayed that Annamalai should not go Sanjay’s way. For, soon after the Parade Grounds meeting, Sanjay was sacked from the BJP TS unit president post.

Screening calls of scribes

Talking about giving media complete access to the chambers of ministers is one thing and requiring at least the PROs of Ministers to take official calls from media persons is quite another. In the absence of clear intent and instruction, both Ministers and PROs take scribes for granted. Almost all the Ministers have appointed PROs, but the latter screen the calls before answering them. They don’t bother to know the names of beat reporters. While Ministers ignore calls of even reporters they know well, their PROs take calls mainly from media persons representing the electronic media. For no fault of theirs, scribes from the print media get the cold shoulder.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateshwarlu, and SNCN Acharyulu)

REPORTERS’ DIARY

Rashtra Samithi parties are one in declaring that the visit ‘organized’ by the latter was atrocious. Journalists had travelled to the spot in two buses, with media houses appearing to be impartial by generously sending reporters to opposition-conducted visit as well. Noticeably, reporters were always left behind; while netas came, saw and left. During the Congress’ show, reporters were sent first and treated respectfully, be it serving them food or organizing pressers. Reporters had leeway to also personally check on the cracks in the piers. During the BRS’ show, reporters had to hitch-hike or beseech politicians going in cars for a lift to the site of the piers. After all, the scribes had travelled 250 km for seven hours just to examine the piers first-hand. “They did not want us to see,” commented a senior journalist. Irony died a thousand deaths when scribes realized belatedly that BRS had arranged a power point presentation. It was done though there was no way reporters could have reached the Annaram barrage in time. Cracking jokes among themselves, reporters agreed: “These guys can never learn how to respect media, even as Revanth Reddy goes on to assure to give houses to journalists.”

‘Sumptuous meal’ ahead of CBI quiz

Kalvakuntla Kavitha had a sumptuous meal in Venkat Ratnam Hotel at

53.35 lakh children to receive Pulse Polio drops in State today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr KS Jawahar Reddy, the Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, has instructed the Health, Medical and Family Welfare Department officials concerned to make the National Immunisation Day, i.e. Pulse Polio programme successful across the State on Sunday. He directed the officials that they should provide polio drops to children in the age group of 0-5.

The Chief Secretary conducted a video conference on Pulse Polio, Phase-3 Lands Re-Survey, House Sites Registrations, Upadhi Scheme, Aarogyasri Health Cards distribution and other issues with the officials concerned from his camp office in Vijayawada on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the CS said that as many as



Chief Secretary Dr. Jawahar Reddy conducting a review meeting with various departments from his camp office in Vijayawada on Saturday

53.35 lakh children would get Polio drops in the State. For that, the department has arranged 37,465 polio booths, 1,693 mobile teams and 1,087 transit teams to make it successful, he said.

On Sunday, the Health Department would provide polio drops to all children and if any children left, the immunisation programme would be continued on March 4 and 5, he added. In addition to identified booths, the department authorities would provide the drops at

railway stations, bus stations and other busiest places in the State, he added. Health, Education, Women and Children, Municipal, Panchayat Raj, RTC and other departmental officials should work cooperatively with each other to make the programme successful, he said.

Later, he reviewed MGNREGA (Upadhi scheme) and the drinking water supply. All district administration should provide 100 working days to the people in the drought-

prone mandals, he instructed. No district will face drinking water problems and all district collectors should attend to the problems to resolve, he added.

After that, CS Jawahar Reddy reviewed the land allotment to the MSME clusters, Jagannanna House Sites registration, Aarogya Suraksha, Aarogyasri cards distribution, MSP to agriculture products and others.

State Survey and Resettlement Commissioner Siddhartha Jai, Stamps and Registration IG Ramakrishna, Health, Medical and Family Welfare Commissioner J Nivas, Disaster Management MV Kurmanath and others participated. However, CCLA G Sai Prasad, PR and RD Special Chief Secretary B Rajasekar, Cooperative Commissioner Babu A, Industries Secretary Dr N Yuvaraj and others participated virtually.

YSRCP expects a record...

Continued from Page 1

The MP said that the fourth Siddham meeting will be attended by 15 lakh people from all 43 Assembly constituencies of Tirupati, Nellore, Bapatla, Guntur, Prakasam and Palnadu districts. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will speak to the gathering on what has been done for the people, especially BCs, SCs, STs and minority communities, during the past four years and 10 months, and also on how to provide better governance to the people in the next five years. CM Jagan will give directions on what elements are included in the manifesto.

He said it is expected that the election notification will be released on March 13 or 14. The Siddham meeting is being held on 100 acres of land, and if necessary, another 100 acres will also be used. After the event, election campaign meetings will be held to cover as many constituencies as possible. He said that all the peo-

ple know how much importance YSR Congress Party has given to the development of BCs in the past, and no one has forgotten the help provided by the Jagan government socially, economically and politically.

“We are all working together to make the Siddham meeting in Bapatla a huge success. The meeting will be held on March 10. We are expecting around 1.5 million (15 lakh) party supporters to be present at the event and make it one of the largest political meetings that have happened in the State,” said MP Vijaya Sai Reddy. Ongole MLA Balineni Srinivasa Reddy added that all sorts of arrangements viz-a-viz event coordination, planning, transportation, venue setup, refreshments, and sanitation had already been done.

The YSRCP leadership further stated that the party cadre was fully charged to tell CM Jagan that they are all ‘Siddham’ to support him in the upcoming ‘Yuddham’ of ‘One vs All.

World Bank Group, RTI all praise for Family Doctor concept

Study conducted on the health benefits of Family Doctor system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy has said that the World Bank Group and the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) have lauded the ‘Family Doctor programme’, which is being implemented in Andhra Pradesh with the aim of providing quality healthcare to the people. The organisation conducted a study in various districts of the State on the health benefits of the Family Doctor system. The details of the CS and

health officials through video-conferencing from Delhi on Saturday.

World Bank Group representative Amit and RTI representative Satya stated that the Family Doctor concept will give an assurance to the people regarding health security. Before the implementation of the concept, this organisation had studied the situation and examined the increase in the use of medicines and diagnostic test services. After its introduction, it is said that the Family Doctors handle more

cases of diagnostic tests, diabetes and hypertension than PHCs and VHCs. The organisation gave many suggestions to the government for running the programme more successfully.

Later, CS Jawahar Reddy said that the government has recently taken many important measures to protect the health of the public, such as the Family Doctor concept, two primary health centres for the mandal and village health clinics at the village level. Due to this, the burden on Aarogyasri

will be reduced to a great extent in the coming days. He said that the government will pay special attention to issues such as prevention of malnutrition among women and girls and prevention of anaemia. Jawahar Reddy specially appreciated the RTI organisation for doing a good study on the Family Doctor policy.

J Niwas, Commissioner of Medical Health and Family Welfare Department, representatives of RTI organisation Dr Jami, Dr. Gururaj and others attended the meeting.

YSRCP suffers...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Narasaraopet YSRCP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu joined the TDP at a programme held in Dacheppalli in Palnadu district on Saturday. Naidu admitted him into the TDP by wrapping scarp. Sri Krishna Devarayalu urged Naidu to release funds for the construction of Varikupudisela lift irrigation scheme YSRCP Mylavaram MLA Vasanta Krishna Prasad also joined the TDP in Hyderabad on Saturday.

It may be mentioned here that YSRCP MPs including Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Lavu Sri Krishna Devaraya, V Balashowry, Maganta Srinivasa Reddy and K Raghun Ramakrishna Raju have quit the YSRCP.

‘Congress will implement ‘Indiramma Abhayam’ first in AP, if voted to power’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) media chairman Dr N Tulasi Reddy has stated that the ‘Indiramma Abhayam’ will be a gift for poor people. The scheme will be implemented first in the State if the people voted for the Congress party to power, he said.

Addressing the media at the Andhra Ratna Bhavan in Vijayawada, he said that under the scheme, every woman from a poor family would get



Rs. 5,000. “Prime Minister Narendra Modi cheated the people of the State by not sanctioning the Special Category Status,” he alleged.

When the UPA government announced the SCS for five years, the then Opposition BJP demanded the status for 10 years. However, during their 10 years of rule, Special Category Status was not sanctioned for the State, he pointed out.

He expressed happiness over the successful conduct of a public meeting in Tirupati, where the Congress made the Special Category Status Declaration. If SCS is sanctioned, the AP will be developed on par with other States, he said.

Min Rajini promises to give Guntur a new look

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Viddala Rajini said that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government’s aim is to transform Guntur city with good roads and drains and the works are being completed in the city. The minister said that Shilparamam has been started on the Inner Ring Road and cultural programmes are also being held there bringing a new look for the city.

Visiting the Nallacheruvu walking track in Guntur city on Saturday, she walked along the track with the locals. She enquired about the issues of locals and discussed them with Guntur Mayor Kavati Sivanaga Manohara Naidu. The Minister and the Mayor assured the locals that all the problems in



the Nallacheruvu area will be solved without fail.

Rajini recalled that during the tenure of the Telugu Desam government, the underground drainage works were incomplete and the city was left in a bad condition. The TD leaders of that time showed endless negligence and showed hell to the people. She pointed out that after their government came, they have been constructing

roads in a systematic manner in these five years. It is known that less than a year after the formation of their government, the Covid pandemic broke out. The Minister claimed that while standing by the people in difficult times, they also worked hard for development.

Regarding Guntur city’s development from all corners, Minister Rajini said that the works of roads and drains are

being completed in the city. Shilparamam has been started on the Inner Ring Road and cultural programmes are also being held there. She said that the city is expanding on four sides. The Minister promised that if the people give another chance to the YSR Congress party in the elections, they will develop Guntur city to an unimaginable level.

The people expressed happiness as Minister Rajini herself went to the locals, enquired about the problems and promised to solve them. On the occasion, the minister stopped at a shop and drank tea with the locals. Mayor Kavati Sivanagamanohar Naidu called upon people to support Rajini in the upcoming elections.

VPA achieves...

Continued from Page 1

Dr. M. Angamuthu commended the exemplary performance and tireless efforts of Mr. B. Ratna Sekhar Rao, the Traffic Manager, and his team, along with the Deputy Conservator and Heads of Departments. The Chairperson expressed gratitude for their timely support, attributing the success to their collective dedication and hard work.

In light of this achievement, Dr. M. Angamuthu extended his aspirations for the future, setting an ambitious goal of handling 80.00 MMT in the current financial year 2023-24.

PM conducts Bhoomi...

Continued from Page 1

In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, IIPPE offers a diverse array of undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programmes, along with initiatives like the Sandwich Ph.D. programme and Global Student Internship Programme, enhancing academic excellence and global exposure.

Prof. Shalivahan further highlighted IIPPE’s holistic approach encompassing environmental conservation and community engagement. Through initiatives like beach adoption and student-faculty connect programs.

YSRCP to field Mudragada’s...

Continued from Page 1

Later, they parted ways due to various reasons. In 2019, JSP contested the elections alone and failed miserably with Pawan losing both the seats he contested.

In the TDP-JSP alliance, JSP received 24 Assembly and three Lok Sabha seats. Pawan has already announced five candidates for the Assembly, but didn’t disclose his own seat. He is likely to announce his candidature from Pithapuram in the second list.

Sources say that Pawan is pinning hopes on Kapu vote bank to win the elections and opted to contest from Pithapuram as there are about 1.9 lakh voters. Out of the 1.9 voters in the constituency, there are around 90,000 Kapu voters and around 50,000 BC voters. Pawan feels that if the Kapus vote for him, he can win the elections and enter the Legislative Assembly for the first time.

On the other hand, the ruling YSRCP has already announced the party in-charge from Pithapuram -- Vanga Geeta, the sitting MP from Kakinada. After the recent development, the party is likely to replace the in-charge with a stronger candidate opposite Pawan Kalyan. Sources say that the YSRCP leadership is likely to field Mudragada Padmanabham’s son Challa Rao against Pawan at Pithapuram.

Interestingly, Mudragada Padmanabham was interested in joining JSP, but after the recent TDP-JSP Janda meeting, he changed his mind and is now willing to join YSRCP. A few YSRCP leaders have invited him to YSRCP and if the news making rounds in the political circles is to be believed, Mudragada will join YSRCP in a day or two.

AU provides international edu opportunities for students

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University (AU) in Visakhapatnam has unveiled an international education initiative aimed at providing a lifeline for economically disadvantaged students in the State. The visionary move is a result of the EDEX agreement signed by the State government, marking a significant stride towards fostering global academic exposure for the youth.

AU Vice-Chancellor, Prof. P.V.G.D Prasada Reddy, lauded the EDEX agreement as a new dawn for the State's youth during a celebratory event held on Saturday. He expressed his gratitude to the Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohana Reddy, stating that the initiative is a testament to the government's commitment to elevating the educational standards and capabilities of Andhra



Pradesh's youth on the international stage.

