www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN



OF PROJECTS HALLMARK OF MODI'S MODEL'

'Going to Hollywood is my ultimate

the pioneer Putting up statues after death will not help anyone, however, providing life to people is permanent. There are many farmhands in the Kamma community. So there is a need to set up a Kamma Corporation. It is much more needed for Kammas during drought times. **Chief Minister** Revanth Reddy will do justice to the Kammas

QUOTE OF THE DAY

- Renuka Chowdhury, Rajya Sabha MP P4

Discord in BJP threatens...

Amid the impending release of the election schedule, political fervour in Andhra Pradesh has reached a boiling point. All eyes are on the major parties as they scramble to finalise their candidates, but the brewing discord within the BJP threatens to disrupt the anticipated TDP-Janasena-BJP alliance. As the YCP stands alone in its electoral pursuit, the unity within the BJP camp appears shaky. With the BJP preparing its candidate roster for the allocated seats, internal dissent has split the party leadership. The imminent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to..

India ranks 134th out of 193...

India's was ranked 134 out of 193 countries in the 2022 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), a notch higher than 135 out of 191 countries in 2021 On the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India has been ranked at 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437. Its rank was 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the GII-2021. This shows a significant jump of 14 ranks on the GII-2022 vis-a-vis the GII-2021, the women and child development ministry said

Air India building with 'numerous ...

Standing on the land reclaimed from sea for more than five decades now, Air India building in the country's commercial capital in the 1970s had people queuing up just to have the experience of New York-based architect John Burgee matching the aspirations of J R D Tata, the 23-storey building was among the first in those days to have elevators, neon signage on top and two levels of basement parking to name a few facilities. The building had "numerous firsts" is how a retired..

-PAGE: 8

Mumbai clinch Ranji Trophy for...

Domestic heavyweights Mumbai ended their eight-year barren run to lift a record-extending 42nd Ranji Trophy title here on Thursday, beating a resolute Vidarbha by 169 runs on the fifth and final day of a thoroughly engrossing summit clash. The fate of the final — Mumbai's 48th in the 90 years of the tournament's history — here at the iconic Wankhede Stadium was sealed when the hosts set a 538-run target for the visiting team. Vidarbha captain Akshay Wadkar (102) and the..

TDP 2nd list sparks protests

Naidu says public opinion given prominence before selection of 34 MLA candidates

- So far, TDP has named candidate for a total of 128 seats
- Names of 16 more nominees to be announced soon
- Naidu seeks public support for TDP candidates

PNS AMARAVATI

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday announced the second list of party candidates for 34 more Assembly seats for the forthcoming polls. With the new set of names, TDP has announced the names of candidates for 128 seats so far with another 16 remaining to be named as the party will be contest-ing from 144 seats as part of the NDA in the southern state.

"We have already kept the first list of candidates in front of people who will contest the forthcoming 2024 polls. Now, we have brought forward another list of 34 names," said Naidu in a post on X. According to the $\ensuremath{\mathsf{TDP}}$ supremo, public opinion has been accorded prominence in selecting the candidates for the 34 seats.

Recently, the NDA partners in Andhra Pradesh finalised their seatsharing formula for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, under which the BJP will contest six Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly seats while the TDP will fight 17 LS and 144 assembly seats.



PNS VIJAYAWADA

Following the release of the second list comprising 34 candidates by TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, a wave of dissatisfaction has swept through the ranks of TDP ticket aspirants and their supporters. In approximately 10 of the 34 con-stituencies, aspiring candidates express discontent, attributing their exclusion to factors such as alliance seat-sharing agreements and other considerations.

Protests erupted in Pithapuram shortly after JSP chief Pawan Kalyan declared his candidacy for the Pithapuram constituency, prompting TDP senior leader Varma and his followers to register their objection by setting fire to party election materials and other

Notably absent from the second list are senior party members, including Kala Venkata Rao and Somireddy, further fueling anger and dissatisfaction among prospec-



denial of seats to Polam Reddy and Bandaru Satyanarayana has caused shock and disappointment, while joint leaders in Vishakhapatnam expressed discontent over Chandrababu's decisions.

The failure to allocate tickets has left TDP leaders seething, with some contemplating resignation from the party. The exodus from TDP has commenced in the Vishaka district, with Gandi Babji,

tive candidates. In Nellore, the the South constituency in-charge, resigning in protest over the allo-cation of the Vishaka seat to the Jana Sena. Pasarla Prasad, who had hoped for the West Vizag seat, resigned from TDP several days

> Reports indicate that more leaders are poised to resign from TDP citing alleged favoritism and bias in seat allocation.



Will contest from Pithapuram: Pawan

"We will exert utmost

effort to secure victory

in all 21 Assembly

seats. Over the past

decade, JSP has

surmounted

numerous obstacles,"

he asserted. "We shall

hold accountable

those responsible for

perpetrating injustices against JSP leaders.

During my detainment

at the AP-Telangana

border by law

enforcement,

hundreds of activists,

including women,

rallied to protect me.

vigorously to every

PNS VIJAYAWADA

RNI No.APENG/2018/76468

*LATE CITY VOL. 6 ISSUE 136

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan revealed his intention to vie for the Assembly elections from Pithapuram constituen-

Speaking at the State office in Mangalagiri near Vijayawada on Thursday during the 10th Formation Day celebrations of JSP, Pawan Kalvan announced amidst fervent applause from party supporters. He also clarified that a decision regarding contesting for a Lok Sabha seat is yet to be made.

Acknowledging cer-

tain unavoidable circumstances, Pawan Kalyan mentioned the allocation of some Assembly seats to the BJP. He conceded the inability to assign seats to certain senior JSP leaders. "I empathise with the discontent among some JSP leaders and supporters regard-

ing seat allocation. We have relinquished the seat designated for my brother Naga Babu," he remarked. However, he pledged to

CM sets tone for National Law Univ

tributed. Reflecting on JSP's

setback in the 2019 elections, Pawan Kalyan expressed anticipation of defeat in both the Bhimavaram and Gajuwaka constituen-

who have diligently con-

"We will exert utmost effort to secure victory in all 21 Assembly seats. Over the past decade, JSP has surmounted numerous obstacles," he asserted. "We shall hold accountable those responsible for perpetrating injustices against JSP leaders. During my detainment at the AP-Telangana border by law enforcement, hundreds of activists, including women, rallied to protect me. We will respond vigorously to every adversity," warned

Pawan Kalyan. "The magnitude of public dissent cannot be underestimated. Consider the events sur-

rounding the Sri Lankan president's situation, where people stormed the presidential palace.







CID to apply for attachment of assets of accused

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Government Principal Secretary (Home) authorised the CID to apply in the ACB court under Sections 3 and Section 10(a)(b) of the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, 1944 for the Attachment of Properties worth about Rs 17.75 crore of the accused in the "Fibernet Case".

The accused Nara Chandrababu Naidu (A1) conspired with the accused Vemuru Harikrishna Prasad (A2), Tummala Gopichand (A5), Director of Tera Software Limited (A4), hatched up a conspiracy and awarded AP Fibernet Project Phase-1 in favour of Tera Software Limited, in a fraudulent manner by accepting false experience certificates, Though Tera Software Ltd was ineligible to participate in the Tender and thereby caused wrongful pecuniary loss of Rs 114,53,23,396/- to the Government Exchequer.





AP Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy participated in the video conference held by Cabinet

2,329 cell towers to bolster 4G services across AP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a virtual meeting held on Thursday, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba reached out to all Chief Secretaries nationwide from New Delhi to discuss the progress of 4G service provision, particularly in villages bordering regions.

AP Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy highlighted the collaborative efforts of BSNL, Airtel, and Jio networks in striving to enhance 4G connectivity within the State. These telecom giants are actively deploying 2,329 towers across various locations in Andhra Pradesh, with 2,316 sites already allocated for this

During the meeting, Jawahar Reddy emphasised the State government's commitment to extending 4G services to every village, detailing plans to cover 5,423 villages in

Obligation Fund (USOF) initiative. Additionally, he noted that the government is diligently monitoring progress through biweekly review meetings with district collec-

However, concerns were raised regarding the pace of tower construction due to staff shortages within BSNL. In response, Rajiv Gauba instructed state-level BSNL officials to collaborate with Jawahar Reddy to address the staffing issue promptly.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Information Technology Department, including Secretary K. Sashidhar, and Vinith Brijlal from the Special Enforcement Bureau IT, along with Additional PCCF Rahul Pandey, and representatives from BSNL, Airtel, and Jio

PNS ■ JAGANNADHA GATTU

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy laid the foundation stone for the Rs.1011crore National Law University here on Thursday.

The Chief Minister unveiled the pylon and launched the works of the University being built in an extent

Launching the works, he recalled the Government's promise of establishing a High Court at Kurnool and said that along with the High Court, SHRC (State Human Rights Commission) and Lokayukta also would be set up here as per its commitment to decentralised develop-

He further said that the AP Legal Metrological Commission, Labour Commission, VAT Appellate Commission, Wakf Board and other institutions dealing with legal mat-

Half-day schools in

The Commissioner of School

Education, S. Suresh Kumar, has

informed that the government has

decided to declare half-day schools from March 18 to April 23. The

timings will be from 7:30 am to 12:30 pm for all management schools, including Government,

Zilla Parishad, Municipal, Aided,

and Private Recognized Unaided

AP from March 18

PNS VIJAYAWADA

schools in the State.



they would help the region achieve

Pointing out that it was pro- steps are being taken by the Pact.

ters would also be set up here and posed to set up the High Court here as per the Sribagh Pact at the time of shifting capital to Hyderabad and

ONE NATION, ONE POLL

Panel recommends three-tier simultaneous polls in two phases



PNS NEW DELHI

A high-level panel on Thursday recfor Lok Sabha and state assemblies days in its report on 'one nation, one election' submitted to President

Simultaneous polls will help save resources, spur development and social cohesion, deepen "foundations of democratic rubric" and help realise the aspirations of "India, that is Bharat", the panel headed by for-mer president Ram Nath Kovind said in its report that runs into more than 18,000 pages.

However, the panel has made 321 pages public.

necessity of uniformity in the electoral process and further advocated for the Union to be responsible for conducting elections in India.

Separately, the Law Commission is also likely to come up soon with its own report on simultaneous polls, of which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a strong votary.

Sources said that the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of government -- Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting with 2029 and a provision for unity government in cases like hung house or no-confi-

Continued on Page 2

Mamata suffers major injury

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday evening suffered a major injury on her forehead and was admitted to a hospital, the TMC said.

The 69-year-old leader had a fall inside her Kalighat home in south Kolkata after she returned after attending a programme, her family said. "Our chairperson @MamataOfficial sustained a major injury. Please keep her in your prayers," the party posted on X along with pictures of Banerjee bleeding from her forehead.

TMC national general secretary and Mamata's nephew Abhishek Banerjee got her admitted to the hospital, according to party

"She fell somewhere inside the home and was immediately shifted to the hospital. She was bleed- her, hospital sources said.



ing from the forehead and stitches were required," her brother Kartik Banerjee told a Bengali news channel. According to sources, she was admitted to the Woodburn Ward of the state-run SSKM Hospital in Kolkata. A team of senior doctors are attending to

EC makes public data on electoral bonds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It is not Adani or Ambani, but data released by the SBI shows that among those who purchased the maximum number of electoral bonds are Future Gaming and Hotel Services, Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Pvt Ltd, Qwik Supply Chain Pvt Ltd, Haldia Energy Ltd and Vedanta Ltd.

Future Gaming and Hotel Services which purchased electoral bonds worth Rs 1,368 crore is a lottery company that was facing an Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe in 2022. Megha Engineering donated Rs 966 crore. Dr Reddy's donated Rs 80 crore and Yashodha Hospitals Rs 162 crore.

The BJP encashed electoral bonds worth Rs 6,060.5 crore, the highest among all parties, between April 12, 2019, and January 24, 2024, that is, 47.46% of all bonds. The All India



Trinamool Congress received Rs 1,609.50 crore (12.6%) through this route followed by the Congress at Rs 1,421.9 crore (11.1%), the second and third biggest parties in terms of

encashment during the period. Fourth comes the BRS with Rs 1214 crore (9.51%). At the seventh place is the YSRCP with Rs 337 crore (2.64%) and at the eighth place is the TDP with Rs 218.9 crore (1.71%). At the 15th place is the Jana Sena with Rs 21 crore.

Sandhu, Gyanesh named **Election Commissioners**

NEW DELHI: Former bureaucrats Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar have been named as the new election commissioners by a panel chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, committee member and Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said on Thursday.

Chowdhury, however, gave his dissent note on the selection, raising questions over the procedure. He said he had sought the names of the shortlisted candidates for the posts in the Election Commission but was provided 212 names the night before the committee met.

ommended simultaneous elections as the first step followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 Droupadi Murmu.

The committee noted that B R

CM releases EBC Nestham funds

Says Naidu lacks credibility; Pawan Kalyan, values

PNS BANAGANAPALLI

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy released Rs 629.37 crore towards the third tranche of YSR EBC Nestham, benefiting 4,19,583 women with Rs 15,000

The amount will be directly credited to the bank accounts of women aged between 45 and 60 years belonging to poor Kshatriya, Arya Vaisya, Brahmana, Reddy, Kamma, Velama, and other OC commu-

Addressing a public meeting before releasing the funds with the click of a button on Thursday, the Chief Minister noted that the tripartite alliance stated that the Government has been implementing the scheme even though it was not mentioned in the YSRCP manifesto,

as poverty has no caste. Castigating the TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP electoral alliance, the Chief Minister remarked that the three parties have once again come together to deceive the people, as they did during the 2014 polls.