In a heartening display of appreciation, students gathered under the auspices of the AU education department, holding placards that read "Thank you CM sir." This public expression of gratitude underscored the significance of

AU Vice-Chancellor, Prof. P.V.G.D Prasada Reddy, lauded the EDEX agreement as a new dawn for the State's youth during a celebratory event held on Saturday.

courses offered by prestigious international institutions such as Oxford and Stanford. This move is seen as a remarkable step towards democratizing education, offering students from rural areas an unprecedented chance to pursue courses in renowned international universities.

Registrar Prof. M. James Stephen, Arts College Principal Acharya A. Narasimha Rao, along with department professors and students, participated in the event.



Commissioner to hold spl grievance programme

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to address rising concerns over land-grabbing cases, the City Police Commissioner has announced a special grievance programme scheduled for March 6. The programme, slated to run from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., aims to provide citizens with a platform to voice their grievances and seek redressal.

Commissioner A. Ravi Shankar has outlined the deployment of senior police officials to all police stations during the programme. Deputy Commissioners of Police, Additional DCPs, and ACP-rank officers will be stationed at each police station to oversee the reception of complaints. Citizens are encouraged to come forward during the programme to register complaints pertaining to various offenses including land-grabbing, forgery, trespassing, and encroachments on government lands.

Key officials designated to receive complaints include Joint Commissioner K. Fakeerappa at PM Palem Police Station, with DCP I and II stationed at Bheemunipatnam PS and Duvvada PS respectively. DCP Crimes will supervise the proceedings at Arilova PS, while ADCP Traffic, ADCP Crimes, and ADCP Admin will be present at Gajuwaka PS, Pendurthi PS, and Dwaraka PS, respectively.

Collector flags off Pulse Polio awareness rally

2.48 lakh children in NTR district will get drops from March 3 to 5

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has said that the District Medical and Health Department authorities have arranged as many as 1,008 centres for conducting the Polio vaccination drive for children in the age group of 0-5. The Medical Department has set up vaccines to provide polio drops for 2.48 lakh children, he said.

In view of the immunisation drive to be conducted for three days from March 3 to 5, Collector, Dilli Rao along with Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagya Lakshmi, flagged off the Pulse Polio awareness rally at the Old Government General Hospital in the city on Saturday. The rally started from the Old GGH and went on via Gandhinagar, Tummalapalli Kalakshetram and returned to the Old GGH.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao said that the steps taken by the Central and State governments in the last 20 years, to provide Pulse Polio drops to children have given good results. Despite there being no polio disease in the State, however, the government has continued the Pulse Polio drive to protect children from the disease, he said.

Further, he stated that the District Medical and Health Department has made elaborate arrangements for conducting the drive a success. The district administration has arranged 1,008 centres to provide polio drops to 2.48 lakh children. Also, there are 1.11 lakh polio drops ready to conduct the programme, he added.



Drive will reach every nook and corner: DMHO

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to bolster public health initiatives, District Medical Health Officer Dr. P. Jagadiswara Rao has announced a comprehensive Pulse Polio campaign scheduled for March 3 across Visakhapatnam.

The initiative aims to reach every nook and corner of the district, encompassing rural and urban landscapes as well as transit hubs. Speaking to media persons here on Saturday, Dr. Rao emphasised the significance of the upcoming drive, highlighting its scope to cover primary health centers in both rural and urban areas, alongside ward and village secretariats. Additionally, special teams will be deployed at major bus and railway stations to administer Pulse Polio drops.

The campaign underscores the imperative for all children aged from birth to five years to receive the polio vaccine. Dr. Rao reiterated that while the programme supplements existing vaccination efforts, it

remains crucial for parents to ensure their children receive the additional dose on Pulse Polio Day. Notably, on March 3, unvaccinated children will be identified at designated polio booths, with follow-up vaccination sessions scheduled for March 4 and 5 district-wide, and March 6 specifically in the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) area. A substantial stockpile of 2,65,820 doses of polio vaccines has been secured for the initiative.

The logistical framework of the campaign encompasses 1,002 polling centres and 74 mobile teams, poised to administer polio drops to an estimated 2,08,163 children aged 0-5. With 4,220 vaccinators and 92 monitoring staff on board, meticulous arrangements have been made to ensure the campaign's efficacy. Moreover, the campaign extends its reach to transient communities, slums, nomadic populations, construction sites, and fishermen's residential areas.

Jogi Ramesh holds Praja Darbar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing Jogi Ramesh, who was appointed coordinator for Penamaluru Assembly constituency in Krishna district, conducted a Praja Darbar at the Dwaraka Residency at Poranki on Saturday. Revenue, Housing, Electricity, Roads and Buildings, Water Resources, Women and Children, Health and Medical and Police department officials participated in the Praja Darbar and received petitions from the public.

The officials received 837 petitions in the Praja Darbar. People who came from various villages explained their concerns which have not been resolved for many years.



Minister Jogi Ramesh receiving petitions from the people at the Praja Darbar held at Dwaraka Residency at Poranki on Saturday

Projects of Vijayawada schools selected for EMDP Expo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Two school projects from NTR district have been selected for the State-level Entrepreneurial Mindset Development Programme (EMDP) Expo. The selected projects are: Line Following Car prepared by Gandhiji Municipal Corporation High School in Vijayawada and Making Jute Articles from Gunny Bags, by AP Residential Minority Girls' High School in Vijayawada.

The expo will take place at the Murali Convention Centre at Poranki in Krishna district on March 6. Two teams from each district will present their projects at the AP EMDP Expo.

Fifty-two projects have been chosen from the district-level



NTR District School Educational Officer Subba Rao and District Science Officer Hussain along with the students who were selected for the State-level EMDP Expo

EMDP expo held recently. The Andhra Pradesh State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT AP) will be conducting the one-day expo.

K Sujay, L Charan Tej, and K Kalyan Sai of Gandhiji Municipal Corporation High School presented the project at

the district-level event, while P Keerthana, B Satwika and Sk Subhanbee presented the project for AP Residential Minority Girls' High School.

NTR District School Educational Officer (DSEO) UV Subba Rao and District Science Officer (DSO) Mynam Hussain praised the students.

Volunteer priorities pension distribution over her wedding day fete

K Rojarani ensured that all the elderly received their pensions timely before tying the knot on Friday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a heartwarming incident, a government volunteer working in the Araku Assembly constituency of the Alluri Sitarama Raju district distributed pensions to the elderly on her wedding day. Prioritising her work above her most special day, K Rojarani ensured that all the elderly in the region received their pensions timely before tying the knot on Friday.

This selfless gesture won the admiration of many and earned her appreciation from all corners. To honour and commend the volunteer, who hails from the Hukumpeta mandal, YSRCP Araku in-charge, Rega Matsyalingam, a teacher, visited her and presented her with a felicitation on Saturday.

Matsyalingam congratulated the newlyweds and commended them for dedicating themselves to serving the people. He encouraged them to continue their service to the community.

During the event, K Rojarani expressed her gratitude to CM



Jagan for providing her with the opportunity to serve as a government volunteer. She also conveyed her deep satisfaction in working as a volunteer and expressed her willingness to serve once again under Jagananna's leadership. She extended her thanks to the villagers for recognising and appreciating her efforts.

Later, they requested them to make changes in the house site's G.O. and allot house sites on nominal prices based on seniority. Similarly, strive to provide funds to the Press Academy and bring back the Railway Concession, provide pensions to retired journalists and start the Best Journalist Awards in the State, they added.

Indian Journalist Union Council member Sk Babu, State council member Daram Venkateswara Rao, Vijayawada Press Club Secretary D Naga Raju and others were present.

Nutrition awareness camp at Vizag Zoo

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant initiative aimed at promoting health and wellness, Southern Educational Institutions, in collaboration with IGZP, organised a Nutrition Awareness Camp near the Bioscope area in Zoo Park. The event witnessed active participation from visitors, students, and faculty members. Expressing his delight, Srikantha Natha Reddy, Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Visakhapatnam highlighted the importance of such health awareness programmes, especially in the vibrant setting of Vizag Zoo.

Food nutritionist students and faculty members from Southern Group College played a pivotal role in examining the zoo visitors. They provided personalised guidance on cholesterol levels based on height and weight, ideal weight according to age, healthy eating habits, and BMI (Body Mass Index). Srikantha Natha Reddy emphasised the significance of these awareness programmes in today's society, considering the prevalent lifestyle. "Such initiatives are crucial for fostering a culture of health consciousness," he stated.

Dr. Nandani Salaria, Curator at IGZP, announced that more awareness programmes are on the horizon in collaboration with the Southern Group. Stressing the urgency of the matter, Satish, CMD of Southern Group, noted that due to the lack of attention to proper nutrition, people are experiencing obesity from a young age.

The programme reached around 1,000 visitors, including zoo staff, from various places. Participants were educated on the timing and quantity of food intake, aiming to combat the growing concern of obesity in society. Mangamma, DCF, IGZP, and Assistant Curators Gopi and Gopala Naidu, along with Forest Section Officers Bharathi and Rajeswara Rao, actively participated in the event.

The Principal of Southern Educational Institution, zoo staff, and students from Southern College also contributed to the success of the programme.



35 injured as lorry collides with bus

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

As many as 35 passengers were injured when a lorry collided with an APSRTC bus at Tenkayalathopu village in Pellakuru mandal on Saturday. Police said that the APSRTC bus was going to Tirupati from Nellore. A speeding lorry which was going to Nellore from Srikalahasti collided with the RTC bus. As many as 40 passengers were travelling in the bus when the mishap took place out of which 35 were injured.

Mahasena Rajesh withdraws from contesting polls

PNS ■ KONASEEMA

TDP-Jana Sena candidate Saripella Rajesh (Mahasena Rajesh) has dropped a bombshell by announcing his withdrawal from contesting the elections. The Opposition alliance had fielded him from the P Gannavaram Assembly constituency. Rajesh said given the current political development in the constituency, he has decided to withdraw from the contest.

Both the TDP and Jana Sena leaders were protesting the candidature of Rajesh from P Gannavaram segment. During the recent TDP-Jana Sena coordination meeting in Ambajipeta of Konaseema district, Jana Sena supporters had created a furore for giving a party ticket to Rajesh while demanding his removal as a candidate for the upcoming elections. The

annoyed supporters had even smashed the windows of the car of TDP parliamentary in-charge Harish Mathur.

TDP-Jana Sena's decision to field Rajesh in P Gannavaram had triggered protests from various quarters. Members of Brahmin Sangh staged a protest outside the TDP office in Visakhapatnam on Friday. They claimed that

by giving a ticket to Rajesh, the TDP has insulted the Brahmin community.

In Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh Brahmin Welfare Corporation also registered their protest against Rajesh who had allegedly made derogatory comments against the Brahmin women. A Brahmin association filed a complaint against Rajesh at Gokavaram police station in East Godavari district and demanded the police to take strict action against him.



APUWJ urges Left leaders to include scribes' issues in manifestos

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) has urged the Left parties to include journalists' issues in their election manifestos. For that, the union leaders submitted a representation comprising 15 items to the Left leaders.

APUWJ State general secretary Ch Janardhan, executive committee member Chava Ravi, SAMNA State president Ch Ramana Reddy and others met CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna and CPM State



APUWJ leaders submitting representations to CPI State secretary Ramakrishna and CPM State secretary Srinivasa Rao at their party offices in Vijayawada on Saturday.

secretary V Srinivasa Rao at their party offices in Vijayawada on Saturday.

After submitting the representations, the union leaders urged them to simplify the

accreditation system in the State. Also, the health card scheme should be implemented more effectively and reintroduce the accidental insurance scheme for journalists, they added.

Historic Queen Victoria Pavilion cries for attention

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Queen Victoria Pavilion, a historic monument in Visakhapatnam meticulously restored by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) in 2016, now faces an uncertain future due to neglect and environmental factors. Originally built in 1904, the Pavilion underwent extensive restoration work in 2016, including sandblasting of walls, meticulous cleaning of the statue, repair of steps, and a fresh coat of paint on the

dome. The result was a shining testament to the city's heritage.

However, after eight years, neglect has taken its toll. The once-pristine structure now bears coal dust from the nearby port coal storage, encrusting the masonry and tarnishing the statue. Plant roots have caused cracks, while the surrounding area has become a gathering spot, with encroaching vehicles.

Sohan Hatangadi, founder and vice-president of the Greater Visakha Citizens' Forum, expressed grave concern over the Pavilion's state. He

warned of structural collapse without immediate intervention and advocated for restoration efforts and ongoing maintenance, particularly as old town roads expand.

In a plea to the GVMC, Hatangadi sought prioritisation of heritage preservation over superficial enhancements, emphasising the Pavilion's significance to Visakhapatnam's history and identity. As the fate of the Queen Victoria Pavilion hangs in the balance, Visakhapatnam awaits GVMC's response.



What is the agenda?Why change names of criminal laws?