Listing the unfulfilled poll promises by the TDP after forging an alliance and sharing election campaign platforms with Jana Sena and BJP in 2014, and distributing signed manifesto copies door-to-door, he X girls from poor families.

TDP leader Eeli Nani

TDP senior leader Eeli Venkata

Madhusudhana Rao (Eeli Nani) of

Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district joined YSRCP in the presence of

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Camp Office here on

Nani, who was first elected to the

Assembly on the Praja Rajyam ticket,

lost the election as a TDP candidate

joins YSRCP

PNS VIJAYAWADA



deceived the people by not implementing promised measures such as loan waivers for farmers and self-help groups, dissolution of belt shops, job creation for every household, and unemployment allowances.

Instead of establishing a romised women's protection force, the TDP government allowed call money sex rackets in Vijayawada and defaulted on schemes like Maha Lakshmi, Pandanti Bidda, Kuteera Lakshmi, and failed to provide Rs. 100 subsidy on each LPG cylinder, smartphones for poor women, and bicycles for Class

While TDP president Chandrababu Naidu lacks credibility, his alliance partner and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan lacks values, he said, adding that they have joined hands with the BJP to deceive

The political opportunists, with the support of their biased media, have declared war against the poor, he said, emphasising that welfare schemes will only continue if YSRCP retains power and Jagan remains Chief Minister.

Encouraging the people to discern the differences between the TDP and YSRCP governments, he noted that while the other programs aimed at the economic empowerment of women, benefiting 42.74 lakh women thus far.

He noted that it was only after the YSRCP came to power that election manifestos started gaining credibility, adding that voting for the TDP-led alliance would only result in the revival of Janma Bhoomi committees and corruption.

Regarding the reforms implemented by the govern-ment, he mentioned that social pensions are being door-delivered with the active and committed support of the village and ward secretariats and volunteers, urging the people to recognize the qualitative and quantitative differences between TDP and YSRCP gov-

He urged them, "If you feel that you have benefited from the Government, become my star campaigner and army, and bring victory to YSRCP in the elections by teaching a fitting lesson to opportunistic alliances.

The Chief Minister sanctioned Rs 100 crore for an irri-

gation project as requested by the local MLA and YSRCP candidate Rami Reddy, and called upon the people to bless him in the elections." sised, "Geetanjali, a beneficia-

ry of the Government's Land

2 arrested in Geetanjali case Addressing a press

The police have taken two persons into custody in connection with the death of Geetanjali, a young mother of two daughters, who succumbed to severe social media trolling allegedly orchestrated by the TDP. Efforts are underway to ensure justice for her grieving

conference in Guntur, SP Tushar Dudi said, "Through the utilisation of opensource intelligence, cyber teams, and various investigative resources, we have meticulously compiled a database of accounts responsible for the harassment. Among these accounts,

we have identified 60 persons. Today, Rambabu and Venkat Durga Rao have been apprehended and will be presented before the magistrate for remand. Legal measures will be pursued against all involved par-Highlighting the gravity of

TDP discarded its election

manifesto, the YSRCP govern-

ment transparently implement-

ed welfare programmes and

disbursed Rs 2.70 lakh crore

of its election promises, with a

He mentioned that a signif-

icant Rs 1,89,000 crore was

deposited into the bank

accounts of women in the last

58 months, with the govern-

ment spending Rs 1,877 crore

The government implement-

ed YSR Cheyutha, Aasara, Amma Vodi, Kapu Nestham,

EBC Nestham, and several

on EBC Nestham alone.

lion's share going to women.

through DBT welfare programmes, fulfilling 99 per cent

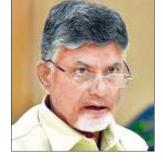
> Patta scheme, shared her joy in an interview with a media outlet. Unfortunately, the interview's circulation led to a barrage of online abuse, including lewd comments and intrusive inquiries about her personal life. The trolls even stooped to targeting her parents. Overwhelmed by the relentless harassment, Geetanjali confined herself to her home, eventually succumbing to the despair by

Naidu demands probe into APPSC exam scam

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Expressing grave concerns over the suspected involvement of high-ranking officials within the State government in significant irregularities surrounding the Group-1 exams, TDP chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu called for a thorough CBI investigation to uncover the truth and ensure justice for the youth.

Chandrababu Naidu highlighted that even the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) had fallen victim to systematic degradation during the five-year tenure of the YSRCP in the State. He criticised CM Jagan Mohan Reddy for



exploiting the Service Commission, a constitutional body, for political ends, resulting in irregularities that have detrimentally affected numerous unemployed individuals.

Naidu asserted that the YSRCP had unfairly allocated

Group 1 positions to their associates, thus depriving deserving candidates of their rightful opportunities.

The former CM demanded a CBI inquiry to expose any involvement of Service Commission officials in these irregularities. He called for the immediate suspension of Gautam Sawang, the chairman of APPSC, and

Sitharamanjaneyulu, an IPS officer who served as the organisation's secretary, followed by legal action and a comprehensive investigation. He emphasized that a CBI probe would reveal the complicity of high-ranking officials and YSRCP leaders in the irregularities.

YSRCP MP Sanieev Kumar joins TDP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Kurnool MP Dr S Sanjeev Kumar, who has resigned both as a Member of Parliament and from the YSR Congress party, on Thursday joined the Telugu Desam Party in the presence of TDP chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu. Sanjeev Kumar was warmly welcomed into the party by Naidu, who presented him with a yellow scarf as a symbol of his membership.
Alongside Sanjeev Kumar,

Padmasali Corporation Director Pyalakurthi Ramesh, Venkayapalle Temple Chairman Betham Krishnadu, Valmiki Sangam leaders Mundla Shekhar and Talari Krishna, former NGO leaders Kubera Swamy, Narasimhulu, Shanthakumari, and others also joined the TDP.

Senior leaders excluded from TDP's second candidate list

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The second list of Telugu

Desam Party (TDP) candidates for the upcoming elections has left many senior leaders disheartened as they failed to secure seats. Leaders such as Ganta Srinivasa Rao, Kalavenkatarao, Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, Devineni Uma, KS Jawahar, and several others found themselves sidelined in the list, comprising 34 candidates. Despite heightened anticipation of the comprision of the com tion, these senior leaders, hopeful of securing a place in the second list, were left disappointed, fueling speculation about their prospects in the anticipated third list.

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu's endorsement of Ganta Srinivasa Rao for the Cheepurupally constituency hit a roadblock as Rao expressed a preference for the Bheemili constituency, yet to be decided. Similar disap-

pointments were faced by other leaders in various constituencies. The exclusion of senior leaders from both lists raises questions about the TDP's candidate selection process, despite being based on various criteria including winning potential, surveys,

and opinion polls.

With the TDP allocating seats to 94 candidates in the first list and 34 in the second, while leaving 14 seats pending, strategic maneuvering is evident. The inclusion of seven women, along with individuals boasting diverse educational backgrounds, reflects a concerted effort to diversify the candidate pool.

As alliances solidify, the distribution of key tickets underscores the party's strategic maneuvers. However, the absence of senior leaders from the Visakhapatnam district in the second list raises further concerns about their future

EC releases electoral bonds data

PNS NEW DELHI

in 2019. YSRCP regional coordinator PV Mithun Reddy was present.

CID to apply for.. Continued from Page 1 While executing AP Fibernet Project Phase-I, the accused in pursuance of their conspiracy violated the political donations. tender agreements and involved the

companies of the accused Viplav Kumar V.L.S (A11), Vijaykumar Rammurthy (A13) Ramkumar Ramurthy and (A14) Kanumuri Koteswara Rao (A18) with a mala fide intention, utilized substandard materials and got released the funds to Tera software Ltd in a fraudulent manner without supply of goods and services. The Principal Secretary (Home) companies.

issued the Government Order based on the letter from the ADGP, CID, permitting to approach the ACB court seeking attachment of the properties worth about Rs 17.75 Crores of Vemuru Harikrishna, Thummala Gopichand, Thummala Pavana Devi, Thummala Bapaiah Choudary and Terasoftware Pvt Ltd.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Tithi: Shashthi:

Saptami

Krithika:

Nakshatram:

Amritakalam:

Billionaires to lesser-known entities among buyers

From steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal to billionaire Sunil

Bharti Mittal's Airtel, Anil Agarwal's Vedanta, ITC, Mahindra and Mahindra, and a lesser-known Future were among the prominent buyers of the now-scrapped electoral bonds for making

Election Commission put up on its website the data on electoral bonds on Thursday, a day ahead of the Supreme Court-fixed deadline. Future Gaming, which was probed by the Enforcement Directorate in March 2022, bought electoral bonds worth over Rs 1,350 crore under two different sets of

Among the known corporates, Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd bought Rs 398 crore worth of bonds, while Sunil Mittal's three companies together purchased a total of

Steel magnate Lakshmi Niwas Mittal bought Rs 35 crore worth of bonds in his individual capacity. Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering, which has bagged contracts of several jects, bought bonds worth Rs 966 crore. While most of the bonds have been issued in the name of political parties, the donations made to the Congress and the Samajwadi Party were made in the name of 'President, All India Congress Committee' and 'Adyaksha

Samajvadi Party'. Following a Supreme Court directive, the State Bank of India, which was the authorised seller of electoral bonds, had shared the data with the poll panel on March 12. The top court had given the Election Commission time till 5 pm of March 15 to

upload the data on its website. The EC has put the details on 'Disclosure of Rs 246 crore worth of Electoral Bonds Submitted

by SBI' in two parts -- one listing the buyers and the other listing the beneficiary parties.

In an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, the State Bank of India (SBI) said a total of 22.217 electoral tions were purchased by donors between April 1, 2019 and February 15 this year, out of which 22,030 were redeemed by political parties. According to the data

uploaded by the poll panel, the buyers of electoral bonds included Spicejet, IndiGo, Grasim Industries, Megha Engineering, Piramal Enterprises, Torrent Power, Bharti Airtel, DLF Commercial Developers, Vedanta Ltd., Apollo Tyres, Edelweiss, PVR, Keventer, Sula Wines, Welspun, Sun Vardhman Pharma, Textiles, Jindal Group, Phillips Carbon Black Limited, CEAT tyres, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, ITC, Kaypee Enterprises, Cipla, and Ultratech Cement.

Tirupati rocked

PNS TIRUPATI

Tremors were felt in the Tirupati zone on Thursday evening. According to the Centre, an earthquake of 3.9 magnitude on the Richter scale occurred in the Tirupati region. The tremors occurred 58 km east-northeast of Tirupati at 8:43 pm, at a depth of 10 km.

CM attends last rites of MLC's mother

PNS KONAKONDLA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy visited the house of YSRCP MLC Sivarami Reddy here on Thursday and paid last respects to the mortal remains of his mother Yellareddy of prolonged illness and old

age. The Chief Minister laid a wreath on Lalithamma's body and spent some time with the family members.

Rampuram Reddy brothers



Lalithamma is the mother of Sai Prasada Reddy (Adoni), Bala Nagi Reddy Sivarami Reddy, YSRCP MLAs (Mantralyam), Venkatrami

Reddy (Guntakal) and TTD Board Member Sitharami

Dhyanachandra is Tirupati JC

VIJAYAWADA: The State government has transferred Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) Vice-Chairman and Managing Director (VC&MD) HM Dhyanachandra from the Youth Advancement, Tourism and Culture Department, and appointed him as Tirupati Joint Collector.

The current Joint Collector of Tirupati, Shubham Bansal was placed at the disposal of the Youth Advancement, Tourism and Culture

A wave of...

In Puttaparthi, TDP party workers staged a protest at Chandrababu's residence, demanding ticket allocations for BCs, and expressing grievances over Chandrababu's perceived neglect of the Vaddera community for the past 30 years. The allocation of a ticket to Palle Raghunatha Reddy's daughter-in-law by the TDP chief has further irked the Vaddera com-

dissatisfied as several seats, including those in Penamaluru and Mylavaram in the erstwhile Krishna district, are yet to be finalised, prompting protests from ticket aspirants and their sup-

In Tirupati, widespread discontent prevails among TDP and JanaSena leaders following the announcement of A. Srinivasulu's candidacy for the Tirupati constituency by JSP, despite his recent defection from the YSRCP. TDP-JSP leaders convened a clandestine meeting, vehemently protesting against the nomination of a non-local candidate and demanding the selection of candidates from the locality.

Panel recommends...

Continued from Page 1

The 2024 general elections for Lok Sabha, along with four state assemblies, are expected in April-May amid indications that the Election Commission may announce these polls as early as this Friday.

The Kovind panel, which has not specified any period for rolling out simultaneous polls, said that in the first stage, elections for the Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies can be held together. In the second step, the elections to municipalities and panchayats will

be synchronised with the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in such a way that elections to municipalities and panchayats are held within 100 days of the holding of parliamentary and assembly polls.

For the purpose of synchronising Lok Sabha and assembly elections,

the committee recommended that the President notifies the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election as the "appointed

The tenure of all state assemblies formed after polls after the "appointed date" and before the expiry of the full term of the Lok Sabha, will be only for the period ending up to the subsequent parliamentary polls. After this one-time transitory measure, all Lok Sabha and assembly polls

will be held simultaneously. The committee recommended that fresh elections could be held to constitute a new Lok Sabha in the event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion, or any such event.

Where fresh elections are held for the House of the People (Lok Sabha), the tenure of the House will be "only for the unexpired (remaining) term of the immediately preceding full term of the House", it said.

When fresh elections are held for state legislative assemblies, then such new assemblies -- unless sooner dissolved -- shall continue up to the end of the full term of the Lok Sabha. To bring into force such a mechanism, Article 83 (duration of Houses of Parliament) and Article 172 (duration

of state legislatures) need to be amended, the committee said. It has also proposed creation of an "Implementation Group" to look into the execution of the panel's recommendations.