Whether calling the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Act, 1898, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 “linguistic imperialism”? Very soon the name of the Indian Constitution also will be changed to Bharatha Samihita. Another step in another phase is: “The committee finds that as the text of the Sanhita is in English, it does not violate the provisions of Article 348 of the Constitution. The committee is satisfied with the response of the Ministry of Home Affairs and holds that the name given to the proposed legislation is not in violation of Article 348 of the Constitution of India” according to the Parliamentary panel on November 21, 2023, in its report submitted to Rajya Sabha.

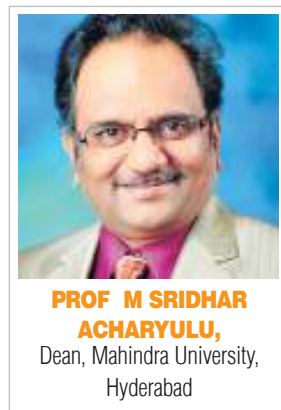
This panel has held that the Hindi names given to the three proposed criminal laws

are not unconstitutional. This panel has dismissed criticism against the move by some political parties and their leaders.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs headed by BJP MP Brijlal has taken note of the wording of Article 348 of the Constitution, which says that the language to be used in the Supreme Court and the High Courts, as well as for Acts, Bills and other legal documents shall be in English language.

The government introduced three bills in the Lok Sabha to replace laws that form the backbone of criminal jurisprudence in India: the Indian Penal Code (1860), the Indian Evidence Act (1872), and the Criminal Procedure Act (1898). With Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), BharatiyaSakshya (BS), and BharatiyaNagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) that would respectively respect the

An important change in the BNS Bill concerns “repealing” sedition. On this the Home Minister says: “We are repealing sedition” that shows the much-debated provision, Section 124A of the IPC, pertaining to sedition as an offence has been re-invented. Section 150 of the BNS Bill deals with the offence of endangering the sovereignty unity and integrity of India but it does not use the word ‘sedition.’ It reads:



PROF. M SRIDHAR ACHARYULU,
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

in the criminal justice system,” he said.

‘Re-invented’ sedition

An important change in the BNS Bill concerns “repealing” sedition. On this the Home Minister says: “We are repealing sedition” that shows the much-debated provision, Section 124A of the IPC, per-

taining to sedition as an offence has been re-invented. Section 150 of the BNS Bill deals with the offence of endangering the sovereignty unity and integrity of India but it does not use the word ‘sedition’. It reads: “Whoever, purposely or knowingly, by words, either spoken or written or by signs, or by visible representation, or by electronic communication or by use of financial means, or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite, secession or armed rebellion or subversive activities or encourages feelings of separatist activities or endangers sovereignty or unity and integrity of India; or indulges in or commits such acts shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.”

The BNS bill has new provisions for the death penalty for raping a minor below the

age of 18 years, sexual exploitation of a woman after hiding her identity, punishments for mob lynching, and 10 years imprisonment for crimes against children, among others.

Community service

Simultaneously, the bill proposes first-time community service as punishment for petty offences. Offences against women and children, murder, and offences against the State have been given precedence. The various offences have been made gender neutral, the statement and object of the BNS Bill said. Under the BNSS Bill, to stop the political use of punishment waivers by governments, a new provision has been made that death sentences can only be converted to life imprisonment, and life imprisonment can be pardoned only within seven years of punishment.

The Home Minister referred to the recent release of criminal-politician Anand Mohan in Bihar and said provisions have been made to ensure that those with political influence do not escape the law. The use of forensic science to increase convictions in cases is also in focus, the Minister said. “The aim is to take the conviction rate to 90 per cent,” he said.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS-2023), BharatiyaNagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS-2023), and the BharatiyaSakshyaAdhiniyam (BSA-2023) were introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11. The proposed laws will replace the Indian Penal Code, of 1860, the Criminal Procedure Act, of 1898, and the Indian Evidence Act, of 1872 respectively. Problem is: Whether the MPs and the people had enough time to read, study and understand the implications?

‘Lay focus on expenditure of candidates’

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Sumit Kumar directed the officials to lay special focus on the expenditure of the candidates during the elections.

Training classes were held for flying squad teams, video survey teams, video views teams and statistics survey teams in the SRKR engineering college auditorium on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, District Collector Sumit Kumar said that the officials should be constantly alert in the wake of the general elections. He said that a candidate contesting for each Parliamentary constituency is allowed to spend up to Rs 95 lakh and a candidate contesting for Legislative Assembly constituency is allowed to spend up to Rs 40 lakh.

The candidates, who spend more than the allowed money, will lose their eligibility. All the teams should enter the details of expenditure of the candidates as assigned to them in the respective registers. The candidates will have to show their expenditure reports thrice to the Expenditure Scrutinizers, the Collector told them.

The details should be entered in the Election Seizure



Management System (ESMS) App as soon as any illegal cash or goods are transported or distributed anywhere. If cash is kept anywhere above Rs 10 lakh that should be seized and the income tax officer should be informed about the seizure, he told the officials.

“If anyone carrying cash exceeding Rs 50,000 should be seized and gifts worth Rs 10,000 and various kinds of items should also be seized. However, star campaigners are allowed to keep up to Rs 1 lakh with him, the Collector clarified.

The candidates contesting the elections must obtain prior approval from the Media Certification Monitoring Committee (MCMC) for campaigning in electronic media. The payment should be credited to the candidate's account under expenses after identifying the news, the Collector said

The Collector opined that crime incidents may occur three or four days before the polling and directed the police and polling officials to be on high alert on the three days.

Collector Sumit Kumar informed that there are 16,70,000 voters in WG district and 1,461 polling stations would be set up for them across the district. He directed the officials to grasp well the guidelines and rules of the election commission. The FST and SST teams were appointed to every constituency. Each team comprises an officer with magisterial designation, a police officer and a videographer.

Superintendent of police Ajita Vejendla, DRO B Shivannarayana Reddy, Additional SPs Bhima Rao and other officials were present.

Officials directed to conduct elections following ECI guidelines

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Collector AS Dinesh Kumar directed the officials to take steps to conduct elections transiently following the guidelines of Election Commission of India.

A training programme was organized to the ROs, AROs and Nodal officers on conducting elections on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the ROs, AROs and Nodal officers to fully grasp guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India to conduct the elections.

The Collector said that the role of the election officials in the election process including the nomination process, the counting process and the implementation of the election rules is very vital. The registration of candidates' election expenditure is also very important to the officials, he added.

The officials should take steps to conduct the polling peacefully without any flaws, the Collector ordered them.

All election staff and officers are advised to perform their



duties keeping in mind that they are appointed as per the Election Commission of India Act, he reminded them.

“Every officer who has been assigned the duties of election must be ready to carry out the duties of the election as a serious responsibility,” he said, asking them to get their doubts allayed.

“All the returning officers should take responsibility to ensure that the officers in their teams are fully prepared for the elections,” the Collector said, advising all the Contestants to enter their expenditure details in the Expenditure Register

from time to time.

The Collector asked them to study and grasp the Expenditure Manual. The election observers observe every aspect during the elections and all officers should be careful in discharging election duties, he advised them.

Earlier, Ongole RDO Visweswar Rao gave a Powerpoint presentation on the process of filing nomination to the counting of votes. Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna, Additional SP Nageswar Rao and DRO Srilatha were among those who were present.

Pawan condemns killing of woman for asking water

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan condemned the brutal killing of a woman for asking for drinking water at Mallavaram Village in Rentachintala mandal.

According to the villagers of Mallavaram, the sarpanch of the village Sheik Nanne Saheb was supplying drinking water through a tanker to the village. On the morning of Friday, a group of women rushed to the tanker to fetch water. The tractor driver, Manikantha Naik, who is also a follower of Sarpanch Sheik Nanne Saheb, objected to the women filling water from the tanker alleging that they belonged to the TDP.

The deceased woman Banavat Samunibai argued with the tractor driver why they should not fill water from the tanker. Irrate over this, tractor driver Manikantha Naik ran over the tractor on her legs, the villagers alleged. The tractor driver ran over the tractor over her legs thrice in which she suffered major injuries on legs and abdomen. She succumbed to injuries while being taken to the GGH in Macherla.

Responding to the heinous incident, Pawan Kalyan said it



is very unfortunate that Andhra Pradesh is in a situation where people have to undergo political scrutiny to get drinking water. “I am deeply disturbed by the incident where a Tribal woman Banawat Samunibai of Mallavaram village in Macherla constituency of Palnadu district was run over by a tractor and killed when she went to fetch drinking water from the water tanker,” he lamented.

Pawan Kalyan said in a statement here on Saturday that she was told that opposition parties were not allowed to get drinking water. There was not a single drop of water left in her house and despite her continuous pleas, she was run over by the tractor and crushed to death.

“This ghastly incident is a testament to the barbaric rule in the state. The only thing left is to issue a G O stating that only YSRCP leaders and workers are allowed to drink water and breathe air,” the JSP chief lambasted. “Under YCP's evil rule even ‘Pancha Bhuthas,’ the five elements of nature, are being painted and drenched in YSRCP party colors. The police should investigate the Mallavaram incident impartially, without succumbing to pressures from the ruling party”.

83% of new Arogyasri cards distributed: Collector Prasanna

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has said that the distribution of new Arogyasri cards has been completed by 83% so far.

Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy held a video conference from the camp office with the Collectors and other officials on Saturday. The Chief Secretary reviewed the progress of the third phase of land re-survey process. Assigned lands, house sites registration, P&RD, NREGA-providing working days in drought affected mandals, supply of drinking water, Jagananna Aarogyasri Suraksh and distribution of Arogyasri cards.



Speaking in the video conference with the Chief Secretary, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that Eluru district has received 5,05,458 Arogyasri cards of which 4,19,964 cards have been distributed to the beneficiaries so far. Steps were taken to distrib-

ute the remaining cards by conducting a special drive, he stated.

The house registration process has been completed by 90%, the Collector said, adding that only 6,984 registrations have been pending for which a special drive is being conducted on Sunday. All arrangements have been made for pulse polio which is to be held on Sunday, the Collector explained to the Chief Secretary.

District Agriculture Officer Sheik Habib Basha, district Panchayat Officer T Srinivas Viswanath and DMHO S Sharmistha and Arogyasri district coordinator Dr. Ravij and a host of other officials were present.

Perpetrators in POCSO Act cases must be punished: SP Prasanthi

PNS ■ ELURU

District Superintendent of Police D Mary Prasanthi emphasized the need of punishing the perpetrators in the POCSO Act cases and carrying out the investigation without flaws.

An awareness programme on the ‘POCSO Act’ ‘Victim Compensation Scheme, ‘Narcotic Drugs’, ‘Psychotropic Substances’ and ‘Juvenile Act’ was organized here on Saturday by the district legal services authority. SP Mary Prashanthi presided over the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP regretted that some accused of the POCSO Act are escaping from the law without being punished due to some



officials’ unawareness about the POCSO Act laws. Justice would be meted to the victims when the accused was punished, the SP said.

Without showing negligence in the investigation of POCSO Act cases, the investigating officials should collect concrete evidence at the ground level to

ensure the punishment in the court. Every police officer should follow the suggestions of judges in getting the POCSO Act accused punished, the SP told the officials. First additional district Judge G Ram Gopal explained what are the evidences to be collected in the NDPS cases. The charge sheet

should be filed accurately and witnesses should be produced before court during the trial which helps the judges to punish the accused.

VIII additional district judge M Sunil Kumar, Civil Judge K Ratna Prasad, A Mary Grace Kumari and Advocate T Subba Rao also spoke.

Afzalgunj Police nab three for vehicle theft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Afzalgunj Police on Saturday arrested three persons involved in vehicle theft and recovered four two-wheelers from them.

The accused were identified as Mohammed Imran (20), a labourer and resident of Nampally; Allam Suresh (40), a resident of Doodh Bowli and Shaik Shahbaaz (24), a resident of Chandrayangutta. Victim Mukesh Tiwari, in his complaint, stated that his bike went missing from the parking lot of his building on February 5.

Indiramma Housing Scheme launch in Telangana State on March 11

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced that the ‘Indiramma Housing Scheme’ would be launched on March 11 and ordered officials to make arrangements for the launch of the housing programme for the state's poor.

The government is launching the housing scheme as part of the six guarantees, the Chief Minister said.

Under the Indiramma Housing Scheme, the government will provide financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to construct houses for those who have a site. A piece of land and Rs 5 lakh will be given to the poor who do not have a site.

The Chief Minister asked officials to prepare rules and guidelines for the release of funds in a phased manner. He said that strict guidelines would be framed to prevent the misuse of funds given to beneficiaries.



The Chief Minister directed officials to extend the housing scheme to all the eligible poor who do not have houses. Officials have been asked to finalise guidelines accordingly. The CM said that priority should be given to the eligible who had filed applications through Praja Palana.

The CM warned officials not to repeat the mistakes committed by the

BRS government while constructing double-bedroom houses and that the scheme's benefits should go only to bonafide applicants.