The panel also recommended preparation of a common electoral roll and voter ID cards by the Election Commission of India in consultation with state election authorities.

At present, the ECI is responsible for Lok Sabha and assembly polls, while local body polls for municipalities and panchayats are managed by state election commissions.

Continued from Page 1 Sukla Paksha Mar 14 11:26 PM Furthermore, in schools where there are SSC examto Mar 15 10:09 PM Mar 15 10:09 PM to Mar 16 09:38 PM Mar 14 04:55 PM

to Mar 15 04:08 PM Rohini: Mar 15 04:08 PM to Mar 16 04:05 PM 10:55 AM to 12:25 PM Rahukalam: 3:23 PM to 4:53 PM Yamagandam: 02:13 PM to 03:38 PM Varjyam: 7:56 AM to 9:26 AM Gulika:

Abhiiit Muhurtham: 12:01 PM to 12:48 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Mostly Sunny Temp: 37°° Humidity: 55%

01:49 PM to 03:22 PM

Sunset: 6:17 PM Updated: March 14, 2024 5:00 PM

Half-day schools in...

ination centres, there shall not be any classes on the days of the examination (seven days in total). These schools shall conduct compensatory classes for seven days on the available public holidays during the period from March 18 to April 23, mandatorily on Sunday and Second Saturday, i.e., on March 24, 31, and April 7, 13, 14, and 21. The option for conducting compensatory classes on other public holidays is left to the school management, depending on the local situation. The compensatory classes will also follow a half-day schedule as prescribed.

He said that all the Regional Joint Directors of School Education and District Educational Officers in the State are requested to issue necessary instructions to all Field Officers & Headmasters of all Management Schools, including Private Unaided Schools, to run Half-a-day Schools with effect from March 18. Furthermore, they are requested to strictly implement the half-a-day school timings as per the School academic calendar. The second Saturday in April should be counted as a working day. Adequate drinking water should be provided in all schools with the support of Gram Panchayat & RWS Department wherever and whenever required.

Will contest...

Continued from Page 1

If the Jagan Reddy administration persists in substantial borrowing to fund welfare schemes, a similar upheaval akin to Sri Lanka may transpire in Andhra Pradesh," he cautioned. Simultaneously, Pawan Kalyan reassured the implementation of all welfare initiatives and developmental endeavours. Deriding YSRCP's 'Siddham', he labelled the party as synonymous with defeat and the alliance as the harbinger of triumph.

Addressing remarks from certain leaders, he noted a tendency to critique him rather than the YSRCP. He condemned attempts at coercion or manipulation, stating his unwillingness to tolerate such tactics. Notably, JSP leaders Tangella Uday Srinivas and Pilla Sridhar had expressed aspirations to contest from Pithapuram. Additionally, YSRCP named Kakinada MP Vanga Geeta as the coordinator for the Pithapuram Assembly constituency.

Meanwhile, many aspiring candidates remain

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

TDP yet to finalise candidates for **Mylavaram and Penamaluru seats**

While Vasantha is likely to be picked for Mylavaram segment, Devineni Uma or Baig may be chosen for Penamaluru

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is yet to finalise its candidates for assembly constituencies in the combined Krishna district, stirring anticipation among party leaders and workers. Despite two lists of candidates being announced, the TDP has not decided on who will contest from these crucial constituen-

On Thursday, TDP Supremo and former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu unveiled a second list comprising 34 names after consultations with alliance party leaders. Notably, several senior leaders' names were omitted from this list, and Penamaluru and Mylavaram constituencies hensive about his seat.



remain unallocated.

Recently, Mylavaram YSRCP MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad joined the TDP, expressing a keen interest in contesting from his former constituency. This development has left the constituency in charge and former minister, Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao, appre-



Consequently, the party is contemplating nominating Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao or MS Baig for Penamaluru. Therefore, the TDP's candidates for both constituencies are still pending finalization. According to party sources, following the release of the ini-

tial list, TDP leadership

engaged in discussions with

former minister Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao. Subsequently, sitting MLA Vasantha Krishna candidacy.

Prasad intensified his campaign activities in the constituency. Meanwhile, another potential candidate for Mylavaram, former Sarpanch Bommasani Subba Rao, maintained silence regarding his

emphasised that his political

that during his tenure as MLA, Rs. 1 crore was allocated annually for constituency development. He credited the successful conduct of Nara Lokesh's Padayatra in the constituency to the support of party leadership and his efforts. Additionally, he claimed to have personally contributed Rs. 1 crore during the local

Bode Prasad affirmed that sion of his supporters and

However, indications suggest that the TDP may lean towards allocating Mylavaram to Vasantha Krishna Prasad. Meanwhile, Vasantha Krishna Prasad is actively touring all mandals and engaging with TDP leaders. Notably, many senior leaders, who are close associates of Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao, have also met with Krishna Prasad. Sources within the party suggest that the Mylavaram seat will likely be granted to Vasantha Krishna Prasad.

The party leadership clarified that there is a significant Muslim minority voter base in the Penamaluru constituency. Therefore, if Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao's candidacy is not considered, the party will likely nominate MS Baig. Despite Baig expressing a desire to contest from Vijayawada West, the seat has already been allocated to the alliance parties.

Party strategists note that historically, no Muslim minority candidates have been fielded in this district, except in the Vijayawada West constituency. Thus, MS Baig's potential candidacy represents a significant milestone in district politics.

Moreover, party sources anticipate that the third list, covering the remaining 16 constituencies in the state, will be released within one or two

It is expected that the candidates for the Penamaluru and Mylavaram constituencies will be finalized in this list.

Meanwhile, former MLA Bode Prasad and his supporters have expressed dissatisfaction with the party leadership's decision to change the candidate in Penamaluru for the upcoming elections. Following communication from the party's central office, Bode Prasad's supporters and followers have contemplated resigning from their party positions. However, the party leadership is actively engaging in discussions with them to uphold the interests of the triparty alliance.

Focus on hot spots to check road mishaps: DC

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has issued directives to prioritise addressing black spots within the district to mitigate road accidents and to formulate a comprehensive, scientifically-driven action plan. He has urged officials to furnish a detailed report on road accidents, fatalities, and injuries while proposing additional measures to curtail casualties stemming from such incidents.

Chairing the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) virtually from his office in Vijayawada on Thursday, Collector Dilli Rao was joined by Deputy Transport Commissioner M Purendra, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar, and other officials.



During the session, Collector Dilli Rao disclosed that in 2023, the district witnessed 1,522 road accidents resulting in 373 fatalities and 1,416 severe injuries. Pointing to police data, he highlighted the identification of 111 black spots across the district. To address these concerns, he recommended collaborative and law enforcement agencies, alongside relevant departments, to implement necessary measures such as installing speed breakers and signage.

Furthermore, he emphasized the need for coordination with the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and advocated for the participation of various stakeholders, including Transport, Police, Health and Medical authorities, as well as government and private hospital management, in the Integrated Road Accident Database (IARD) App to ensure accurate and timely reporting of incidents.

Among those present were NTR Police Commissionerate Traffic DCP K Chakravarthi, DM&HO Dr M Suhasini, R & B SE VK Vijaya Sri, and other officials.

Won't leave TDP: Bode

"I am not leaving the TDP. I will continue to be a part of the party and fight to prove my hard work in serving the people as well as the party. I will be contesting from the Penamaluru constituency in the upcoming elections, regardless of whether the party grants me a seat," stated former MLA Bode Prasad. However, he did not pursue an independent candidacy.

Following news from the TDP Central office that there was no available seat for Bode Prasad, the former MLA and Penamaluru incharge, former MPP Devineni Raja Venkateswara Prasad (Raja), Anumolu Prabhakara Rao, Edupugallu sarpanch P Indira, and their supporters swiftly converged on the party office, where



they staged a protest against the party's decision.

This sudden incident has stirred controversy within the party. During the protest, one party worker attempted to douse himself in petrol, protesting the denial of Bode Prasad's candidacy in the Penamaluru segment. However, he was promptly restrained by party

During the subsequent meeting with party leaders and cadres, Bode Prasad expressed his discontent



leaders and other members.

over the decision to deny him a seat, speaking passionately about his dedication to the party's develop-ment in the constituency

over the past five years.
"I didn't feel disheartened after losing the last election. For the past decade, I have devoted myself tirelessly to the party, often at the expense of time with my family. Despite indications from IVRS and surveys suggesting my potential victory, the party leadership has chosen not to field me in the upcoming elections," he said, voicing his disappoint-

He went on to assert that the people of Penamaluru would not readily embrace candidates from outside the region. With the endorsement of former Chief Minister N Chandrababu

Naidu, he was elected as Penamaluru MLA. He career has remained untainted by corruption, despite allegations to the contrary in the constituency. Furthermore, he disclosed

body elections.

he would respect the deciparty cadre. However, he remains determined to contest from the Penamaluru constituency in the upcoming elections, aiming to demonstrate his dedication to Chandrababu Naidu.

138 centres set up for SSC exams in Vizag district

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

District Educational Officer (DEO) L Chandrakala has announced that a total of 31,379 students from 441 recognised schools across the district are gearing up to undertake their 10th class examinations, scheduled to begin on March 18, 2024. Speaking to the media people here on Tuesday, DEO Chandrakala, disclosed that out of the total students, 28,367 are regular candidates, while 3,012 are private candidates. Gender distribution indicates 14,972 boys and 13,395 girls preparing diligently for their examinations.

To facilitate smooth conduct, DEO said 138 examination centres have been established district-wide, with strict measures in place to maintain the integrity of the examination process. Notably, electronic devices are strictly prohibited within examination centers, including officials, who must leave their cell phones outside before entering. Any instances of paper leakages will be met with stringent actions

To ensure the well-being of students, ANMs from the Medical Health Department will be stationed at examination centers to provide immediate first aid if required. Additionally, the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) has offered free bus facilities to



students appearing for the examinations, demonstrating a concerted effort to support the education system. The distribution of hall tickets has been streamlined, with clear instructions issued to allow them to be written directly to the centers without resorting to direct downloads from the official website. Furthermore, other examinations under the Andhra Pradesh Open School Society (APOSS) and intermediate examinations are also scheduled to commence on March 18, with 2,201 candidates expected to participate across 11 designated centers.

Key officials including Commissioner of the Government Examinations Department, Murali Mohan, Assistant Director of the Education Department, Lakshmana Rao, Deputy DEO Gowrishankar, Comprehensive Punishment APC Srinivasa Rao were present at the press conference.

BIS celebrates World Consumer Rights Day

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Branch of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), celebrated Manak Mahotsay, on the occasion of Worlds Consumer Rights Day 2024, in KBC Zilla Parishad High School, Patamata, Vijayawada on Thursday.

On the occasion a poster-making competition was organized, to enlighten about the consumer's rights in the young minds. BIS Vijayawada has established the Standards Club in 299 government schools and colleges AP Standards Clubs have been conceptualized to create awareness about the significance of standards among young minds. A poster-making competition is being organized on the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day, regarding creating awareness in the youth and understanding of the importance of standards in daily life.

D Akhil, Assistant Director, VJBO inaugurated the event with a briefing about the Bureau of Indian Standards, and the roles of BIS in consumer satisfaction and safety. He also threw light on the history behind the Consumer Day celebration and motivated the students to be an aware nation builder.

Rama Aswanth Reddy guided the students about the importance consumers and also explained that the ISI mark must be verified for the purchase of a quality product. Thereafter various sports items were distributed by the Ultratech Cements, and ABG Groups to the school-basketballs, volleyballs, and carrom boards with stands, shuttle rackets and shuttlecock boxes.

20 Cls charged for neglect in counselling rowdy sheeters

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Police Commissioner Ravi Shankar Ayyannar has stirred discussions by issuing charge memos to 20 Chief Inspectors (CIs). The action comes in response to their alleged negligence in counselling rowdy sheeters, a duty integral to maintaining law and order. The issuance of memos en masse has ignited conversations within the Police Department, raising questions about the efficacy of current policing practices. These memos were handed out due alarming

to the CIs' fail-

ure to ade-As part of quately counsel routine law individuals identified as enforcement rowdy sheeters. As part of measures, routine law rowdy sheeters enforcement measures, are counselled rowdy sheeters

every Sunday are counselled every Sunday at at local police local police stastations tions. However, it has been observed that

many CIs have exhibited indifference towards this responsibility. Instead of ensuring comprehensive counselling, some CIs merely attend the session, take photographs, and return home.

Moreover, there have been lapses in identifying individuals who fail to attend counselling sessions.



This negligence in surveillance over rowdy sheeters has resulted in a surge in criminal activities including murders, attempted murders, and assaults. In response to this trend, Joint

Commissioner

of Police K Fakirappa has issued directives to ensure the proper conduct of counselling sessions. It is mandated that CIs personally conduct these sessions on Sundays and take action against those who fail to

attend. Despite these directives, all 20 CIs within the city reportedly ignored the instructions of the Joint CP. Some CIs did not attend counselling sessions at all, while others were noted to have left prematurely. Consequently, Commissioner Ayyannar has taken a firm stance by issuing charge memos to all involved.

New police outpost inaugurated

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a collaborative effort between the Police Department and the Navy, a new Police Outpost was inaugurated on Thursday at Dolphin Nose Hills, Y Junction under the jurisdiction of Malkapuram Police Station. Commissioner of Police Dr A Ravi Shankar highlighted its strategic location within the Navy area of Harbor Sub-division, particularly near prominent tourist spots such as Yarada and ight House.

The primary objective behind this initiative is to ensure constant vigilance and policing in tourist areas, deterring any potential hooliganism or unsocial activities.