A tentative decision was taken to allot funds to construct 3,500 houses in each constituency at the meeting. The CM expressed his hope that the dream of the poor to own a house would be fulfilled in a phased manner.

Revanth said that different models of houses and designs should be made available for those who are building houses on their own sites. A kitchen and toilet are required while constructing houses under the housing scheme, he added.

The CM also told officials to hand over the responsibilities of monitoring house construction to the engineering wings of government departments. These responsibilities will be given to engineering wings under the supervision of Collectors.

The CM, Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar and Chief Minister's Advisor Vem Narendra Reddy held a meeting to frame guidelines for implementing the housing scheme.

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, R&B Secretary Srinivasa Raju and other officials also attended the meeting.

Govt to record biometrics of pregnant women, infants

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy ordered officials to record the biometrics of pregnant women, infants and children and to install CCTVs at all centres. Biometric systems will be set up in all the 35,000 Anganwadi centres in the state, he said. The CM asked officials to ensure the preservation of all records in digital form so that auditing can be done easily.

The CM directed officials to take strict measures to provide food to pregnant women and infants in Anganwadi centres. The NFHS (National Family Health Survey) revealed the alarming situation that pregnant women, infants and children are falling sick due to malnutrition and anaemia. The Chief Minister said that dropping of health standards is not a good sign



and suggested to the authorities to monitor whether the nutritional food is being delivered to the actual beneficiaries through Anganwadi centres regularly. Adequate measures should be taken to prevent the misuse of nutritious food by showing wrong details in the records. As there are no adequate numbers of anganwadi centres to meet requirements in GHMC limits. The CM and officials discussed the concept of mobile Anganwadi

centres. The CM suggested a study on procedures implemented in other states and to take it up as a pilot project. In order to reach Women and Child Welfare schemes to the needy, a special weekly festival programme will be organised every six months and a wide campaign will be carried out. The meeting also discussed the importance of creating awareness of the use of sanitary napkins at the school level and distributing them to girl students. The CM ordered the officials to make arrangements to set up sanitary napkins manufacturing units by the women of self-help groups. This programme will be implemented in coordination with the Education Department, Women and Child Welfare Department and Rural Development.



President Murmu pays homage to Santha Kabi Bhima Bhoi in Sambalpur

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday paid homage to Santha Kabi Bhima Bhoi in Odisha's Samabampur district. The president visited Rairakhol and offered floral tributes to the statue of the saint. Accompanied by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, she then went to Cousathi Siddhankara Dhooni Mandap at Madhupur and paid homage to the revered figure from the 19th century by pouring oil on the ever-lighted 'Havan'. She then visited the nearby Chausathi Siddhi Ashram. There, the president had a brief discussion with the monks and enquired about the old trees of the ashram. She also planted saplings in the ashram premises. She was presented with a photo of Santha Kabi Bhima Bhoi and a book. She also interacted with the people at the ashram, and distributed chocolates among the children.

Dynasts scared of contesting LS polls, trying RS route: Modi

PNS ■ AURANGABAD (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday hit out at the opposition, saying that "dynasts" were scared to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha and were seeking the Rajya Sabha route to enter Parliament. He launched a veiled attack on the Congress-RJD alliance in Bihar, claiming the NDA has "pushed to the margins" those who "indulged in dynastic rule and created terror in the minds of the people". Addressing a rally in Aurangabad district, Modi said it was his "guarantee" to ensure that Bihar witnessed development, the rule of law and that its women lived free from fear. "Bihar now again has a double-engine government. The NDA has pushed to the margins political dynasts in Bihar," he said, in an obvious reference to the recent return to the BJP-led coalition of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who was present on the dais. The PM said Bihar is the land of Goddess Sita and enthusiasm was palpable in the state when Ram temple was consecrated in Ayodhya. He said that Bharat Ratna to former chief minister Karpoori Thakur was an honour for entire Bihar. "An earlier generation in Bihar had been condemned to live in fear. So many youngsters were forced to migrate. We must not allow those times to return," Modi said, in an apparent reference to the RJD rule.



I will remain with NDA forever, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar assures PM

PNS ■ AURANGABAD (BIHAR)

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he would remain with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) forever. Speaking on the occasion of unveiling function of

the projects worth Rs 21,400 crore in Aurangabad district by Modi, Kumar said, "I am confident that the NDA coalition will win more than 400 seats in the coming Lok Sabha polls. I assure the PM that now I will remain in NDA forever". Kumar dumped the R J D - l e d Mahagathbandhan and

returned to his old ally BJP last month. "We welcome you (the PM) in Bihar. Lots of developments are taking place in Bihar. I am confident that now things will move faster and Bihar will reach new heights of development. People of Bihar will now feel economically more empowered," said

Projects worth Rs 21,400 cr unveiled in Aurangabad

PNS ■ AURANGABAD (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled development projects worth Rs 21,400 crore in Bihar's Aurangabad district on Saturday. The PM unveiled the projects at an official function in Ratanwa village. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Governor Rajendra V Arlekar, Deputy CMs Samat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, and several Union ministers were among those present at the programme. This is Modi's first visit to Bihar since the BJP-led NDA returned to power in the state after CM Nitish Kumar, who heads the JD(U), dumped the Mahagathbandhan. Addressing the programme, Kumar told the prime minister that he would remain in the NDA forever. Modi unveiled national highway projects worth over Rs 18,000 crore. He also laid the foundation stone for a six-lane bridge over the Ganga, which will be constructed parallel to the existing JP Ganga Setu. He dedicated to the nation three railway projects, which include the doubling of the Patliputra-Pahleja line and a 26-km-long new line between Bandhua and Paimar. The PM also inaugurated 12 projects worth over 2,190 crore under the Namami Gange scheme.

INDIA CORNER

Cow dies in country bomb explosion in Tiger reserve



A cow died in a blast triggered by a country-made bomb in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve here, police said on Saturday. According to police, the five-year-old cow was part of a herd of five owned by Thayappa, a local farmer in the Dignarai forest area near Thalavadi in STR. The herd is used to grazing inside the forest area. On Friday evening, the ill-fated bovine bit a country-made bomb hidden within the grass and fell down due to injuries on its face and mouth. The bomb was allegedly kept by some persons in the area to scare wild boars and other animals from straying into their fertile land, police said. Despite the injuries, the cow managed to return to its owner who rushed it to a veterinary doctor in the area for first aid. However, the cow died there, police said. Thayappa informed the forest officials and police about the incident and a case has been recorded for investigation.

LG nod for CBI probe against Satyendar Jain



Delhi LG V K Saxena has granted sanction for a CBI probe against former minister Satyendar Jain in a complaint of extortion filed by money laundering accused Sukesh Chandrashekhar, officials said on Saturday. Jain is accused of extorting Rs 10 crore from Chandrashekhar as "protection money". A former director general of Tihar jail was also accused in the matter, the Raj Niwas officials said. The LG has given his nod for a CBI inquiry against Jain under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, they said. Jain, a former home minister in the Kejriwal government, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case in May 2022 and is lodged in Tihar jail.

Writing 'Bharatmata' with saplings: Guinness record



PNS ■ CHANDRAPUR

A Guinness world record was set in Chandrapur in Maharashtra on Saturday after 65,724 saplings were used to write 'Bharatmata' in Hindi, an official said.

26 species to write 'Bharatmata' in Hindi," Swapnil Dangrikar, Adjudicator of Guinness World Records, who was present at Rambhag during the programme, said. He handed over the certificate to state Forest Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar during a ceremony held near the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. Hailing the efforts of the forest department, Mungantiwar said such feats will boost the morale of the staffers. "After these saplings grow into trees, one will still see Bharatmata written when aerial photography is done with the help of a drone," Mungantiwar said.

The feat was achieved as part of the 3-day Tadoba Festival underway here, he said. "The officials of the Forest Department have set the world record at first attempt by using 65,724 saplings from



Rahul to address rally in Bhiwandi during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra

PNS ■ THANE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will address a rally at Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district on March 15 as part of his ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which is also set to make a night halt there, party functionaries said. Interestingly, Gandhi is facing a case of criminal defamation filed by a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) worker over the former's alleged statement made at an election rally near Bhiwandi 10 years back (in March 2014), that "the RSS people killed Mahatma Gandhi". The district unit of the Congress is making all necessary arrangements for the yatra, they said. Gandhi's yatra is scheduled to enter Maharashtra from neighbouring Gujarat on March 10. In the state, it will pass via Nandurbar, Dhule, Malegaon and Nashik, Bhiwandi and Mumbai, the Congress has said. Former state Congress president and ex-minister Balasaheb Thorat visited Thane

Gandhi's yatra is scheduled to enter Maharashtra from neighbouring Gujarat on March 10. In the state, it will pass via Nandurbar, Dhule, Malegaon and Nashik, Bhiwandi and Mumbai.

city and Bhiwandi on Saturday to take stock of the preparations. Talking to reporters, Thorat said that after entering Nandurbar on March 12, Gandhi will reach Bhiwandi on March 15, where he will interact with local citizens. "Later, the yatra will make a night halt in Bhiwandi before proceeding to Thane and then to Mumbai on March 16. The next day (on March 17), a public rally of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will be held in Mumbai," he said.

Ruckus in J'khand Assembly over Spanish tourist's gang-rape

PNS ■ RANCHI

Uproarious scenes were witnessed in the Jharkhand Assembly on Saturday over the alleged gang-rape of a Spanish woman in Dumka district, leading to two adjournments of the House. The House also witnessed a ruckus over the alleged misuse of central agencies against non-BJP governments. A Spanish tourist was allegedly gang-raped in Dumka district, where she and her partner were camping in a makeshift tent on Friday night after crossing over from Bangladesh on a two-wheeler.

Gujarat CM offers prayers at Ayodhya Ram temple with ministers; calls it 'indescribable' experience

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, his cabinet colleagues, and legislative assembly Speaker Shankar Chaudhary offered prayers at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Saturday. Patel expressed joy over his visit to the temple and termed the experience as "indescribable". In a release issued by the state government, Patel said the prime minister's perseverance and commitment had ensured the temple's inauguration. The construction of the Ram temple is a proud occasion, especially for the Gujarati community, as the temple was consecrated by Prime Minister Modi, who hails from Gujarat, the release quoting the chief minister stated. He further said that the



state government has allocated Rs 10 crore in this year's budget to build the Gujarat Yatri Bhavan to facilitate ease of travel for pilgrims visiting the temple from Gujarat. The total cost of the project was Rs 50 crore, he said. Patel thanked Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for providing land for the Yatri Bhavan and making arrangements for pilgrims visiting the

holy city, particularly by the 'Aastha' trains from Gujarat. The chief minister presented a painting depicting the events of Shabari Mata and Lord Ram to the trustees of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir Janmabhoomi Trust. During the visit, Patel was accompanied by state cabinet ministers, Speaker Shankar Chaudhary and chief whip Balkrishna Shukla.

India eliminates extreme poverty: Brookings' article

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has eliminated extreme poverty, a commentary authored by economists Surjit Bhalla and Karan Bhasin in a leading American think-tank The Brookings Institution said, citing the just released consumption expenditure data for 2022-23. In the article, the two noted economists cite the data to say real per capita consumption has grown 2.9 per cent per annum since 2011-12, with rural growth at 3.1 per cent being significantly higher than urban growth of 2.6 per cent. Also, there has been an unprecedented decline in urban and rural inequality. The urban Gini declined from 36.7 to 31.9; the rural Gini declined from 28.7 to 27.0.



The Gini coefficient, or the Gini index, measures the inequality of income distribution, whereas a higher value closer to one (or 100 per cent) represents greater inequality. "In the annals of inequality analysis, this decline is unheard of, and especially in the context of high per capita growth," the

article states. High growth and a large decline in inequality have combined to eliminate poverty in India, it said, citing the PPP of USD 1.9 (purchasing power parity at 2011 prices and not the PPP USD 2.15 line at 2017 prices). This, the economists argued,

was more because the PPP of USD 1.9 closely corresponds to the official India Tendulkar poverty line. The Headcount Poverty Ratio (HCR), the proportion of a population that lives below the poverty line, has declined from 12.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2 per cent in 2022-23, equiv-

alent to 0.93 percentage points per year. Rural poverty stood at 2.5 per cent, while urban poverty was down to 1 per cent. "These estimates do not take into account the free food (wheat and rice) supplied by the government to approximately two-thirds of the population, nor utilisation of public health and education," the authors noted in the commentary. The decline in HCR is remarkable given that in the past it took 30 years for India to witness a similar decline in poverty levels, which has now been witnessed over 11 years, the article said. Given the near elimination of extreme poverty, India should now graduate to a higher poverty line, which would provide an opportunity to

redefine existing social protection programmes to give greater support to the genuinely poor, it added. "Official data now confirms that India has eliminated extreme poverty as commonly defined in international comparisons," the economists said. This is an encouraging development with positive implications for global poverty headcount rates. This also means that the time has come for India to graduate to a higher poverty line much like other countries. The transition to a higher poverty line provides an opportunity to redefine existing social protection programmes, particularly with the objective of better identification of intended beneficiaries and providing greater support to the genuine poor, it added.

Jayant Sinha not to contest LS polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP Jayant Sinha on Saturday said he has requested the party president J P Nadda to relieve him from direct electoral duties, joining the list of party leaders not contesting the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. In a post on social media platform 'X', the MP from Jharkhand's Hazaribagh said he will continue to work with the party on economic and governance issues. The BJP is said to be contemplating giving tickets to several new leaders and some other sitting MPs also are understood to have told the party that they would like to focus on other organisational work. Earlier in the day, BJP's

East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir also said he asked the party to relieve him from political duties so that he can focus on his upcoming cricket commitments. Sinha, a former union minister, said he wants to focus his efforts on "combating global climate change in Bharat and around the world". "I have had the privilege of serving the people of Bharat and Hazaribagh for the past ten years. Moreover, I have been blessed by the many opportunities provided by Prime Minister Narendra Mod, Home Minister Amit Shah and the BJP leadership. My sincerest gratitude to all of them. Jai Hind!" he said in his post on X.

FINANCING AND DEVELOPING COOPERATIVES ACROSS THE NATION

Shah launches NUCFDC

Calls for establishing one urban cooperative bank in each town

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

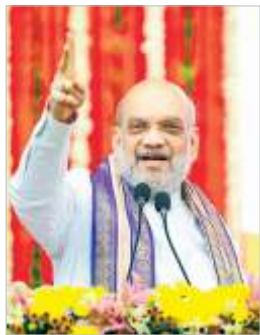
Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday launched the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC) and asked the umbrella body to set up one urban cooperative bank in each town.

He also said urban cooperative banks should upgrade themselves to provide ATM facility, credit/debit cards, clearing system, maintain SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) limit and refinancing.

NUCFDC has received the RBI approval to function as a non-banking finance company and a self-regulatory organisation for the urban cooperative banking sector.

After launching NUCFDC, Shah said, "After 20 years, NUCFDC has been established. This is the need of the hour. I am happy the RBI has given approval for this."

The minister said he felt the absence of an umbrella organisation when he had an oppor-



He also said urban cooperative banks should upgrade themselves to provide ATM facility, credit/debit cards, clearing system, maintain SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) limit and refinancing.

tunity to work with National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies (NAFCUB) when there was a crisis in Gujarat.

Some urban cooperative banks would not have suffered losses if there was NUCFDC, he added.

Shah mentioned that there were several deliberations and even reports, including from the Vishwanathan Committee emphasised the need of an umbrella body for urban coop-

erative banks. "I am confident there will be multi-fold growth in the urban cooperative banking sector with the setting up of NUCFDC," he added.

Highlighting the wider role of NUCFDC, Shah said urban cooperative banks have been operating in India for a long time, but could not grow rapidly even though they can play a key role in the country's economic growth, he said.

For urban cooperative banks

to grow and survive, they should upgrade themselves and follow the RBI guidelines. The main objective of NUCFDC should be to help urban cooperative banks adhere to the Banking Regulations Act and bring professionalism in their work, the minister said.

Like other commercial banks, Shah said urban cooperative banks should provide ATM facility, credit/debit cards, clearing system, maintain SLR (statutory liquidity ratio) limit and refinancing.

"I believe for small banks, NUCFDC is a 'suraksha kavach' (safety net)," he said.

There are more than 1,500 urban cooperative banks with 11,000 branches and a deposit of Rs 5 lakh crore across the country, he added.

The minister said NUCFDC should achieve its target paid up capital within a year and not depend on others. National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has committed Rs 200 crore in it.

Cong accuses Modi govt of helping the rich

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday accused the Modi government of helping the rich industrialists and waiving off bad loans of corporates and alleged that it has upgraded facilities at the Jamnagar airport using the tax-payer's money only to facilitate the guests of a rich industrialist.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the Jamnagar airport in Gujarat is near the Pakistan border and is sensitive to defence concerns.

He also alleged that even while the government is seen standing with the rich, it is demolishing houses of the poor and farmers seeking a minimum support price (MSP) for their produce have to face bullets.

"When it comes to helping out his rich industrialist friends, Prime Minister Modi is willing to do anything," he alleged, claiming that he "has declared

the Jamnagar airport an international airport for 10 days".

"He has ordered the doubling of the size of the passenger terminal - with taxpayers' money - just to make life more convenient for the wedding guests.

The Jamnagar airport is close to the Pakistan border, and is sensitive to defence concerns - but the private jets of the wedding guests have even been allowed to use the Indian Air Force 'technical area'," Ramesh alleged in a post on X.

"Of course, this is not a new development. The Prime Minister has spent his whole career in politics helping out his billionaire friends," the Congress leader alleged citing examples in this regard.

He alleged that the government ensured that six out of six airports being privatised went to Adani, allowed two companies to take over 90 per cent of India's airline market and wrote off Rs 14.5 lakh crore of bad loans by corporates.



Bengaluru hotels to enhance security

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A day after a low intensity bomb blast at a popular city eatery left 10 people injured, Bruhat Bangalore Hotels Association on Saturday said it will chalk out a plan to enhance the security system at all hotels across the city and would also discuss the preventive measures to be taken to make public places safer.

On Friday afternoon, the Rameshwaram Cafe witnessed a bomb blast at its Brookefield branch following which security has been tightened across the state and its capital city.

According to the Association, it will be convening a meeting with police officials, hotels owners and other stakeholders to discuss the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to maintain vigil in hotels.

They would also discuss the do's and don'ts in hotels, review the SOPs and step up security measures to avert any such untoward incidents in the near future.

It will also discuss having in place an enhanced security system in place and work towards having a zero tolerance approach against movement of any "suspicious individuals" and those "loitering" in the hotels henceforth. President of Bruhat Bangalore Hotels

Association, PC Rao said that once the police investigation is concluded, they would soon call up a meeting with the police department, cafe and hotel owners as well as other stakeholders to discuss and chalk out a detailed plan to enhance the security system at the eateries so as to avoid such unfortunate incident in future.

"We are working on ways to enhance the security system and ensure safety of people at public places but for now we are waiting for the formal report from the police department on how it (blast) happened. Once the investigation is over, we will take up the matter and chalk a detailed plan. Our discussions are on and we are definitely calling for a meeting next week with police officials and other members in the hospitality business," he told PTI.

Emphasizing that such incidents have occurred in public places like hotels, railway stations, bus stands, he said, such people can target any public place and so we as citizens of Karnataka and Bengaluru should be careful and do the needful as a responsible citizen to keep our city safe and secure.

"We need to know and analyse what actually happened and how it happened, and take preventive measures accordingly.

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages to invest Rs 350 cr in Madhya Pradesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), the bottling arm of Coca-Cola in India, has announced a Rs 350 crore investment in Madhya Pradesh for setting up two manufacturing lines at its Rajgarh plant.

The announcement, made during the Regional Industry Conclave in Ujjain, takes HCCB's total investment in the state to more than Rs 660 crore, according to a statement.

"The fresh infusion of capital will see the introduction of 2 new, state-of-the-art manufacturing lines at HCCB's factory in Rajgarh.

Innovative steps in pipeline to make J-K popular tourist spot



PNS ■ JAMMU

From contemplating taking up projects in public-private partnership mode to inviting high-profile domain experts, the Tourism department in Jammu and Kashmir is working on a renewed plan to make

the region a popular tourist destination, officials said on Saturday.

The department also intends to hold Formula 4 races in association with private players, the officials said after a review meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on

the renewed tourism development plan.

They said Friday's meeting, which was attended by Tourism Commissioner Secretary Yasha Mudgal, discussed the new innovative steps to make Jammu and Kashmir the most popular tourist destination in the country.

Among other initiatives, the officials said the department is contemplating taking up projects in public-private partnership mode in both the Jammu and the Kashmir divisions for increasing footfall.

It has also decided to conduct a three-day conference with high-profile domain experts in areas such as administration, hospitality, tourism academia and ecotourism.

Rise of customer care fraud a significant concern: Haryana Police

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Asserting that it is committed to combating cybercrimes, Haryana Police on Saturday said the rise of 'customer care frauds' was an area of concern.

In a statement, the state police urged people to verify the authenticity of any communication that sought personal or financial information.

Police said many individuals, in search of customer support numbers via search engines, end up contacting fraudulent numbers.

These imposters, posing as customer care representatives, exploit the situation to extract personal and financial information, culminating in financial losses for the victims, they said.

"In an era where digital convenience has become integral to our daily lives, it has



also opened up avenues for cybercriminals to exploit unsuspecting citizens," the police said in a statement.

Haryana Police had earlier highlighted an alarming rise in cybercrime tactics targeting individuals across the state.

"From impersonation scams to fraudulent job offers, the digital domain is fraught with hazards that the public needs to be aware of and guard against," Haryana Director General of Police Shatruejt

Kapur in a statement here.

Police also highlighted the menace of online job fraud, where cybercriminals create fake job portals or impersonate officials from renowned companies.

Unsuspecting job seekers are lured into sharing sensitive information or transferring money for non-existent job opportunities, registration fees, or training programmes, police said.

Another method of fraud is the Telegram task scam, where victims receive unsolicited messages offering easy money for simple tasks, only to find themselves trapped in schemes that require financial investments, ultimately leading to losses, said police.

"In light of these threats, the Haryana Police urges the public to remain vigilant and cautious," police said.

AI platforms must seek approval for deploying under-trial AI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after Google's AI platform's response to queries on Prime Minister Narendra Modi generated controversy, the government has issued an advisory for social media and other platforms to label under-trial AI models and prevent hosting unlawful content.

In an advisory issued to intermediaries/platforms on March 1, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology warned of criminal action in case of non-compliance.

"All intermediaries or platforms to ensure that use of Artificial Intelligence model(s) /LLM/Generative AI, software(s) or algorithm(s) on or through its computer resource does not permit its users to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share any unlawful content," the advisory said.

Jal Shakti Ministry introduces Swachhata Green Leaf Rating

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to enhance sanitation practices across India's tourism sector, the Centre has introduced the Swachhata Green Leaf Rating initiative to elevate aesthetic and sanitation standards at popular destinations.

The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, in conjunction with the Union Ministry of Tourism, has introduced this concept, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in a statement.

Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat emphasised the need for all tourist facilities to elevate aesthetic and sanitation standards at popular destinations.

"As ambassadors of our country's hospitality and development, all our tourist facilities should actively involve themselves in enhanc-



The Bison Resort in Madhya Pradesh's Narmadapuram

ing the aesthetic and sanitation levels of our tourist spots," he said in a post on X.

He also stressed the potential for increased tourist footfall and enhanced brand value within the hospitality sector through investment in responsible sanitation practices.

The Bison Resort in Madhya Pradesh's Narmadapuram has emerged as a pioneer by secur-

ing the inaugural Five Swachhata Green Leaf Rating Certificate of Recognition, the ministry said.

Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation Secretary Vini Mahajan highlighted the transformative potential of initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission and the Swachhata Green Leaf Rating in redefining the tourism sec-

tor's image, positioning it as a global beacon for cleanliness and responsible tourism.

The launch of the "National Pilot on Swachhata Green Leaf Rating in Hospitality Facilities" took place in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag district and Assam's Kaziranga National Park.

The launch included orientation sessions and interactive engagements with hotels, resorts and homestay owners, aimed at fostering awareness and adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

The ministry said the Swachhata Green Leaf Rating booklet, unveiled during a national conference in Lucknow in January, serves as a comprehensive guide for establishments committed to championing sustainable development and upholding world-class sanitation standards.

MONEY MATTERS

Coal production mines rises 27% in Apr-Feb



The coal production from captive and commercial mines has increased 27.06 per cent year-on-year to 126.8 million tonnes (MT) in the April-February this fiscal. The coal dispatch from the captive and commercial mines in the first eleven months of the current financial year also rose 19.14 per cent to 128.88 MT over the corresponding period of

previous fiscal, the coal ministry said in a statement. The total coal production and dispatch in February was 14.85 MT and 12.95 MT, registering an increase of 37 per cent and 33 per cent, respectively. In the year-ago period, The total coal production and dispatch stood at 10.85 MT and 9.72 MT, respectively. As of February 29, 2024, the total number of producing mines was 54, with 35 allocated to the power sector, 11 allocated to the non-regulated sector, and 8 for the sale of coal. Of the 91 mines awarded under commercial coal auctions, seven blocks have already started production.