To ensure round-the-clock surveillance and emergency response, the Police Outpost has been equipped with advanced technology, including a two-wheeler outfitted with display technology for continuous monitoring. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the participation of several dignitaries including Navy Officers Commodore Mohan Commodore Sachin Shinde, Joint CP K. Fakkirappa DCP-02 (L&O) Y. Sattibabu, Harbor Sub Division ACP, Malkapuram CI, and other

Discord in BJP threatens alliance

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Amid the impending release of the election schedule, political fervour in Andhra Pradesh has reached a boiling point. All eyes are on the major parties as they scramble to finalise their candidates, but the brewing discord within the BJP threatens to disrupt the anticipated TDP-Janasena-BJP alliance. As the YCP stands alone in its electoral pursuit, the unity within the BJP camp appears shaky. With the BJP preparing its candidate roster for the allocated seats, internal dissent has split the party leadership. The imminent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state exacerbates the party's woes, as differences threaten to

mar the occasion. Since the assumption of Daggubati Purandeshwari as the state BJP president, discontent has been brewing among party ranks. The dissatisfaction has peaked as elections loom closer, with veteran leaders lamenting the perceived deviation from traditional BJP principles, accusing the party of being tainted by TDP's influence. Opposition to the BJP's alliance with TDP-Janasena is palpable within the party, paralleled by dissent within the TDP itself. Many BJP members decry the alleged interference of Daggubati Venkateswara Rao, Purandeshwari's husband, in candidate selection, labelling

it as undue influence.

Furthermore, BJP cadres allege rampant corruption in ticket allocation, claiming that deserving candidates are overlooked in favour of those with financial clout. Their grievances have been forwarded to the party's central leadership, highlighting concerns over external influence in candidate selection. A faction within the BJP contends that certain leaders harbour hopes of electoral success solely due to their alignment with TDP-Janasena, rather than merit. Senior BJP figures voice suspicions that TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu wields undue influence in candidate selection, casting doubt on the fairness of the

process. Amidst these internal squabbles, questions arise regarding the fate of prominent BJP leaders who have long been active in the state, particularly regarding their anticipated candidacies. The absence of clarity surrounding the allocation of the Visakha Lok Sabha seat adds fuel to the growing discontent within the party. As the election schedule draws nearer, the BJP finds itself embroiled in internal strife, jeopardizing its alliances and raising doubts about its electoral prospects in Andhra Pradesh. With tensions running high, the party faces a critical juncture in navigating its path forward amidst a turbulent political landscape.

Training programme held on Election Seizure Management System

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector Dr A. Mallikarjuna has underscored the importance of transparent elections and directed nodal officers of enforcement agencies to ensure adherence to the code of conduct. Speaking during a training programme on the Election Seizure Management System (ESMS), the District Collector alerted officials about the imminent election notification and emphasised that the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) would be enforced immediately upon its release. He urged nodal officers to be well-prepared for the upcoming electoral process, highlighting the appointment of specialised teams such as the Flying Squad Team (FST), Video Viewing Team (VVP), and Static Surveillance Team (SST) for elec-

With a focus on maintaining



the integrity of the electoral process, strict surveillance measures were urged, particularly at airports, railway stations, and interstate and district borders, to prevent the influx of cash, gold ornaments, alcohol, and other intoxicating substances from external sources. Additionally, joint inspections involving various departments, including SEB, Police, Forest, Excise, Narcotics, and others, were emphasised to curb illegal activities effectively.

The District Collector stressed the importance of promptly documenting any instances of illegal cash or goods transportation through the ESMS app, which must be utilised from the initiation of the Election Code. Notably, the Income Tax Officer must be notified and cash exceeding Rs 10 lakh should be seized. Furthermore, stringent measures were outlined for individuals carrying cash exceeding Rs 50,000 and those in possession of gifts worth Rs 10,000 or more.

In a subsequent presentation, GVMC Commissioner CM Saikanth Verma provided insights into the utilisation of the ESMS app, further equipping nodal officials with the necessary tools to enforce election regulations effectively. Officials including Joint Collector K. Mayur Ashok, GVMC Commissioner CM Saikanth Verma, DRO K. Mohan Kumar, and representatives from SEB, Police, Forest, Excise, Postal, Income Tax, Airports, CRPF, GST, and Revenue department attended

Gifts galore as parties gear up for elections in AP

Wooing voters with gifts and cash has emerged as a time-tested strategy in **State politics**

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Trucks laden with gifts are inundating constituencies across Andhra Pradesh as political parties intensi-

fy their pre-election campaigns. Despite mounting concerns over legality, ruling parties show no signs of backing down as they openly dispense cash and gifts, triggering controversy and complaints from the Opposition parties. Undeterred by the absence of electoral codes, the ruling party continues to distribute gifts and cash openly, aiming to secure support. The distribution of "Gift bags," a customary offering, flies in the face

of the law, yet the programme pro-

ceeds unchecked. Opposition voices are being raised, but the response remains subdued, allowing the distribution scheme to forge ahead smoothly. Volunteers, secretariat staff, and employees are among the beneficiaries, each receiving gifts and money amounting to as much as Rs 10,000. The trend of wooing voters with gifts and cash has emerged as a prevalent strategy in Andhra



Pradesh politics. Leaders are entic-

ing voters with various offerings,

sarees, in exchange for their ballots. This strategy, dubbed "gift-vote," seeks to sway voters in favour of particular parties. The distribution strategy extends beyond the immediate pre-election period, underscoring the cru-

tinct tactics to sway voters. In the Nagari constituency, discial nature of the forthcoming elecsension and rebellion pose chaltions for parties like the YCP and lenges for MLA and Minister RK

TDP. Leaders are strategically target-

ing women voters, believing that their

satisfaction will translate into electoral

success. Under the guise of govern-

ment schemes, meetings are being convened to attract voters, particular-

ly women. These gatherings serve as

cash, with each leader employing dis-

bution programmes persist, with dinners and gift distributions being orchestrated to placate various factions. However, disparities in the enforcement of regulations are apparent, with leaders from non-ruling parties facing repercussions for similar distribution endeavours. The case of Punganur Bharata Chaitanya Yuvajana Party president Bode Ramachandra Yadav platforms for distributing gifts and highlights the unequal treatment, fueling accusations of favouritism and bias. Nonetheless, leaders remain resolute, persisting in their efforts to influence voters through pre-election handouts.

Roja. Despite internal strife, distri-



Pawan's announcement incurs wrath of TDP workers in AP

PNS KAKINADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan's declaration of his intention to contest from the Pithapuram Assembly constituency sparked violent protests by followers of TDP leader SVSN Varma on

Thursday in Pithapuram.
TDP senior leader SVSN Varma had been designated as the in-charge of the Pithapuram constituency and had been laying the groundwork for a potential Assembly run for the past few months.

However, Pawan Kalyan's announcement to contest from Pithapuram caught many off guard. The TDP had allocated the Pithapuram seat to the JSP under their alliance. Enraged by Pawan Kalyan's decision, a significant number of TDP activists set ablaze TDP flex banners, wall posters, flags, and other materials at the TDP office.

They voiced their dissatisfac-



tion with the TDP's decision to allocate Pithapuram to the JSP, chanting slogans against the party. Followers of SVSN Varma conveyed to the media that he would consider running as an independent candidate if Pawan Kalyan proceeds with his candidacy from the area. They expressed sentiments of betray-

al by the TDP towards Varma. TDP leader SVSN Varma

stated that he has faithfully served the TDP in Pithapuram for the past two decades, garnering goodwill among the local populace. He mentioned convening a meeting with his supporters scheduled for the following day to chart out the next steps. Reports indicate that his supporters are contemplating leaving the TDP.

have called for a meeting with MLAs from the combined East Godavari district and other senior members to strategize on selecting a candidate to

oppose Pawan Kalyan.

Kharif paddy procurement to end by March 31

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a press release issued on Thursday, the Civil Supplies Department in Krishna district has stated that the paddy procurement in Kharif season will end on March 31. Also, the officials asked the farmers to sell their produce at the PPC centres in the district before the deadline.

Further, they denied the reports which circulated on social media regarding the closing of the paddy procure-ment. The false news reached Joint Collector Geethanjali Sarma and the Civil Supplies District Manager, the official statement said.

Kidney counselling centre inaugurated

PNS SRIKAKULAM

Kidney Hospital Superintendent (Additional Director) Dr Allu Padmaja inaugurated the kidney counselling centre in the YSR Kidney Research and Super Specialty Hospital in Palasa on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Padmaja said that super specialty medical facilities had been made available in the YSR Kidney Research and Super Specialty hospital and appealed to all to avail the opportunity.

She said that a kidney counselling centre was also set up in the hospital to provide information and conduct counselling to the patients to ensure that they do not lose confidence.

Later, a seminar was organised on the occasion of World Kidney Day. Addressing the seminar, Dr Allu Padmaja said



that Nephrologists, Neurologist Medicine Specialist, General Medicine, Natural Surgery, Pulmonologist, Anesthetist, Gynecologist and other super speciality doctors are available in the YSR Kidney Research and Super Specialty hospital and requested use their ser-

She suggested to the people that painkillers should not be used for a long time as they would lead to kidney diseases. Kidney Hospital manager Dr. Kuna Mohan Babu and specialist Dr Ramesh were among

Jagan depending on positive votes to retain power

SNCN ACHARYULU

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy depends on positive votes to retain power in the coming Assembly elections. In the previous Assembly elections, YSR Congress came to power with a landslide victory. It won 151 seats out of total 175 Assembly seats. In winning a record number of Assembly seats apart from sympathy on Jagan, the strong opposition on the than ruling party TDP among the people also came in handy to the YSR Congress. But this time the situation is different.

The YSR Congress has to depend only on positive vote in retaining power. In this issue, Jagan is very confident though the TDP is fighting with Jana Sena and the BJP alliance. In the 'siddham' public meetings, Jagan is asking the people to vote for YSR Congress in the coming Assembly elections if they feel that they benefited by his gov-



In the last four-and-a-half years, Jagan implemented several welfare programmes benefiting a cross section of people. The families of poor sections in the society have benefited with two or three welfare schemes. With that confidence and courage only, Jagan is asking people to vote to his party. It is common that every ruling party will have anti-incumbency factor.

But, Jagan feels that the positive factor is more to his government than the antiincumbency factor. Now the people of Andhra Pradesh have experienced the governments of both TDP rule of Chandrababu Naidu and the YSR Congress rule of Jagan.

Now Jagan wants that the people should compare his government with previous Chandrababu government. It is a fact that the people of Andhra Pradesh benefited more in Jagan's government than in Chandrababu's government. Apart from welfare schemes, Jagan brought village secretariats system and volunteers system which are benefiting the people in many ways. It is known fact that if TDP alliance will come to power the chief minister will be Chandrababu. Because of that only, Jagan wants comparision between his and Chandrababu governments. From the beginning, Jagan is depending on the people than the leaders of his party. With that confidence only, Jagan changed around 70 sitting MLAs and about 10 MPs for the coming elections. Jagan strongly feels that if people are with him, leaving the party by some leaders will have no affect on the prospects of the party in

TTD to celebrate **Amarajeevi's** birth anniv tomorrow

Kalyan's decision to contest

from the Pithapuram con-

stituency has stirred up reac-

tions within both the YSRCP

and TDP circles. It is reported

that senior YSRCP leaders

PNS TIRUPATI

The state function of Amarajeevi Sri Potti SriramuluJayanti will be celebrated by TTD at Annamacharya Kalamandiram in Tirupati on March 16.

Potti Sreeramulu is revered

as Amarajeevi (immortal being) for his self-sacrifice in the formation of a separate state for Andhra Pradesh. He became famous for undertaking a hunger strike for 56 days in support of having a separate state for Andhra Pradesh; he died in the process. The Jayanti fete will commence at 11 am on

Rs 18.99 cr for Eluru under EBC Nestham

PNS ELURU/BHIMAVARAM

Eluru district has received Rs 18,99,00,000 under the YSR EBC Nestham scheme.

A programme was organized here on the occasion of the disbursement of EBC welfare scheme benefits. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that 12,660 women belonging to upper cases were being disbursed Rs 18,99,00,000.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy released Rs 620 37 growt bewards the third

629.37 crore towards the third tranche of YSR EBC Nestham benefiting 4,19, 583 women with Rs 15, 000 each.

The amount would be directly credited into the bank accounts of women aged between 45 to 60 years belonging to poor Kshatriya, Arya



Vaisya, Brahmana, Reddy, Kamma, Velama and other OC communities.

Speaking on the occasion, District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh said that in three installments a total amount of Rs 45,000 was extended to the beneficiaries. He said that Rs 15,000 was given in each instalment. A total number of 12,660 women beneficiaries were being extended Rs 18.99 crore in the district under the YSR EBC Nestam, the Collector

DRDA PD R Vijaya Raju, Corporation ED Pushpalatha, district BC Welfare officer R Nagarani and Minorty welfare office Srinivasa Rao were among those who were present. Collector Prasanna Venkatesh released a replica of the cheque on the occasion.

Meanwhile, West Godavari district has received Rs 19.54 crore under the EBC Nestam scheme. Collector Sumit Kumar said that 13,024 eligible women in the district were being disbursed Rs 19.54 crore under the scheme.

A programme was organized on the occasion of the disbursement of benefits under the EBC Nestham here on Thursday in which MLC Kavuru Śrinivas and other leaders participated. The Collector asked the beneficiaries to utilize the amount to improve their financial condi-

'Problems of Hindi students abroad will be solved'

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Vishwa Hindi Parishad president and Padma Bhushan Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad has said that they are committed to enhancing the survival of Hindi at the international level.

Yarlagadda was the chief guest at the first Hindi conclave held in Alemi city of Kazakhstan on Thursday. The international conference was jointly organised by al-Farabi University, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Vivekananda Cultural Centre and the Embassy of

Speaking on the occasion, Acharya Yarlagadda said that efforts will be made to solve the problems of Hindi students abroad and the Vishwa Hindi Parishad with other countries has already prepared an action plan for this. Similarly, Hindi teachers abroad are also facing many problems and their efforts to preserve the supremacy of Hindi as an Indian language are commendable, he said. Acharya Yarlagadda's speech referring to the poems of Hindi poets attracted a lot of

Road accidents came down by 20%: Collector

the elections.



PNS KAKINADA

District Collector Krithika Shukla has said that the road accidents in the district have come down by 20 per cent and road accident deaths by 15 per cent during 2023-24. The district road safety committee meeting was held here on Thursday and presided over by

the Collector. The road safety committee reviewed the programmes to be undertaken in the district to further strengthen road safety. On this occasion, Collector Krithika Shukla said that the programmes undertaken in the district to make the roads safe with the coordination of various departments are yielding results.

She expressed happiness that the road accidents in the district have decreased by 20 per cent and accidental deaths by 15 per cent during the last

The Collector asked all departments to continue the same effort and inspiration. On this occasion, they reviewed the steps being taken to identify 46 black spots on NH 16 and 40 black spots identified on NH 216 road in

the district. The Collector directed the officials concerned for the development and installation of signal lighting at 14 junctions facing traffic conges-

tions in Kakinada city. The District Collector also directed the authorities to give appreciation certificates and incentives to the people who saved the lives of accident victims by taking them to the hospital under the Good

Samaritan Law. Additional Bhaskara Rao, R&B SE G Kantu, Deputy Transport Commissioner A Mohan, National Highways Project Directors D. Surendranath (NH16), B Sai Srinivas (NH216) and DMHO Dr J.

SRM-AP hosts meet on advances in environmental sustainability

PNS VIJAYAWADA

of Department Environmental Science and Engineering at SRM University-AP organised a three-day International Environmental Sustainability, Energy and Earth Sciences (AESEE 2024). The inaugural session on Thursday was graced by industry experts, Prof Prakasham Tata from the Centre for Transformation of Waste Technology, USA and Dr Prakash Chauhan, Director-National Remote Sensing Centre, Indian Space Research Organisation, as the chief guest for the event.

Prof Prakasham Tata, in his exuberant address, stated that the nation does not lack the intelligence or manpower to combat the alarming ecolog-

ical crisis; it is the lack of trained personnel, pollution control boards, corruption and lack of effective cooperation between societal institutes that is causing a lax. Prof Tata insisted that "universities like SRM AP are knowledge cer tres and have the tenacity and wisdom to combat the growing threats." He issued a clarion call to all the youngsters and environmental enthusiasts to walk the talk.

Dr Prakash Chauhan, Director of the National Remote Sensing Centre, cited Indians' inherent way of living a sustainable lifestyle and went on to encourage the young participants in attendance to become true 'karma yogis' by innovating and finding new ways to promote and work towards environmental sustainability.

Candlelight rally marks protest against Geetanjali trolling



A large number of women took out a candlelight rally condemning the trolling of social welfare beneficiary Geethanjali leading to her

The women held a demonstration holding candles at Gandhi Bomma Centre in protest against the trolling of Geetanjali on social media platforms. They formed a human chain holding candles at the centre.

They demanded that the perpetrators should be arrested. YSRCP leaders including Guduri Umabala, Gudala Šrihari Gopal Rao and other leaders were among those who took part in the candle rally.

Two killed as car rams private bus

PNS TIRUPATI

Two persons were killed as a car rammed a stationary private bus at Budanam toll plaza in Chillakuru mandal on Thursday.

Police said that the tyre of the private bus got punc-tured and the bus was stopped on the roadside. The bus driver Malangsha Vali (52) was replacing the wheel. At the same time, a GGH for postmortem.

speeding car rammed the bus in the driver Vali killed instantaneously. The driver of the car was also killed in the accident.

The car was going to Chennai from Chennai Tadepalligudem. Two women travelling in the car suffered injuries. Chillakuru SI Anjireddy visited the

'Criminal' stabbed to death; case registered



PNS NARASARAOPET

A criminal who was involved in several offences, including rape and murder, was stabbed to death at Challagundla village in Nakirikallu mandal.

Police said that some unidentified miscreants attacked the deceased Peravalli Manikantha (32) when he was having liquor at body to the GGH.

a hotel on Thursday. They stabbed him indiscriminately resulting in him dying instantaneously

The deceased Manikantha belonged to Vipparla village. He was involved in several criminal cases including rape and murder of an elderly woman. The police registered a case and shifted the

Fire at timber depot in Madanapalle

PNS MADANAPALLE

A blaze at a timber depot in the wee hours Thursday Madanapalle Annamayya district was put out in three hours, a police official said.

Annamayya district Superintendent of Police (SP) B Krishna Rao said the fire, which occurred Tarakarama theatre, started due to a short circuit around 3 am on Thursday.

"As the timber depot is accessible only through one way and had walls on all three sides, it took time to put out the blaze. The fire was brought under control by 6 am," Rao said. Further, he said no injury or death was

dent. Several local people also actively participated in containing and extinguishing the fire, police said.

reported in the fire acci-

Kamma Sangham

PNS HYDERABAD

Renuka had a meeting with representatives of the State on

Stating that Kammas are

known for perseverance, Rajya

Sabha Member Renuka Choudhary said that persever-

ance is very important nowa-

days. She said that a Kamma

Corporation is very much needed for Kammas in times

of drought like the one now.

Thursday at her residence.

Renuka backs demand for Kamma corporation

She said that she strongly believes that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will do justice to Kammas and that the Kammas are a community that will take other communities along with them.

She said that former Chief Minister NTR brought recognition to Telugus and that many had thought that she was a daughter of NTR. Even BRS leader KCR named his son as

Taraka Rama Rao, she added. The Rajya Sabha MP said that there are many farmhands in the Kamma community and so there is a need to set up a Kamma Corporation. Putting up statues after death will not help anyone, but helping peo-ple is permanent, she said. She asked Kamma Sangham representatives to explain to the people of AP how an anti-Kamma leader who is ruling AP is targeting Kammas.

Child mauled to death by stray dogs: Delhi HC asks police to investigate

he Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the Delhi Police to investigate the "nature" of pets kept by residents in Dhobi Ghat area of Tuqhlaq Lane area where a one-and-a half-year-old girl was allegedly mauled to death by a pack of dogs last month. Justice Subramonium Prasad asked the police to file a status report before March 19 giving the details. The court was hearing a petition by the infant's father seeking a Rs 50 lakh compensation for the death of the

child. "Police are directed to investigate regarding the nature of pets that are kept in the area. It is also stated that there was a pitbull in the area. Investigate this. Status report be filed by Tuesday," the court said. During the hearing, the court asked the police to also find out if there was any pet dog in the nearby houses where the incident took place. The court said it was seeking the information just to rule out the apprehension of a ferocious dog kept in a nearby house which could have attacked the



Naxalite wanted in over 100 cases held in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district

Naxalite wanted in more than 100 cases, including murder and abduction, and , carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh was arrested in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police Acarrying a reward of HS o lakif was affected in Chinacogamic 2,552 committee member of Maoists, was apprehended in a forest between Gundam and Puvarti villages during an operation by security personnel on Tuesday, an official said.

The operation involving personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG), 210th battalion of CoBRA, an elite unit of CRPF, and local police, was launched from Basaguda police station, he said. A native of Gaganpalli village in Basaguda area, Sudhakar had joined the outlawed CPI (Maoist) as a PLGA (People's Liberation Guerilla Army) member in 1996 and then served in various capacities. He led the supply team of the West Bastar Division of Maoists between 2006 and 2008, he said.



Govt designates I4C as agency of MHA to notify unlawful activities

he Centre has designated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) as an agency of the MHA to notify, under the Information Technology Act-2000, lawenforcement agencies about unlawful activities in cyberspace. The I4C was set up by the MHA to provide a framework and eco-system for law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) in dealing with cybercrime in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (b) of sub-section (3) of section 79 of the Information Technology Act 2000, Central Government being the appropriate government hereby designate the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), to be the agency of the Ministry of Home Affairs to perform the functions under clause (b) of sub-section (3) of section 79 of Information Technology Act, 2000 and to notify the instances of information, data or communication link



'Graft, anti-national agenda are INDIA bloc's ideology'

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the opposition INDIA bloc of being guided by corruption, mis-governance and fuelling anti-national agenda, asserting he stands for rooting out corruption and appeasement.

His ideology is ensuring the country's welfare through people's welfare, he said at a programme here attended by the beneficiaries of PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi scheme, under which loan is given to street vendors.

Targeting the opposition alliance which has united in the national capital to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, he said they have come together on the agenda of "abusing" him day and night.

The Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress have joined hands in Delhi where all seven Lok Sabha seats are held by the

Modi said the PM SVANidhi scheme has been a big boost to

the lakhs of families of street vendors who were never paid any "attention" by previous been given loans of about Rs governments. They used to suffer insults and ran from pillar to post as they hardly got

interest rates, he said. "Modi ki guarantee" has ensured that they can get loans from banks at simple rates," he

loans from banks and had to

obtain capital at exorbitant

11,000 crore, he said. The BJP government at the Centre has been working to improve the lives of the poor and middle class in the national capital, he said, adding that it has been making honest efforts to ease traffic and curb pollution in Indian cities

Over 62 lakh persons have

Targeting the opposition alliance which has united in the national capital to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, he said they have come together on the agenda of 'abusing" him day and night

Over 1,000 electric buses have been deployed in Delhi, he said, and highlighted the expansion of expressways around the city's periphery and increase in its Metro network.

The prime minister also laid the foundation stone of two additional corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase 4 during the programme.

Class X girls asked to remove hijab in Gujarat

PNS BHARUCH

The principal of a private school was removed as an exam administrator by the Gujarat Education Department on Thursday after an outrage erupted among parents who alleged that she had compelled Muslim girl students to remove their hijabs before a Class X examination.

The incident took place at Lions School in Ankleshwar town, Bharuch district, just before the mathematics paper on Wednesday of the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board (GSHSEB).

Following complaints from the parents, the state education department swiftly removed the exam centre administrator, Ilaben Suratiya, who is also the

principal of the school. District Education Officer Swati Raol took action after meeting with the concerned

CAA; Nobody's citizenship will be snatched: Rajnath

PNS ■ BARPETA (ASSAM)

Union Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said people are being misled over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, asserting that the legislation would not take away the citizenship of anyone living in India.

Addressing a rally in Assam's Barpeta, he said the CAA will grant citizenship to religiously persecuted people who came to India till 2014 from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Singh was campaigning for BJP ally Asom Gana Parishad's candidate Phani Bhusan Choudhury, who is contesting the Barpeta Lok Sabha constituency, currently being represented by Congress MP Abdul Khaleque.

"The people are being mis-led over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act... I assure you that this Act will not take away the citizenship of any people. It would only grant citizenship," the defence min-

JUDICIAL INQUIRY INTO FARMER'S DEATH



The Centre on Monday implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, notifying the rules four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who came to India before December 31,

Singh also said with the consecration of the Ayodhya temple, "nobody can stop the establishment of 'Ram Rajya'

NDA will retain power by winning over 400 LS seats

PNS KOKRAJHAR (ASSAM)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday claimed that it is a surety that the NDA government will return to power winning over 400 seats during the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Addressing party workers of three NDA allies in Assam -- BJP, AGP and UPPL, Singh said there will be no kutcha houses in the state and assured people that everyone will get pucca dwelling units if the Narendra Modi-led government returns to power for the third consecutive term. "There is no doubt that our government will be formed at the Centre. I believe the NDA will win more than 400 seats," he said, asking the party workers to campaign for this target.

If voted to power, INDIA bloc will be farmers' voice: Rahul

Says Rahul; repeats caste census demand

PNS NASHIK

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the opposition INDIA alliance, if voted to power, will be the rmers policies to protect them, promising to exclude cultivators from GST and restructure crop insurance scheme.

He was addressing a farm-report. ers' rally Chandwad in Maharashtra's Nashik district along with NCP (SP) head Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, as part of the Congress' ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay

Later in the day, Gandhi held a

Yatra'.

roadshow and a street-corner meeting in Nashik where he repeated his demand for a caste census in the country.

"The INDIA alliance government will be the voice of farmers and work to protect their interests. Mine and our (INDIA bloc) government's doors would always be open for farmers," he said at Chandwad.

The Congress leader promised loan waiver for farmers, restructuring of crop insurance scheme to benefit cultivators, to protect crop said.

prices in formulation of export import policies and to make efforts to exclude agriculture from GST and work on only one tax.

The Lok Sabha member from Wayanad also re the Congress' promise of a legal guarantee to minimum support price (MSP) as per the Swaminathan committee

> The former Congress president claimed 20 to 25 people in the country have wealth equivalent to 70 crore of the country's popula-

The Narendra Modi government waived Rs 16 lakh crore debt of industrialists, he further claimed.

"This amount is equivalent to 24 years of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) under which Rs 35,000 crore is spent every year to give employment to the poor people, Gandhi

He said the previous Congress-led UPA government had waived Rs 70,000 crore debt of farmers.

"If the loans of rich people can be written off, farmers also should get the benefit," he



CAA a challenge to idea of India. says Kerala Civi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said that the Citizenship Amendment Act was unconstitutional, against human rights, and poses a challenge to the idea of India.

Vijayan, at a press conference here, alleged that the contentious legislation grants legal validity to religious discrimination.