Modi a 'speed breaker' for economy: Rahul



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become a "speed breaker" for the "rapidly-growing" economy under the UPA. In a post on X, he also claimed that while the Congress gave a boost to development by empowering the poor, the prime minister is "hollowing out" the country for

the benefit of his "few friends". "Narendra Modi has become a 'speed breaker' for the rapidly growing Indian economy under the UPA government," Gandhi said in his post in Hindi. "The Congress gave impetus to development by empowering the poor, whereas Narendra Modi is hollowing out the country for the benefit of a few friends," he wrote. The development of the country is impossible without keeping the countrymen at the forefront of policies," the former Congress president said. "Contrary to false propaganda, the BJP government is nowhere near the Congress on the economic front. The figures are testifying to this," Gandhi said using a video highlighting the comparison between the UPA and the NDA governments on the economic fronts.

Naukri, 99acres, other apps make a comeback



Google has reinstated some popular Indian apps it had removed from its Play Store, including Naukri and 99acres, amid the government's clear signal that the delisting of Indian apps cannot be permitted. Sources said reinstating some of the apps was not linked to the government's position but with the concerned apps complying with the Play Store

Billing policies. Info Edge founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani, in a post on X, confirmed that many Info Edge apps are now back in the app marketplace. "Many of the Info Edge apps are back on the Play Store. An effort very well led by (company MD and CEO) Hitesh and the entire Info Edge team. People were up all night for this. Great crisis management," he said. Taking a strong view of Google pulling out some apps from its Play Store, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told PTI that the delisting of Indian apps cannot be permitted and that the tech company and startups concerned have been called for a meeting next week. In an interview, IT and Telecom Minister Vaishnaw said the startup ecosystem is key to the Indian economy and their fate cannot be left to any big tech to decide. The minister's comments assume significance as Google on Friday began removing some apps, including popular matrimony apps, from its Play Store in India over a dispute on service fee payments.

Lulu Group to visit Vijayapura to decide on food processing unit

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A team of Lulu Group, a leading multinational diversified conglomerate that has planned to set up an export oriented full-fledged food processing plant will visit Vijayapura soon and will conduct site visits to decide where the food processing unit should be set up, officials said on Saturday.

Top representatives of the Lulu Group held a preliminary meeting about the proposed project with the Minister of Large and Medium Industries M B Patil, who is also the district in-charge minister for Vijayapura, they said.

Lulu Group export division CEO Najbuddin, Director

Anant and his team participated in the meeting held on Friday at Khanija Bhavan.

In a statement issued by the Minister's office, Patil was quoted as saying that the team of Lulu Group will visit Vijayapura soon and will conduct site visits to decide on where the food processing unit should be set up.

At the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Lulu Group had expressed interest and signed an agreement to set up a full-fledged food processing plant in Vijayapura district by investing Rs 300 crore. This meeting was held as a continuation of that and the minister assured that the government will extend full cooperation, it said.



Delhi HC sets aside bank's order declaring Ratul Puri as wilful defaulter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has set aside Bank of Baroda's decision declaring businessman Ratul Puri as a wilful defaulter under Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines.

The court said the forensic audit report did not verify the source of funds invested in the subsidiaries of Moser Baer India Ltd (MBIL), with which Puri was earlier associated, and the bank could not have issued show cause notice to the petitioner for wilful default without verifying the source of funds.

"Unless the funds that were invested were found to be borrowed funds, the respondent-bank did not have jurisdiction to invoke the Master Circular. The very genesis of 'diversion' or 'siphoning of' funds is dependent on the funds being borrowed funds."



Jewellery

THAT REFLECTS YOUR STYLE



Recognised for its enduring value and cultural significance, handcrafted jewellery continues to be a preferred choice among discerning individuals looking to make meaningful and lasting investments in precious metals and stones. As the wedding season approaches, we speak to jewellery expert **GUNJAN SONI** about the latest trends. By **NIVI SHRIVASTAVA**



BRIDAL BLING

KNOWN for its stunning bridal pieces and intricate sets, the House of MBJ is famous for designing statement necklaces, chandbalis, jhumkas and chandelier earrings, and beautifully crafted maang tikkas. Speaking about the latest trends for brides, Gunjan informs, “We understand the importance of making every bride’s special day even more magical. We offer a curated selection of bridal jewellery that captures the essence of timeless elegance and contemporary flair. In terms of specific styles, we specialize in traditional, antique, and modern designs, ensuring that there’s something for every bride’s taste and preference. Whether

you’re looking for a classic Kundan or Gold set, a regal Polki ensemble, or a modern diamond-studded piece, our bridal collection is designed to cater to diverse style sensibilities. Each piece is meticulously crafted to complement the bride’s attire and enhance her natural beauty on her wedding day.”

As for the latest trends in bridal jewellery, the market is currently witnessing a surge in demand for contemporary yet traditional designs. Brides are gravitating towards statement pieces that blend cultural aesthetics with a modern twist. Adding further, Gunjan says, “Personalized and customizable jewellery is gaining popularity, allowing brides to add a personal touch to their bridal ensembles. For brides who

appreciate versatility, convertible jewellery is a trend to watch. Pieces that can be worn in multiple ways, such as detachable necklace pendants or convertible earrings, provide brides with the flexibility to create different looks throughout their wedding festivities. This year, we have launched the AZRA bridal collection, which aims to transport wearers to a world of timeless charm and magical allure. Each piece in this collection is meticulously crafted to capture the essence of elegance, sophistication, and grace. The collection showcases an array of exquisite gemstones, including radiant diamonds, lustrous pearls, and vibrant colored gemstones, each carefully selected for its exceptional brilliance and symbolic significance.”



EVERYDAY ELEGANCE

APART from bridal sets, contemporary jewellery with modern aesthetics is also a huge hit among young buyers, who love sporting layered necklaces for both festive and daily occasions. For festive styling, Gunjan recommends, “Consider mixing various lengths and styles of layered neckpieces with Indian wear, while delicate and dainty options work seamlessly for daily wear. Statement earrings with intricate details and vibrant gemstones are perfect for adding glamour to festive attire, while smaller, more subtle statement earrings can elevate daily outfits. Stackable rings and bracelet stacks remain en vogue, allowing for creative expression in both festive and daily ensembles. Choker necklaces, especially those with unique detailing, effortlessly enhance traditional outfits for celebrations, while simpler versions make for stylish daily accessories. Personalized jewellery, such as pieces with initials or significant dates, adds a sentimental touch suitable for both special occasions and everyday wear.”

A BLEND OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Currently, young jewellery buyers in India reveal a strong affinity for contemporary designs that seamlessly merge tradition with modernity. Brands have noticed a particular fondness for minimalist pieces that effortlessly complement everyday wear. Versatility is paramount, as youngsters look for designs that effortlessly transition



from casual to formal settings, meeting diverse lifestyle needs. Gunjan reveals, “Our customization options allow for personalization with initials or birthstones and resonate deeply with this dynamic demographic seeking self-expression. We prioritize ethical and sustainable practices in jewellery production, aligning with the heightened environmental consciousness among young consumers. Collaborations



with influencers and celebrities, along with our commitment to affordability and technology integration such as virtual try-ons, enrich the shopping experience for our patrons. While embracing contemporary trends, we also honour the cultural significance of jewelry, offering pieces that celebrate India’s rich heritage.”



ARTIST’S TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR OF HOPE

75 Portraits of Prime Minister NARENDRA MODI Unveiled in Delhi



DR Avinash Kate, the Dean of Shantamani Kala Kendra at Jain University, has embarked on an extraordinary artistic endeavour by creating 75 emotion-filled portraits of Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. These diverse portraits, capturing various facets of Shri Modi’s work, emotions, and devotion to ‘Bharat Mata’, have been meticulously crafted on canvas using acrylic colors. The exhibition, which also includes a compilation detailing Modi’s journey as the Prime Minister, was unveiled to

commemorate his leadership and representational role in shaping the modern India. This unparalleled artistic feat marks a global first, with no other artist having created such an extensive series of portraits of a single individual in various forms. Dr. Avinash Kate dedicated three months of tireless effort to this meditative process, indirectly guided by spiritual influences, adding a profound dimension to the creation of these soulful portraits. Reflecting on the exhibition, Dr. Avinash Kate expressed, “The inspiring leadership

and unwavering commitment of our esteemed Prime Minister have been a constant source of motivation for me. This collection serves as a depiction of his emotional journey, portraying him as a true ambassador of hope.” Acknowledging the support received, Dr. Chenraj Roychand, Chancellor of JAIN (Deemed-to-be University), stated, “The collection provides a unique glimpse into Dr. Kate’s inner imagination, capturing the essence of Shri Modi’s emotions, whose leadership has not only shaped the

present but is paving the way for a future where India stands tall on the global stage.” The exhibition, held at the Constitution Club, New Delhi, attracted a significant number of art enthusiasts and prominent figures directly involved in the project, including Dr. Chainraj Roychand (Chairman of Jain University) and Dr. Gani Rajendra Vijay Maharaj (Founder of Sukhi Foundation Parivar, tribal Jain saint), among others. For his commitment and dedication, Dr. Avinash Kate has received numerous prestigious

awards and honors, including recognition in world records, international records, and the Limca Book of Records. Shantamani Kala Kendra, where the exhibition took place, stands as a testament to the university’s commitment to promoting various art forms, including Fine Arts and Performing Arts, while JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) continues to be recognized among the top educational institutions in India, fostering a learner-centric environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship.

"I really believe that what I do as an actress is my God-given talent. This is my calling, not my career!"
— Angela Bassett



HUMA QURESHI, the acclaimed Indian actress, has carved her niche in the film industry with her remarkable talent and versatile performances. Her breakthrough role in Anurag Kashyap's crime thriller *Gangs of Wasseypur* garnered widespread acclaim, establishing her as a force to reckon with in Bollywood. Known for her ability to portray complex characters with nuance and authenticity, Qureshi has since delivered captivating performances in web series like *Laila Maharani*. Beyond her acting prowess, she advocates for social causes and gender equality, using her platform to address important issues. Huma Qureshi continues to captivate audiences with her talent, proving herself as one of the most compelling actresses of her generation. She spoke to the **PIONEER** about her craft and career

ACTRESS OF DEPTH AND VERSATILITY



CAN YOU share a bit about your journey into the film industry and how you got your start as an actress?

I was into theatre in college and that's where I discovered my love for acting. I moved to Mumbai with the intention of becoming an actor. In my initial days in the industry, I did a commercial which was directed by Anurag Kashyap and he offered me *Gangs of Wasseypur*. That's how my journey in cinema was kickstarted.

What motivated you to pursue a career in acting?

In school I used to keenly participate in extra-curricular activities. Whether it was elocution, debates or plays. When I went to college, I was deeply attracted to theatre and was bitten by the acting bug. I moved to Mumbai with the dream of becoming an actor.

Of all the roles you've played so far, which one has been the most challenging, and why?

I have played roles which have challenged me as an actor and made me push myself out of my comfort zone. It's difficult to choose any one role. I thoroughly enjoyed playing both *Mohsina* and *Jhilmil* even though they belong to completely different worlds. In the recent past, whether it was *Tarla*, *Monica*, *Shalini* or *Rani Bharti* - they are all strong women who will not be deterred by society or it's norms and will rise above their circumstances with sheer will power and be unapologetic about their ambitions.

Can you tell us about any upcoming projects that you are excited about?

The third season of *Maharani* will be streaming soon. I think this is one of the only shows which has a female protagonist and has been commissioned for the third season. I am really looking forward to how people receive it.

How do you think the film industry has evolved during your career, especially in terms of roles for women and what changes would you like to see in the entertainment industry, particularly in Bollywood?

It's important for every actor to figure out their own path. There always will be a plethora of roles to play and actors must

I WAS INTO THEATRE IN COLLEGE AND THAT'S WHERE I DISCOVERED MY LOVE FOR ACTING. I MOVED TO MUMBAI WITH THE INTENTION OF BECOMING AN ACTOR. IN MY INITIAL DAYS IN THE INDUSTRY, I DID A COMMERCIAL WHICH WAS DIRECTED BY ANURAG KASHYAP AND HE OFFERED ME *GANGS OF WASSEYPUR*. THAT'S HOW MY JOURNEY IN CINEMA WAS KICKSTARTED

choose roles that work for them. The parameters for choosing roles are one's own. The sets have more women in all departments of filmmaking. Even though it's still not a level playing field, for example, the pay gap between male and female actors is still an issue, the industry has space for everyone and is constantly evolving

How do you approach preparing for a new role? Are there any specific methods you follow?

Not really. For me, reading the script multiple times helps. I just follow the script and the director's vision. Of course as an actor I improvise where it makes sense. But, essentially, I rely on the script for shaping my role.

Balancing personal and professional life can be challenging. How do you manage to maintain that balance? What are your favorite ways to unwind and relax when you're not working? I love sleeping. On days when I am not shooting, I am usually catching up on my sleep or hang out with my friends and family.

In recent years, many actors have become advocates for social issues. Are there any causes that you are particularly passionate about? How do you see your platform as an actress contributing to social change or awareness? I made a film which addressed body shaming called *Double XL*. As an actor one is expected to fit a mould but I have never adhered to that. My film was about how the skills a person has is far superior and what matters more than the looks or the how much they weigh. There has always been a lot of pressure on women to look a certain way and I have always advocated against that thought process.