The CM also accused the Congress of withdrawing from a united front against the CAA.

The CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the President's assent, but there were protests in several parts of the country against it, with many opposition parties speaking out against the law, calling it

"discriminatory" This act grants citizenship to undocumented migrants of all religions -- except Muslims -- from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who arrived in India before December 31, 2014.



The state government filed A division bench of Acting the special leave petition in the Chief Justice G S Sandhawalia top court on March 11 against and Justice Lapita Banerji, the high court's decision. which was hearing petitions on The high court March 7 the farmers' agitation, had said



that "it was a sad state of affairs" that youngsters were "armed with lathis and at certain places with swords and

spears and sharp-edged weapons" and children were "being exposed to violence". The high court had formed

the committee headed by retired HC judge Jaishree Thakur to inquire into the ing the investigation regarding the death of Shubhkaran, 21, cannot be entrusted solely either to Punjab or to Haryana for "reasons obvious as both states have several things to

The committee will be assisted by Additional Director General of Police (Punjab) Promod Ban and ADGP (Haryana) Amitabh Singh

Dhillon, according to the order. Shubhkaran, a native of Bathinda, was killed and 12 police personnel injured in at Khanaui Punjab-Haryana border on February 21.

The incident took place when some protesting farmers were trying to head towards barricades and were stopped by security personnel from crossing the state border and marching to Delhi.

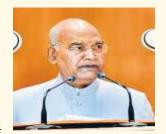
28 no-confidence motions moved in LS till now: Kovind panel report

PNS NEW DELHI

A total of 28 no-confidence motions have been moved in the Lok Sabha till now, as disclosed by a high-level panel deliberating on the prospect of 'one nation, one election'.

The panel's findings also shed light on the occurrence of seven instances where Lok Sabha found itself in a state of deadlock.

Proposing a solution to these challenges, the high-level panel led by former president Ram Nath Kovind suggested that in scenarios of a hung House or



a vote of no confidence, fresh elections should be conducted to constitute a new Lok Sabha. Historical data highlighted in the report indicates that the highest number of no-confidence motions in Lok Sabha were moved during 1961-70, totalling 12, followed by six such motions during 1971-

In stark contrast, from 2000 to 2023, merely three no-confidence motions were recorded. To tackle these issues, the panel has put forth a comprehensive mechanism.

This proposed framework entails a constitutional amendment fixing Lok Sabha's tenure at five years from its inaugural meeting. Should dissolution occur before the term's completion, fresh elections will be held, and new Lok Sabha will serve out the remainder of

"India has shown remark-

able progress in human devel-

opment over the years. Since

1990, life expectancy at birth

has risen by 9.1 years, expect-

ed years of schooling have

increased by 4.6 years and

mean years of schooling have

grown by 3.8 years. India's GNI per capita has grown by

LS Polls: Discontent brews in BJP Karnataka unit after announcement of first list

PNS BENGALURU

A day after the BJP announced its first list of candidates for 20 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka for the upcoming Parliament elections, discontent has started brewing among the ticket aspirants

who were denied a ticket. Former chief minister Jagadish Shettar, who was

expecting a ticket from Haveri or Dharwad Lok Sabha constituency, said he will arrive at a decision on Thursday evening.

According to him, he is still in talks with the seniors in the BJP regarding the

Belgaum seat. Shettar had returned to the BJP in January after quitting the Congress, which gave him a ticket for the 2023 assembly

Though he had lost that election, Congress nominated him as a Member of the

Legislative Council. Incidentally Shettar had quit the BIP before the elections as

he had been denied a ticket. Shettar's supporters claim that he was offered a Lok Sabha ticket in the 2024 elec-

tions by the BJP. When asked whether he

was made a scapegoat as his name did not figure in the first list of candidates, Shettar said. "Don't put words in my mouth. Everyone knows what's going on. Hence, I am not going to comment on it. People will say and those who should say will speak up."

Reacting to it, Union Minister for Coal and Mines, Pralhad Joshi said, "Shettar has

said that his name is there for Belagavi constituency. I too know this. I will be happy if he gets the ticket from Belagavi or any because he is our very senior leader.

Ánother BJP leader left disappointed after the first list was former Deputy

Chief Minister K Eshwarappa. He was aspiring for a ticket for his son K E Kantesh.

Eshwarappa accused the former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, who is in the BJP's apex body parliamentary board member, of chucking out his son from the Lok Sabha election.

"There is a pressure on me to contest the election independently," Eshwarappa told reporters in Shivamogga, yes-

India ranks 134th out of 193 countries in 2022 HD

PNS NEW DELHI

India's was ranked 134 out of 193 countries in the 2022 United Nations Human

Development Index (HDI), a notch higher than 135 out of 191 countries in 2021. On the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India has been ranked at 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437.

countries with a score of 0.490 in the GII-2021. This shows a significant jump of 14 ranks on the GII-2022 vis-a-vis the GII-2021, the women and child development

Its rank was 122 out of 191

ministry said. However, the country also

gaps in its labour force participation rate -- a 47.8 per cent difference between women (28.3 per cent) and men (76.1 per cent).

After a drop in its HDI value in 2021 and following a flat trend over the past few years, India's HDI value has increased to 0.644 in 2022, placing the country at 134 out of 193 countries and territories in the just released 2023/24 Human Development Report

India ranked 135 out of 191 countries in 2021 on the back of a marginal increase in its HDI value to 0.644 compared to 0.633 in 2021.



The data was published in Nations United Development Programme's report titled "Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World". It builds on the 2021

2022 Human Development Report findings that saw the global HDI value fall for the first time -- two years in a row.

The report revealed that while rich countries attained

record human development,

progress. In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators -- life expectancy, education, and gross national income (GNI) per capita and life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57 and GNI per capita saw an increase from USD 6,542 to USD 6.951.

below their pre-crisis level of

Moreover, India demonstrated progress in reducing gender inequality. The country's GII value of 0.437 is better than the global and South Asian averages, according to approximately 287 per cent," it With an HDI value of 0.644, the latest HDR places India in the medium human develop-ment category. Between 1990

and 2022, the country saw its HDI value increase by 48.4 per cent, from 0.434 in 1990 to 0.644 in 2022.

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Synchronising polls

The Kovind panel report will spur governance and deepen the democratic rubric

he submission of a much-awaited report on the feasibility and practicality of simultaneous elections across the nation has reignited discussions across the political spectrum. The 18,626-page report, finalised by a committee under the chairpersonship of former President Ram Nath Kovind, has recommended simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, followed within 100 days by concurrent local body elections. To this end, at least five Articles of the Constitution would need amendment. While simultaneous elections offer potential benefits, several considerations and challenges merit attention. The main proposals make it clear that in cases of a hung House or no-confidence motion sailing through, fresh polls may be held for the remainder of the five-year term. The first simultaneous polls would entail Assembly tenures aligning with the Lok Sabha elections, and the Election Commission would create a unified electoral roll and voter ID cards in collaboration with State Election Commissions



for all polls. The concept of 'One Nation, One Election' has been a subject of debate for quite some time now. Its backers feel it is necessary to reduce the frequency of polls, and that it will spawn several other advantages, including enhanced and continued governance, decreased expenditure, minimal life disruptions and social cohesion, besides providing stability.

By aligning the electoral cycles, the Governments can focus more on policymaking and implementation rather than perpetually being in campaign mode. However, the opponents are concerned about logistical challenges, constitutional implications and potential dilution of regional issues in electoral discourse.

Addressing concerns related to federalism and democratic principles while ensuring the synchronisation of electoral cycles poses a formidable challenge. Even if the recommendations are accepted, it would be a long road to actualisation of 'One Nation, One Election.' Besides, simultaneous elections might dilute the regional narrative, leading to a focus primarily on national issues. The Kovind panel's report provides insights into mitigating this risk and preserving the essence of federalism within the framework of simultaneous elections. Also, elections incur substantial costs for the exchequer; simultaneous elections could potentially reduce this financial burden. However, the initial investment required for synchronisation, including infrastructure development and voter education, needs careful consideration. The analysis of financial implications will influence the decision regarding the feasibility of this reform. It would indeed be a good idea to reach a political consensus as every party is a stakeholder. The implications of this report extend beyond administrative efficiency to encompass constitutional, political and financial dimensions. As stakeholders await the findings and recommendations, it is imperative to engage in constructive dialogue to address concerns and chart a path forward that upholds the democratic ethos while enhancing the effectiveness of governance.



embers of Toda tribal community during the celebrations of temple festival at Mallikorai Mund, in Ooty

Presidential choices make veterans rueful



BHOPINDER SINGH

The United States finds itself in a peculiar predicament where the choice between Biden and Trump feels more like picking the 'less bad' option

he United States of America has a strange conundrum of choosing the 'less bad' Presidential option amongst geriatrics in Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump. One concerned set of constituents is the fraternity of retired service personnel (from US Armed Forces) or simply, Veterans. Given the size and scale of the standing US Armed Forces and the accompanying global deployments, it is unsurprising that the Veterans community is over 18 million strong. As the US has had a consistent history of ongoing combat duties, Veterans evoke an emotional and hallowed position in the American consciousness. The longstanding American norm of walking up and shaking the hands of a Veteran by saying, Thank you for your services" is a sacred culture that exemplifies the hallowed position afforded to Veterans, across the partisan and

societal divide. Of the 46 US Presidents to date, an unprecedented 31 had done military service testifying to the image of the 'Uniform', in public reverence. At one time, 'Uniform' as considered a political millstone for prospective Presidency. Sadly, it is a normalcy on the decline. Today neither of the two Presidential candidates i.e., Trump or Biden, fit the bill on this score. On the contrary, Biden does himself no good by defending his five-student draft deferments, whereas Donald Trump is infamous for his five conscription deferments, during the Vietnam War. In recent times, even the likes of Bill Clinton and George W Bush (with his specious service with the Air National Guard) were criticised for lack of experience. The implicit fear was that as the Commander-in-Chief of the US Armed Forces, a President bereft of Military Service would be unversed and unempathetic to the institutional realities and Bush was the last US President to serve in combat.

While the campaign spiel and competitive claims by both the contesting candidates towards Veterans in the 2024 Presidential Elections will bear prominence,



sentative of the realm. While Biden has routinely invoked the Military Service of his late son, Beau Biden, to burnish his militaristic association, it remains an artful contextualization as Beau's service was that of Judge Advocate General in Iraq for a year – later, Beau had died owing to brain cancer. Many Veterans have questioned Biden's sincerity like the AMERICA'S FUTURE incident of the Air Force Veteran accosting Biden at an AS A SUPERPOWER event, "I'm an Air Force veter-IS PREDICATED ON an. I'm here with an Army veteran. We are just wondering ITS COMMITMENT TO why we should vote for someone who voted for a war and THE 'ARMED FORCES' enabled a war that killed thou-AND THEIR sands of our brothers and sisters, countless Iraqi civilians." ASSOCIATED DOMAIN However, even though OF VETERAN Republicans always enjoyed a historical bias in terms of AFFAIRS, YET Veteran traction, given its conservative and overtly 'nation-NEITHER OF THE alistic' moorings, Trump is not CONTESTANTS exactly in the mould of Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, George HW Bush etc., **DEMONSTRATES A** Trump's Republicanism is more FAMILIAL OR anchored in the commercial TOPICAL URGENCY sensibilities of its affluent elites. as opposed to martial tradi-TOWARDS THE tions of Military families that breed reserves of selfless char-**VETERANS** acter. Therefore, Trump has had to appropriate the apolitical institution of the Armed

the fact is that neither of the

two is seen as genuine repre-

and suchlike unwarranted usurpations. Ironically, he has even pooh-poohed the Veterans with utter disdain whenever his instincts have taken over. Trump's former Chief of Staff, John Kelley, has confirmed Trump's apathy, "A person that thinks those who defend their country in uniform, or are shot down or seriously wounded in combat, or pend years being tortured as POWs are all 'suckers' because 'there is nothing in it for them.' A person who did not want to be seen in the presence of military amputees because 'It doesn't look good for me". Even Trump's contempt for 'Gold Star' Military families owing to their faith or dislike for rivals like the revered Senator John McCain (distinguished Veteran) or even his purported query about a wounded Army Captain at an event with a query, "Why do you bring people like that here?" and added for the measure, "No one wants to see that, the wounded." reflects the real amorality of Trump.

commentary of 'My Generals,

walk at Lafayette Square etc.,

Even Secretary and legendary warrior, General James Mattis who was eventually, 'the last adult in the room, testified to the inadvertent bluster that was postured as faux 'muscularity' in Trump's drumming

EDITOR

and demeanour. Mattis the proud and apolitical Veteran had mustered all the correctness that he could manage in his resignation note when he suggested that Trump needed a Defense Secretary 'whose views are better aligned to yours' - suggesting that no professional, balanced or selfrespecting individual could align with an unhinged Trump. Veterans who served partisan governments, couldn't possibly see individual leaders as bigger entities, than the Constitutional morality of the land.

Today both Biden and Trump attempt to profess more sensitivity, care, and concern for the Veterans, and like the choice generally, it is yet another case of a 'less bad', rather than 'good' choice. America's future as a Superpower is predicated on its commitment to the 'Armed Forces' and their associated domain of Veteran Affairs, yet neither of the contestants demonstrates a familial or topical urgency towards the Veterans. Therefore, partisanship aside, many Veterans feel that their service has been taken for granted and they have no better choice.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

Scientists play key role in a nation's progress



BIJU **Dharmapalan**

In times of crisis, society instinctively turns its gaze towards the scientific community, seeking solace and solutions amid turmoil

he public always looks at the scientific community whenever they are in dire straits. Farmers seek help from agriculture scientists when serious pests affect their crops, or there is a drastic decline in productivity. Similarly, the public looks to medical scientists for help whenever a pathogen attacks humans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how, every day, the ordinary person eagerly looked at research work from various labs. Covid-19 reinstated the common man's confidence in scientists. The current generation that has overcome the COVID-19 catastrophe is deeply indebted to scientists for their lives

Even though there are hundreds of scientific fields, agriculture and health care are close to the day-to-day affairs of ordinary people, and hence, scientists working in these areas need to communicate directly to the public. Scientists working in other fields like communication engineering, space research, civil engineering etc, though highly relevant to the day-today life of commoners, never come in direct contact with between proponents of mod-

them. Whenever humanity is in disarray, scientists bring glee and a ray of hope through their discoveries. In many parts of the world,

scientists also create confusion because of conflicts of interest and interference from policymakers. It's an open secret that most of the food products available in our market are adulterated, and in some cases, they contain toxic substances. Even scientists working in industries will secretly admit it, but they are not allowed to publish the results or speak publicly. Most of the scientific work related to pesticides, drugs etc is linked with industry, and none of the industries will support a genuine scientist. Industries may influence the design of research studies to ensure outcomes align with their objectives.

There is always a conflict

systems of medicine. Many scientists blatantly state that drugs have side effects, forgetting the fact that all modern medicines have severe side effects. Scientists should strive to be impartial in pursuing knowledge and understanding of the natural world. This dedication to objectivity is fundamental to the scientific method, which relies on systematic observation, experimentation, and analysis to uncover truths about the universe. However, scientists, like all humans, are susceptible to personal beliefs and biases that may subtly influence their work.

These biases can affect everything from the questions scientists choose to investigate to the interpretation of their findings. Furthermore, external factors such as funding sources, societal pressures, and political climates can also influence scientific research. Research funding, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping the scientific agenda, as scientists often rely on grants from government agencies, private foundations, or industry sponsors

ern medicine and traditional to support their work. The priorities of these funding sources may align with par-Ayurvedic or Homeopathic ticular agendas or interests, potentially influencing the direction and focus of research. Societal pressures and political influence can also distort scientific results. Despite these challenges, the scientific community is committed to upholding certain principles of objectivity, transparency, and peer review to ensure the integrity of scientific research.

While scientists may not always be entirely free from bias, these principles help to minimise the impact of personal beliefs and external influences on the scientific process. The scientific community can maintain public trust and credibility by upholding these standards. Moreover, scientists should proactively engage with societal concerns, prioritising research that tackles urgent issues like public health, and social inequality. If scientists lose public trust, society will be in disarray.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

BIDEN AND TRUMP FACE OFF

Forces with his misplaced

Sir — This is concerning the article "The US presidential race intensifies" (March 13, 2024). The process of presidential elections in America in November has progressed to the point where it is almost clear that President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump will face off again. The Super Tuesday results showed them to be far ahead of their opponents, and the next day, Nikki Haley eliminated all questions by stating that she was postponing the campaign to become the Republican nominee. The US presidential elections will feature only the same candidates for the second time in a row, a first since 1956. Second, both candidates are elderly. Two-thirds of those polled in February believed Biden was no longer old enough to work for the government. Nearly half of the respondents expressed the same way about Trump.

The serious allegations against former President Trump are also making these elections unique. It is unclear when the court will rule on these charges. Everyone's attention is focused on what will happen if the court rules against Trump before the election. These claims are also fueling intense resentment on both sides during a presidential race. While Biden has branded Trump as a threat to America's very survival, Trump continues to claim victory in the 2020 elections. Leaving aside these internal challenges, neither candidate's victory would result in a significant shift in America's foreign policy. Aside from modest efforts to balance the Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars, America now has few options. On the other hand, America's future posture will be heavily influenced by the desire to contain China's growing

Abhijit Roy | *Jamshedpur*

PROTECTING RIVERS

aggression.

Sir — Though rivers are national assets, there is little awareness among the people about ways to preserve their purity and utility. Besides being indispensable for day-today use, including agricultural purposes, they serve as a great inland mode of trans-

China's hollow claims



hina's protest against PM Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh is a continuation of its desperate attempts to lav illegal claim on Arunachal Pradesh, the integral and inalienable part of India. China can't stomach Modi's inauguration of strategically significant Sela Tunnel

portation that can bolster trade and com-

merce. Biodiversity would have been a

system, of course, is Earth's highest biolog-

ical diversity zone. International Day of

Action for Rivers aims at spreading aware-

ness through campaigns on the importance

of rivers and their protection. Only about

ten per cent of the river basins in the world

are protected. Dams, encroachments and

deforestation have threatened their very

existence. Therefore, saving and celebrat-

Campaign against the construction of dams

is an integral part of "saving rivers" because

preserving free-flowing rivers is the key. It

is indisputable that "water is for all." That

said, it is every citizen's responsibility to

keep the nation's rivers clean and pollution-

free devoid of dump and industrial wastage.

A country's rivers cannot be allowed to

become sites for garbage and sewage dis-

posal. River management, river pollution

and river conservation are three areas that

have seized the attention of experts. More

than thirty countries come together on the

International Day of Action for Rivers to

take stock of the international rivers, and

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

ways to upkeep them.

ing rivers cannot be overstated.

which will provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang in India's territory. The world's longest twin-lane tunnel will ease pressure on the existing infrastructure, specifically the Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang road, which faces issues from landslides, snow, and heavy rainfall.

The road link is expected to help India shore up defence along the nuclear-armed neighbours' 3,500-kilometer Line of Actual Control (LAC). India and China have also been locked in a border standoff in the eastern Ladakh region since 2020 when a deadly hand-to-hand clash broke out. China's tactic of laying illegal claims on the territories of its neighbours is a well-known fact. Thus, objections raised by it are hollow as long as India develops the regions well within its boundaries.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

ENFORCE LAWS ON PLASTIC MISUSE

Sir — Despite knowing the harmful thing of the past but for the rivers. The river effects of plastic, the government is not serious about enforcing laws against its rampant use. People also turn a blind eye to the plastic menace. They have become accustomed to the use-and-throw culture, and don't bother to carry shopping bags. Users don't even think twice before throwing a plastic bag perhaps because it comes cheap. Do we ever think about how thick the plastic bag given to us in shopping malls is? About 15 per cent of all garbage is plastic; only 50 per cent of it is recycled. Despite being long-lasting, plastic bags are

thrown away after a single use. Plastic remains in the earth for a long time, cutting air and water supply to the soil, and tremendously affecting the growth of plants. It reduces the water-retaining capacity of the soil. In the monsoon, plastic gets collected in drains and blocks the passage of water which causes waterlogging and floods, which in turn give rise to water-

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

FIRST COLUMN

TEPA DEAL IS A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH

Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement is a game changer



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India signing a low-hanging trade agreement with four European countries, earlier this week, marks a new chapter in the policy outlook going forward. For starters the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), India managed to close with European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member countries (comprising of Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) is a first of its kind with developed countries from

It would be worth mentioning that India has been trying to sign trade agreements (FTAs) with the Western world, particularly the larger European Union, the UK and in the long run with the US for several years. However, all of these negotiations, which tend to get extremely complex, when dealing with Western nations, due to divergences in priorities, failed to fructify into something meaningful, in decades. India's external economic policy outlook, for a very long, including the early years of PM Narendra Modi's government, prioritised the domestic sector, over a more integrated new world trade-based economy. This had also raised concerns about the current government's priorities being too protectionist, which in plain English meant providing artificial government shield to, often, inefficient domestic manufacturing, leading to high-cost, low-quality products and services for the domestic market.

India had also walked out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement (one of the largest multilateral trade agreements among ASEAN members and Australia, China, Japan, South Korea etc) after multiple rounds of negotiations, citing a disproportionate advantage to China in the agreement. This left little room for the Indian economy to grow and get more investments, create fresh employment and provide the necessary fillip to exports, however, things began to change during the second term of PM Modi beginning in 2019.



At a time when the global chorus started shifting to being more proprotectionist, i.e. trying to save their domestic industry, as a result of the Covid Pandemic, the Ukraine war and tensions in West Asia, India managed to sign two early harvest trade agreements with UAE and Australia in record time. This was a signal to the world that India is willing to negotiate at the trade table (being the fifth largest economy serves as a good balt) and get turther integrated with the global economy, of course, on terms that are mutually beneficial for all participating partners. India is currently in deep negotiations with the UK for signing an FTA, whose final signing was being tuned up as another feather in the current government's economic successes, however, it will have to wait longer for eco-political reasons.

The UAE trade agreement had also opened doors for India to negotiate a similar deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council (where UAE is also an influential member) but the West Asian crisis may delay the negotiations. It may be mentioned here, that, the Oman FTA has a definite stellar output record from the commerce ministry. Coming back to the TEPA, commerce minister Piyush Goyal during the announcement underscored "The agreement will give a boost to Make in India and provide opportunities to young & talented workforce. The FTA will provide a window to Indian exporters to access large European and global markets."

TEPA heavily relies on a nearly \$100 billion investment commitment from the EFTA members in a fifteen-year window, which could serve as an important benchmark and a template for signing similar deals with other developed nations. India and the EU have taken several steps to arrive at some sort of a free trade agreement, albeit, negotiating with 27 member countries' union may be slightly more complex. The message from India, which has tasted high growth years, despite several setbacks from global headwinds, is clear, the domestic market is open for business and Indian exporters are confident to win the world.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

India, Mauritius forge strategic ties



SUDHIR **HINDWAN**

The joint inauguration of India-assisted projects on the Agalega island of Mauritius marks a significant milestone in the strategic partnership between the nations

he joint inauguration of India-assisted projects such as an airstrip, community development projects and a jetty in the Agalega island of Mauritius shows the increasing concern over the need to change the existing — and also evolve a new — strategic approach to not only enhance economic and commercial cooperation but also ensure strategic surveillance and security of Indian Ocean Area. The virtual Conference between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth is a new cornerstone in building up close cooperation through multiple projects such as the India-assisted Aushadhi scheme (providing high-quality medicines) commercial and economic cooperation, humanitarian relief assistance and joint patrolling. This also fulfils the main thrust of the Indian Foreign Policy principle: "Neighbourhood First Policy" and Mauritius's multiple needs in health, security and economic areas. The Indo-Mauritius coordination is a step forward to add a new country to India's new strategic vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in Region) Besides, it also brings an important fact to light that India and Mauritius need to diversify their strategies to counter the challenges both face from Pakistan and China.

The war between Russia and Ukraine, the spreading tentacles of transnational terrorism and the over-ambitious mission of Chinese dominance across the globe have created serious problems for international security. While the world is still grappling with the deadly spikes of war and terror, the issue of sea security is taking the forefront of global politics. The Leading Realist in IR John Mearsheimer once conceded that states always seek to maximise their power and prowess to achieve security. Realism also contends that states prioritise maintaining their security and status quo power over aggressive expansion, focusing on balancing against threats rather than seeking dominance. It provides a theoretical rationale for comprehending the complex rigmarole in the fluid power equations and how the changing dynamics of Asia particularly around IOA shape India's defence strategies. There is an increasing tendency of actors in International relations to cluster around the powerful one in the system. China's expansionist mission has vindicated Raymond Aron's observation correctly. Aron once conceded that "The two most typical models are called multipolar and bipolar: either the chief actors, whose forces are not too unequal, are relatively numerous, or, on the contrary, two actors dominate their rivals to such a degree that both become the centre of a coalition and the secondary actors are obliged to situate themselves about the two "blocs," thus joining one or another, unless they have the opportunity to abstain. Intermediary models are possible, depending on the number of chief actors and the degree of equality or inequality of forces among the chief actors". These are changing times and many changes have occurred in International relations recently. Sharing and working on a common strategic vision and a combined approach to ensure mutual economic prosperity and approaching through a multi-layered and multilateral strategy if the situation demands is going to dominate the world order in the coming days. What is required is to develop a fresh per-

spective for a more mature reliance on international cooperation between nations to



ation, threatening a severe response to any attempt to destabilise the

In this direction To counter the increasing tentacles of Chinese aggressiveness endangering India's Maritime Security through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), deployment of Naval bases in the IOC areas, Naval base in Djibouti, construction of Gwadar Port to help Pakistan, its policy of Strings of Pearls through which China is encircling India by enhancing strategic partnerships with IOR countries India has reached out to its neighbouring countries such as Sri-Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius and had a defence strategy of developing coastal Radar System between these countries. Besides, it has already started a Fusion system to provide STRATEGY AND IS information related to the security of the Indian Ocean Region.

The recent procurement of an India-Russia Joint Venture BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile for the Indian Navy and aero-engine for MIG-29 Jets for the Indian Air Force are major initiatives to enhance

India's defence capabilities. India has also developed a Necklace of Diamonds Strategy and is establishing a Changi naval service Base in Singapore, Chabahar Port in Iran, and ports in Myanmar and Oman. India is moving ahead with its Act East Policy to enhance economic and trade cooperation among East Asian neighbours in addition to this started with an extensive web of ports and Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR) building systems. India's recent strategy has set out a clear way forward by getting fully involved in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all the partners. The issue that remains vital is to bring so many neighbouring countries to a negotiating table to work out a strategy for maritime securi-

ty and protecting economic inter-

The increasing support and agreement about limiting climate change issues and opening up gateways for renewable energy and development in technological know-how along with channelising the sources of power generation and creating a mechanism to withstand any sudden threat posed by BRI (Belt and Road Initiatives) augur well for peace and prosperity of all the member countries. There has always been a series of extremely good relationships between India and its neighbouring countries about trade share having crossed a decent landmark during the last half a decade which was way more than expected.