What advice would you give to aspiring actors who are looking to enter the film industry?

Every individual's journey is different and they have to write their own story. What worked for me might not work for someone else. Focus, determination and resilience are key qualities.

Are there any lessons you've learned in your career that you wish someone had told you earlier?

I am glad that I got the opportunity to be on the journey and experience it for myself.



I LOVE SLEEPING. ON DAYS WHEN I AM NOT SHOOTING, I AM USUALLY CATCHING UP ON MY SLEEP OR HANG OUT WITH MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY

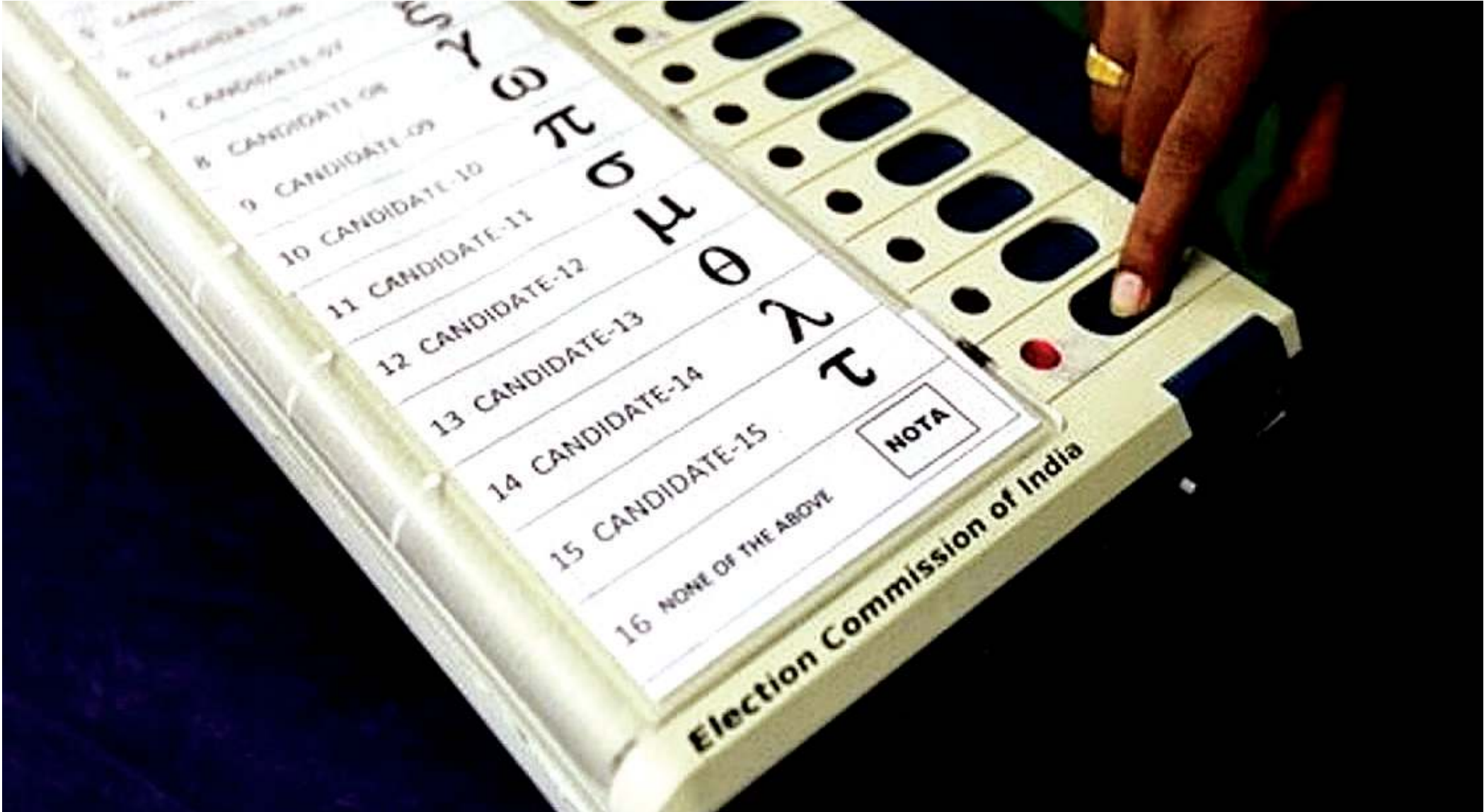


NOTA: THE SILENT REVOLUTION OR THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE?



ASTHA RANJAN

NOTA CONTINUES TO BE A TOOL OF DISSENT IN THE ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY. IT EMPOWERS THE ELECTORS TO REGISTER THEIR DISCONTENT WITH THE POOL OF CANDIDATES WHILE MAINTAINING SECRECY, THUS PERSUADING PARTIES TO FIELD BETTER CANDIDATES



It's impeccable to christen the word as the 'Sankat Mochan' of democracy in political Lanka, as each vote deserves a political Ayodhya, not a chaotic Lanka. With the 2013 judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (PUCL v. Union of India), a firm position was set that in an exceedingly legal system, electors must be given the right to reject, which owes its genesis to freedom of speech and expression (Art. 19(1)(a)). However, this was substantially necessitated on account that secrecy of casting a vote was duly recognised under the provisions of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, and the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, as being fundamental to free and fair elections. The 170th Report of the Law Commission, 1999, while laying down the chassis of NOTA,

recommended a method to ensure the purity of elections, keep out criminals and other undesirable elements, and minimise the role and importance of caste and religion. Pursuant to this, no candidate could be declared returned unless he obtains at least 50% of the votes cast, and to determine such a percentage, even the negative vote would be treated as votes cast. The report also recommends a 'run-off' and fresh election if candidates fail to secure the requisite percentage. This was endorsed by the Background Paper on Electoral Reforms, 2010. Even in Columbia, blank votes are considered to be valid ones and there stands similar provision to this effect. However, in its press release dated October 28th, 2013, the Election Commission of India clarified while referring to provisions of the Conduct of

Elections Rules, 1961 (clause (a) of Rule 64) read with the Representation of the People's Act, 1951 (Section 65), that even if the number of electors opting for NOTA option is more than the number of votes polled by any of the candidates, the candidate who secures the largest number of votes has to be declared elected. This implies that even if 99% of the electors rejected the candidature of all the candidates, conversely, in defiance of their mandate, the candidate who managed to secure just 1% of the votes could be declared to be returned. This serves as a testimony of NOTA having no electoral value in India, ergo, there's no wrong in deeming it nothing more than a protest vote. Be that as it may, to justify the forthcoming quote "Not all battles are fought for victory. Some are fought simply to tell the world that someone was there on the battlefield"

(Ravish Kumar) in an electoral democracy could set the stage for catalysing NOTA as just a token of gesture which is bound to be unjust. Nevertheless, NOTA continues to be a tool of dissent in the electoral democracy. It empowers the electors to register their discontent with the pool of candidates while maintaining secrecy, thus persuading parties to field better candidates. In the 2018 Assembly election of Madhya Pradesh, NOTA bagged fifth largest tally of votes polled (1.42%) which was more than SP (1.3%) and AAP (0.66%). Similarly, in Karnataka, NOTA secured more votes than BSP and CPI (M) which are national parties. The figures are indicative of the significant usage of NOTA in numeric sense, however, its impact still remains insignificant. The State Election Commission of Haryana deviated from the

practice of Election Commission of India during the Municipal Elections. A notification dated November 22nd, 2018 by the SEC, Haryana deemed NOTA to be a 'Fictional Electoral Candidate'. It further went on to state that if a situation arises where NOTA receives the highest number of votes, then a fresh election would be conducted. All candidates who received lesser vote than NOTA would become ineligible from contesting the re-election. Similar notification was also published by the SEC, Maharashtra in the same year. In yet another development from the past, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Centre and the ECI on March 15th, 2021 on a PIL which sought a direction to the poll panel to nullify an election result and conduct a fresh poll if the maximum votes in a particular constituency were for NOTA.

For a democracy to survive in its true form it is essential that the best available men should be chosen as people's representative and if electors find none from the roster to be suitable enough, negative voting is necessitated. However, the rationale behind the 2013 judgement of the Apex Court has failed to bear fruits. In a vibrant democracy, voter's choice must be of paramount and if they palpably reject all the contesting candidates, their choice should be empowered by way of a fresh election. In the existing scenario, if we picture the electoral stage as a grand theatre; NOTA plays the role of a silent spectator, leaving no tangible mark on the political drama. Thus, even with the popularity of NOTA among the electors experiencing a significant rise over the years, the question of whether it is 'revolutionary' or mere 'illusory' lingers.

Adaptability is key in today's ever-changing business landscape, and many businesses struggle to keep up with rapid changes. That's where composable architecture steps in as the game-changer. Composable architecture is like the Lego bricks of digital transformation. Brands can create independent, reusable, and scalable building blocks, mixing and matching them to fit their needs. The best part? It's fast. Brands can try new solutions, make changes, fail fast, and learn from failures quickly, making their business more agile. Take the Netflix vs Blockbuster case. Netflix embraced change early on, initially delivering DVDs by mail and then swiftly transitioning to a streaming platform. On the contrary, Blockbuster failed to adapt promptly. Even though they understood that Netflix's approach was the future, they didn't evolve quickly enough. As a result, Blockbuster couldn't keep pace and eventually faced failure. It's a lesson that being late to adjust can lead to significant consequences. The result? Blockbuster went bankrupt, while Netflix became a leader in online entertainment. The lesson? Digital transformation is no longer a choice; it's a necessity. To stay ahead, brands need a flexible and agile architecture, making composable architecture the future of digital transformation. And it comes with benefits:

The Role of Composable Architecture in Your Digital Transformation Journey

VELOCITY

One big plus of composable systems is how quickly you can get things done. Gartner predicts that by 2024, 70% of big and medium-sized companies will focus on composable to make their apps easy to put together. Teams using composable web setups show real business benefits, like faster go-to-market time.

AGILITY:

Composable architecture involves assembling systems through loosely coupled components, creating a modular structure with easily combinable, detachable, and reusable parts. Furthermore, composable architecture minimizes vendor lock-in to a great extent, allowing brands to build piece by piece. If one vendor doesn't have the required technology, a brand can get it from another, creating a customized structure using best-of-breed technologies.

SECURITY

Maintaining and updating codebases in monolithic



MAYANK MISHRA

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structures affects the entire system. However, composable architectures allow alteration in each component independently, making the process far less cumbersome and risky to deploy.

REUSABILITY

The key benefit of composable architecture is the ability to reuse components. The modular

system reuses and connects standards and patterns through APIs. With reusability as a central focus, any existing modules can be reused or serve as the foundation for a new application or service. Furthermore, reusability of components lowers the development costs to a great extent.

QUICKER INNOVATION

Legacy systems are complex to handle and need lots of time and resources to change, keep up, and improve. Besides, multiple teams have to be involved in the entire process. Composable architecture offers a more manageable IT upgrade setup, allowing seamless integration and feature launches. With composable architecture, IT can focus on developing new ideas and giving customers a better experience instead of dealing with routine tasks like marketing and maintenance.

OMNICHANNEL CAPABILITIES

A flexible digital experience platform (DXP) combined with a headless content management system (CMS) makes creating and sharing content smooth. This allows marketers to keep a consistent presence on various digital platforms and devices, all from one central place. They can quickly and easily improve and send out campaigns to reach their target audience wherever they are. While the many benefits of composable make it desirable

for significant brands, they must first check if they have the proper framework to adopt a composable architecture. This can be done using MACH.

MACH

- M — Microservices: Independent services connected via APIs.
- A — API-First: APIs linking applications or services.
- C — Cloud-Native: Applications designed for the cloud, ensuring scalability.
- H — Headless: Decoupling front-end and back-end for flexibility.

As the business ecosystem changes, companies are figuring out that composable architecture is not only the future for business continuation but also a smart move as it makes everything work better.

Companies like Walmart, Asics, Mantel, and Shell have adopted composable architecture for efficient operations. It's not just a trend; it's the usual way of doing things now. Digital transformation is not a one-time destination; it's an ongoing journey. The process is similar to building a stack of blocks- each piece added on-demand as your business grows. Composable architecture is the foundation of your digital transformation journey. So adopt it now and make the transformation agile and enjoyable.

(The writer is VP of Engineering, Contentstack)

90% of Himalayas will face year-long drought at 3° warming

About 90 per cent of the Himalayan Region will experience drought lasting over a year if global warming increases by 3 degrees Celsius, according to new research.

The findings, published in the journal *Climatic Change*, show that 80 per cent of the increased human exposure to heat stress in India can be avoided by adhering to Paris Agreement's temperature goals of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to 3 degrees Celsius warming.

The team led by researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the UK quantified how climate change risks to human and natural systems increase at a national scale as the level of global warming increases.

A collection of eight studies -- all focusing on India, Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Ghana -- shows that the risks of drought, flooding, declines in crop yields, and loss of biodiversity and natural capital greatly increase for each additional degree of global warming.

It found that in India pollination is reduced by half at 3-4 degrees global warming compared to a quarter reduction at 1.5 degrees.

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius allows half the country to act as a refuge for biodiversity, compared with 6 per cent at 3 degrees, the researchers said.

The team found very large increases in the exposure of agricultural land to drought with 3 degrees Celsius warming -- more than 50 per cent of the agricultural land in each of the countries studied is projected to be exposed to severe droughts of longer than one year over a 30-year period.

However, limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius would reduce the increase in exposure of agricultural land to drought by between 21 per cent (India) and 61 per cent (Ethiopia) as well as reduce economic damages due to fluvial flooding. This happens when rivers and streams break their banks and the water flows out onto the adjacent low-lying areas.

Avoided increases in human exposure to severe drought are also 20-80 per cent lower at 1.5 degrees Celsius than 3 degrees Celsius across the six countries, the researchers said.

Economic damages associated with sea-level rise are projected to increase in coastal nations, but more slowly if warming was limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius, they said.

The researchers warned that more effort is needed to reduce global warming, as currently the policies in place globally are likely to result in 3 degrees Celsius of global warming.

One paper explored the risks to plants and vertebrates due to increases in global warming, and another developed a new natural capital risk register for each of the six countries that also included the projected changes in the risk stemming from future human population changes.

This combination shows that many areas in the six countries are already at high natural capital risk at 1.5 degrees Celsius when effects of increasing human population are accounted for.

The findings also showed that an expansion of protected area networks is necessary in order to deliver climate resilient biodiversity conservation.

"The results presented in this collection confirm the need for the implementation of climate policies aligned to the Paris Agreement limits if widespread and escalating climate change risk is to be avoided," said lead author of the paper, Professor Rachel Warren, from the UEA.

"They provide additional confirmation of the rapid escalation of climate change risks with global warming found in the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) 2022 report, which identifies how the risk of severe consequences increases with every additional increment of global warming," Warren said.

Although these studies focus on the risks to six countries only, other nations are projected to experience similar issues, the researchers said.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on both climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation to avoid large increases in risk to both human and natural systems, they said.

"For example, a good way to combat the effects of climate change on natural systems and soak up carbon from the atmosphere is to restore ecosystems to their natural state, especially if warming can be held to 2 degrees Celsius or less. This has the additional benefit of restoring the natural capital bank in these areas," said study co-author Jeff Price, also from the UEA.

The work focuses on developing countries as they tend to be more vulnerable to climate change than others. Spanning the continents of Asia, Africa, and South America, the case studies present examples of both large and small countries and cover a range of levels of socioeconomic development.

The risks assessed are the additional risks due to anthropogenic or human-induced climate change corresponding to the elevated global warming in comparison with a baseline of levels of risk in 1961-1990, when warming was approximately 0.3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Together the studies provide a harmonised assessment for the six countries of projected changes in exposure of humans and land to climate-related hazards, such as drought, water stress, fluvial and coastal flooding, and the projected effects of climate change on biodiversity, as well as the economic and societal implications of climate risks.



having me here. God bless your union. I wish you the best. Congratulations," she said. As the prelude of her song 'We Found Love' played, Rihanna asked the audience members if they believed in love. "Make some noise for love right now. Send some extra love to the bride. It's my honour to be here and I want you to put your hands together like this," the multiple Grammy winner said before singing the popular track. The Ambani family presented Rihanna with a bouquet and posed for the shutterbugs together after her performance. Later, actor Janhvi Kapoor shared a reel of her shaking a leg with Rihanna on her song 'Zingaat' from her debut film 'Dhadak'. "This woman is a goddess. Stop it goodbye," Kapoor captioned the video. Before flying out on early Saturday morning, the singer took selfies with women cops and obliged the paparazzi with pictures. Rihanna was also photographed sharing a hug with one of the women police officers. According to multiple media reports, the Barbadian singer was paid Rs 74 crore for performing at the celebration. Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg with philanthropist-wife Priscilla Chan, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, former US president Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka, corporate leaders Gautam Adani, Nandan Nilekani, and Adar Poonawala, cricketers Sachin Tendulkar, MS Dhoni, Rohit Sharma and spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev are also part of the pre-wedding festivities. Other well-known film personalities who have been invited for the event are Amitabh Bachchan, Rajinikanth, Aamir Khan, Karan Johar, Ranbir Kapoor-Alia Bhatt, Anil Kapoor, and Madhuri Dixit. In 2018, music icon Beyonce performed at Mukesh Ambani's daughter Isha's wedding.

Rihanna rocks the stage at Anant Ambani-Radhika's pre-wedding bash, says 'thank you for having me'

In her first performance in India, pop star Rihanna set the stage on fire at the day one of the lavish pre-wedding event of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's son Anant and his fiancée Radhika Merchant. The international music sensation, who belted out hit songs such as 'Diamonds', 'Where Have You Been', 'Rude Boy' and 'Pour it Up', had Indian film celebrities like Shah Rukh Khan-Gauri Khan, Ranveer Singh-Deepika Padukone, Shreya Ghoshal and Shiamak Davar grooving to her tunes. Dressed in a shimmering body-hugging fluorescent green and pink outfit, Rihanna put up her best moves and also interacted with the audience at the grand event, which is being held over three days at a residential township situated close to Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)'s petroleum refinery near Jamnagar city. The 38-year-old singer-songwriter thanked the Ambanis for making her a part of the family affair. "Thanks to the Ambani family I'm here tonight in honour of Anant and Radhika. Thank you for

Pulse oximeters may be overestimating oxygen saturation in dark skinned people, finds study

Pulse oximeters, now common in many households for measuring oxygen saturation in blood, could be overestimating their readings in dark skin-toned people, new research analysing 44 studies over the last five decades has found.

Researchers in the UK assessed more than 733,000 oxygen saturation readings taken from over 222,000 people, including almost 70,000 people of non-white ethnicity. The team said that most of the studies (30 out of 44) analysed revealed evidence of these medical devices being inclined to overestimate oxygen saturation in blood in participants with darker skin tones, even though they found it challenging to determine 'by how much', based on the current available data.

The researchers said that a major finding in these studies related to the incidence of occult hypoxaemia - medical condition of having abnormally little oxygen in the blood - with an incidence of up to 21.5 per cent in Black patients.

"Most studies reported an occult hypoxaemia incidence 25-75 per cent higher in Black compared with White patients, with other ethnic groups having a 25-50 per cent higher incidence," the researchers wrote in the study published in the British Journal of Anaesthesia.

Intensive Care Medicine in the University of Plymouth, UK.

"If those levels are being overestimated - so, for example, if a device is telling someone their oxygen saturation is 98 per cent whereas it is in fact significantly lower - it could realistically mean people are missing out on treatments they need," said Martin.

He said that the concern arose out of the use of these devices in the community, where additional tests to ascertain unwell patients like blood tests and physical assessments are not available as they are in hospital and other healthcare settings.

Acknowledging limitations to the study, the researchers said all the studies were conducted in high-income countries, where the majority of the population have light skin tones.

This they said was relevant as low- and middle-income countries often have a higher proportion of people with darker skin tones and funding for healthcare may be such that pulse oximetry is the only available monitor for unwell patients.

The study findings are currently being explored in more detail, the researchers said, with recruitment of 900 critically ill patients differing in skin tones underway in the UK.



AI shows prostate cancer is not just one disease

Scientists have used artificial intelligence (AI) to reveal a new form of aggressive prostate cancer which they said could help thousands of lives by revolutionising how the disease is diagnosed and treated in the future. The study, published in the journal *Cell Genomics*, reveals that prostate cancer, which affects one in eight men in their lifetime, includes two different subtypes termed *evotypes*.

The findings, led by researchers at the University of Oxford, and the University of Manchester, UK, could help provide tailored treatments to each individual patient according to a genetic test which will also be delivered using AI, they said. "Our research demonstrates that prostate tumours evolve along multiple pathways, leading to two distinct disease types," said lead researcher Dan Woodcock, from the University of Oxford.

"This understanding is pivotal as it allows us to classify tumours based on how the cancer evolves rather than solely on individual gene mutations or expression patterns," Woodcock said. The researchers worked together as part of international consortium, called The Pan Prostate Cancer Group, set up by scientists at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and The University of East Anglia, UK, to analyse genetic data from thousands of prostate cancer samples across nine countries.

The team's collaboration with Cancer Research UK (CRUK) aims to develop a genetic test that, when combined with conventional staging and grading, can provide a more precise prognosis for each patient, allowing tailored treatment decisions.

Day not far when you will celebrate 'Herath' festival in Kashmir: LG to KPs

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking Jammu and Kashmir and the country forward and soon the 'Herath' festival will be celebrated in the valley, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said at a gathering of Kashmiri Pandits here.

Mahashivratri is celebrated as 'Herath' by the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Speaking at a 'Herath Milan Samaroh' organised by 'Youth All India Kashmiri Samaj' here, the Lt Governor informed the gathering that PM Modi would visit Srinagar on March 7 and requested all those present in the valley to attend his programme.

In the last eight to 10 years under the leadership of Modi, the country has witnessed a change in the political style and work culture, as a result of which the country is moving ahead to become a world leader, Sinha said.

"We have such a government at the Centre which is speaking the same language in Delhi, Jammu and Srinagar. The time has passed when some people used to speak differently at these places. "There are some things which if spoken creates problems. The prime minister is taking the country and J&K forward and the day is not far when you will celebrate Herath in Kashmir rather than in Jammu," he said.

The Lt Governor said 'Herath' is an integral part of our rich cultural and spiritual heritage. "May the festival usher in the happiness, prosperity and well-being of all," he said.

"A new period of renaissance began sometime back. We will regain the lost reputation and emerge as the world leaders. The young generation has to prepare for themselves to fulfil their duties in the new India," Sinha said.

Extending his felicitations to the people, the Lt Governor appreciated the 'Youth All India Kashmiri Samaj' for working towards the welfare of the people of J&K for over two decades and reconnecting future generations of the community with their roots.

WORLD BIRTH DEFECTS DAY

WHO calls for awareness on congenital anomalies, releases toolkit

On the eve of the World Birth Defects Day 2024, the World Health Organization on Saturday highlighted the need to raise awareness about birth defects and accelerate actions to prevent, detect and manage congenital anomalies which occur during intra-uterine life of infants.

"We are reminded that every journey matters and the journey of health indeed begins before birth," Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia said in a statement.

A regional guidance document on screening newborns for three conditions -- hearing impairment, eye abnormalities, and neonatal hyperbilirubinaemia -- is being released on this occasion to facilitate capacity-building of member states, Wazed said.

She pointed out that the contribution of congenital disorders to death is increasing globally among children aged below 5 years.

Between 2000 and 2021, the contribution of birth defects to child mortality increased in our WHO South-East Asia Region from 4 per cent to 11 per cent, and globally from 4.6 per cent to 8 per cent, she said.

"Birth defects are sadly now the third most common cause of death among under-5 children in our Region, accounting for 11 per cent of the total. This is equivalent to the deaths of 300 under-5 children every single day," Wazed said.

Birth defects not only have a profound impact on individuals but also place a considerable burden on families, friends, the community and health-care systems.

The WHO regional director said while genetics plays a major role in their aetiology (study of the causes of a disease), many birth defects are preventable through addressing environmental factors. These include exposure to pollutants, lifestyle choices and socioeconomic conditions that affect pregnant women and fetuses.

Since 2014, WHO has supported all our member states to drive rapid and sustained reductions in maternal, newborn and child mortality, which includes targeted action to prevent, detect, manage and care for birth defects, Wazed said.

An integrated approach has been adopted to implement interventions for the prevention and treatment of birth defects in existing national programmes, she said.

"Guided by the Regional Strategic Framework, all our member states have national plans for prevention and control of birth defects," she added.

Accelerating prevention, management and care for birth defects is a priority, and we as a region have issued a "call for action" in five key areas, Wazed highlighted.

First, countries need to place birth defects high on their agenda and expand commitment and leadership at both the policy and programme levels, along with commensurate financial allocations, she said.

Secondly, the new regional document and videos on universal newborn screening of three conditions -- hearing impairment, eye abnormalities and neonatal hyperbilirubinaemia -- provide guidance on how simple bedside tests can be integrated within the existing health system, she added.

Third, focus should be laid on improving the coverage and quality of preventive interventions such as rubella immunisation, food fortification and quality pre-conception and antenatal care.

"Fourth, our Member states must work together with community-based networks, platforms and organisations, to recognize the challenges, hard work and perseverance of parents, caregivers and families of children with birth defects, and to empower them to access services and support, including social protection," Wazed stated.