The recent efforts by India to protect IOA's security through cooperation with Mauritius would further boost and cement their ties and create a genuine environment for stabilising economic growth (along with ensuring the free flow of goods and services) strategic security, prosperity, stability and combating sudden challenges arising due to climate change and maritime and border threat. Further, the panel discussion focusing on "The Quad Squad: Power and Purpose of the Polygon," during early 2023 provided another step towards solving the expansionist plans.

The member countries showed their commitment to support Pacific Island countries with regional institutions through cooperation in several areas along with the terror such as climate change, resilient infrastructure, and maritime security to strengthen the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The role of India's leadership in finalising the IORA in India-Pacific areas was greatly appreciated and became even more important due to its impeccable reputation. Further negotiation may lead to the creation of a strategic mechanism to provide a shield against maritime security,

piracy, drug trafficking, armed robbery, terrorism, international crime, smuggling and cyber threats unleashed by any non-state actor as well. This may also accelerate maritime-friendly ties and bolster security around the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific areas which have lately become areas of concern.

Hence, a collaborative partnership among the nations around the Indian Ocean Area through equity and access to those who are in need at the time of unprecedented crisis may show the level of insight in empowering and motivating people across the board towards extending a helping hand and saving lives. Besides, the pursuit towards the promotion of their well-being would lead to tremendous effort towards enhancement of the overall development scenario in India and neighbouring countries. The sum and substance of the idea is to ensure that the New structural Thinking and orientation changes through a fresh perspective and a framework for key demands while maintaining a synergy among various stakeholders to negotiate even on the issues of different perspec-

Since then, cooperation among Quad Group countries has set a new road map through diplomatic endeavours towards building a new apparatus for the management of terrorism. Foreign relations are operated through efficient diplomacy and diplomacy is all about the right gestures cooperation and coordination at times of crisis. India is indeed a leading partner in this regard. India is a mature democracy and its leaders are capable of cashing in on any opportunity and strategy that's a combination of tactful strength and resilience.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award, is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

Remembering Johan Galtung: A pioneer in peace research

INDIA HAS ALSO

DEVELOPED A

NECKLACE OF

ESTABLISHING

NAVAL SERVICE

THE CHANGI

SINGAPORE,

IN IRAN AND

MYANMAR AND

PORTS IN

CHABAHAR PORT

BASE IN

DIAMONDS

A visionary thinker and dedicated peace activist, Galtung has left an indelible mark on our understanding of conflict resolution

he world of peace research and conflict resolution mourns the loss of one of its most influential figures, Johan Galtung, who passed away on February 17, 2024. Johan Galtung, born in Oslo, Norway, in 1930, was not just a visionary thinker but also a prolific writer and dedicated peace activist whose legacy continues to reverberate within the field

Growing up amidst the tur-moil of World War II, Galtung's experiences deeply influenced his worldview and spurred his lifelong dedand resolving conflicts. He ing innovative approaches to at comprehensively under-



diverse disciplines such as sociology, psychology, political science, and economics. Galtung's pivotal contributions to peace research led to the establishment of the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) in 1959. PRIO served as a pioication to understanding neering interdisciplinary hub, fostering collaborative devoted his career to explor- research endeavours aimed

gies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
His leadership at PRIO facil-

itated the exchange of methodologies and ideas among scholars globally, nurturing a vibrant intellectual community dedicated to advancing peace. Initiatives like the Transcend Network for Peace, Development, and Environment exemplified Galtung's commitment to fostering dialogue and cooperation among scholars, policymakers, and grassroots activists worldwide.

Throughout history, leaders and activists have emphasised the transformative power of collaborative efforts in promoting peace and non-violence. Mahatma peacebuilding, drawing from standing conflict origins and Gandhi's philosophy of non-

developing effective strate- violent resistance mobilised millions during India's independence movement, showcasing the potential for collective action to bring about profound social and political

Similarly, Nelson Mandela's emphasis on reconciliation and collaboration across racial divides in South Africa led to initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, aimed at healing past wounds through dialogue and understanding. Archbishop Desmond Tutu's advocacy for the African philosophy of Ubuntu further emphasised the importance of recognising our shared humanity in promoting peace and justice. More recently, figures like Malala Yousafzai have cham-



pioned education as a tool for peace, inspiring a global movement to ensure every child's right to education

contributions is his concept of "structural violence," which highlights the underlying structural causes of and opportunity. violence such as poverty, One of Galtung's enduring inequality, and discriminaviolence such as poverty,

tion embedded within societal structures. This concept remains relevant today, as issues like racism and global economic disparities continue to fuel conflicts worldwide.

Galtung's advocacy for nonviolent conflict resolution continues to inspire peacebuilders and activists worldwide. His emphasis on dialogue, empathy, and cooperation offers practical tools for building sustainable peace in today's conflicted

Contemporary movements for social justice and human rights, such as Black Lives Matter, draw inspiration from Galtung's ideas about the power of non-violent resistance and grassroots

mobilisation to challenge

systemic injustice. In reflecting on Galtung's legacy, we must draw upon his teachings to develop innovative approaches that promote peace, justice, and human dignity for all.

His profound impact on education and social transformation persists beyond his passing, serving as a guiding light for future endeavours in the pursuit of a more peaceful and just world. As Galtung himself said, "Peace is not a fixed state, but a process that requires constant attention and effort." It is up to each of us to contribute to this ongoing work.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Sansthan, views are personal)

Gold rises Rs 250; silver jumps Rs 1,700 per kg

Gamid a rally in precious metal prices in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 65,950 per 10 grams in the previous close. Silver also surged Rs 1,700 to Rs 77,000 per kg. In the previous trade, it had ended at Rs 75,300 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 66,200 per 10 grams, up

by Rs 250 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,169 per ounce, up by US\$ 9 from the previous close. Gold prices recovered from a recent low and moved higher during the European trading session on Thursday due to a pullback in the US dollar and safe-haven buying, Gandhi added. Silver also quoted higher at US\$ 24.92 per ounce, and it had settled at USD 24.22 per ounce in the



CESL floats rate contract for 1,000 e-cars

onvergence Energy Services (CESL) on Thursday said it has floated a rate contract for procuring 1,000 electric cars on a five-year lease on a pan-India basis. The rate Contract is under the 'EV as a Service' model developed by CESL and will target to deploy 1,000 e-cars across India in the first phase, the company said in a statement. According to the statement, such deployment will include the provision of fleet

management services, including repair and maintenance, vehicle insurance, roadside assistance, and drivers (optional). CESL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL), which is under the Ministry of Power has placed a rate contract for a five-year lease of 1,000 e-cars, on a pan-India basis. Since 2018, EESL and CESL have jointly deployed approximately 2.000 e-cars on a lease basis with different departments under the central and state governments and CPSUs.



India, US, South Korea explore cooperation in tech sector

infrastructure, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, critical minerals and production of military hardware figured prominently at a trilateral dialogue among India, the US and South Korea. According to a readout by the US, the meeting in Seoul was the first such trilateral dialogue among the three nations. The meeting committed to

coordinate measures to protect sensitive technologies and build trusted technology ecosystems in the region and globally, the US embassy said on the meeting held this week. "In this first trilateral technology meeting, the United States, Republic of Korea, and India discussed opportunities to cooperate on semiconductor supply chains, telecommunications and digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence. quantum, space, advanced materials, clean energy and critical minerals," it said.



'Completion of projects hallmark of Modi's model'

PNS GUWAHATI

Completion of projects after laying foundation is the hallmark of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development model, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said here on Thursday.

Sitharaman claimed that prior to 2014, when the Modi government came to power at the Centre, foundations were laid but projects were not completed on time.

"The delay in completing projects adversely impacted the country's image, giving the impression that India does not finish its projects," Sitharaman said at the 'Viksit Bharat Ambassador Campus Dialogue' organised at IIT-Guwahati. "The PM believes that the government will not only lay foundations, but also complete the projects... Northeast has also benefitted from this thumb rule," she said.

The Northeast is an important part in the government's development model, which is

'The region's achievements in the last ten years are remarkable and have contributed immensely to India's growth aspiration.



evident from the number of times the prime minister and other central ministers have visited the region in the last decade, she said. "The PM has visited the region 65 times, while other Union ministers have visited 850 times. This shows the government's priority on the region's develop-

ment," Sitharaman said. She highlighted various initiatives taken by the BJP in the last decade to make the Northeast an "engine of growth and development".

The initiatives taken during the last ten years for the Northeast is not just to ensure that the region 'catches up with the other states, but to make sure that it marches fast and ahead in the development process', she said.

The region's achievements in the last ten years are remark-

immensely to India's growth aspiration', the Union minister

It is not about just making investments, but understanding and giving priority to what the youth wants, she added.

Referring to the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Rs 27,000-crore semiconductor assembly and test facility in Assam's Morigaon district by the Prime Minister on Wednesday, Sitharaman said this was very different from any other investments made earlier. 'Money and investments will come, but yesterday was history for the NE and particularly for Assam', she said. Assam and the region

became a part of the semiconductor value chain with the Tata group of industries coming forward to set up the most advanced technological facility which will help the youth not only to gain employment, but also get skilled in the latest technology, the minister

IIFT completes summer placements; average stipend at Rs 2.67 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) on Thursday completed summer placements for the MBA (international business) 2023-25 batch with an average stipend of Rs 2.67 lakh.

Summer placement has witnessed participation from a large number of companies from diverse sectors and industries, the IIFT, which is under the commerce min-

istry, said in a statement.
"The placement cycle saw participation from 102 reputed recruiters across diverse domains and industries. In spite of testing times due to unfavourable market conditions, IIFT emerged victorious with an average stipend of Rs 2.67 lakh," it said.

Among the companies that visited the institute this year includes Accenture Strategy, Amazon, Capgemini, Deloitte, EY, JP Morgan Chase & Co, Wipro, Amazon, Apollo Tyres, Bayer, Cargill, DCM Shriram, Flipkart, L&T, Maersk, Shell, Tata Steel, TVS Motors and

'India set to become exporter of forged wheels used in railways'

Sixty to seventy years after being an importer of forged wheels used in the railways, India is all set to become an exporter of the train component, Union Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said here on Thursday.

The minister, who also holds the portfolio of Electronics and Information Technology, was here to inaugurate the Chennai Design Centre of US-based semiconductor manufacturer Qualcomm, when he said that construction activities for setting up a plant to produce forged wheels for the rail-

Nadu. The railways has entered into a joint venture with Ramakrishna Forgings Ltd to set up the manufacturing facility at Gummidipoondi near Chennai, at an outlay of Rs 650

ways has commenced in Tamil

crore in the first phase. "As you are aware, Vande Bharat trains have been very successful. The wheels that are used in Vande Bharat trains are of special quality. They

undergo a special manufacturing process. The wheels that we use in the wagons under-

reporters. The factory to produce the forged wheels is now being set up. Construction has started. The plant will have the capacity to produce 2.5 lakh wheels, of which 80,000 will be used in India and the remaining

1.70 lakh will be exported," he

go a casting process," he told

"For 60-70 years, India was an importer of forged wheels. India will now emerge as a major exporter of forged wheels. I am very happy that this plant is being set up in Tamil Nadu, and in another will start." he said.

Similarly, Vaishnaw said, the Integral Coach Factory here would also develop standard gauge Vande Bharat trains.

"Standard gauge rakes are used all over the world. So, when we are thinking of exporting Vande Bharat trains few years down the line, we must have the development of standard gauge Vande Bharat trains today," he said.

Designing and testing of standard gauge Vande Bharat trains need to be done, after which national and international approvals need to be obtained before they can be formally launched, he added, saying it will take some time.

Govt, ADB pact to strengthen fintech India's ecosystem

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday signed a USD 23 million loan agreement to enhance access to quality fintech education research, and innovation at the Guiarat International Finance Tec-City. GIFT City is an initiative of the Centre and the Gujarat government to foster India's financial services and fintech ecosystem, the finance ministry said in a statement.

As per the loan agreement, a fintech institute will be set up at GIFT City. The pact was signed by Finance Ministry Joint Secretary Juhi Mukherjee and Officer-in Charge of ADB's India Resident Mission Rajesh Vasudevan. After signing the agreement, Mukherjee said the project will establish International Fintech Institute (IFI) to strengthen fintech education, boost startup success rates, and drive fintech research and innovation. "The project's emphasis on market-driven fintech skills programmes, creating enabling environment for private sector investment and enhancing collaboration between industry, skills development institutes and development partners will promote holistic growth of fintech ecosystem in Īndia," Vasudevan said.

Sensex recovers 335 pts, Nifty closes above 22100

Benchmark Sensex rebounded 335 points while Nifty closed above the 22,100 level on Thursday as buying in IT good helped broader markets recover from the previous day's sharp losses.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 335.39 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 73,097.28 with 20 of its constituents ending in the green and 10 in the red. During the day, it jumped 602.41 points or 0.82 per cent to 73,364.30.

The broader Nifty gained 148.95 points or 0.68 per cent to close at 22,146.65 as 37 of its components settled higher and 13 with losses. Sensex 906.07 points, or

1.23 per cent while Nifty plunged by 338 points, or 1.51 per cent, to close below the 22,000 level on Wednesday due to heavy selling pressure. "The market was able to

recover half of last trading day's sell-off as leverage-based square-off neutralised it, while institutional buying sustained the buoyancy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

"Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI) eased to a four-month



low at 0.2 per cent in February, bringing ease to upcoming CPI trajectory, a relief for future rate cuts," Nair added.

From the Sensex pack, HCL Technologies rose the most by 2.96 per cent. Gains in Larsen &Toubro, Infosys, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services and Asian Paints helped key indices to recover

Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, JSW Steel, State Bank of India and Tata Steel were among the major laggards.

The broader markets also staged a smart recovery, with the BSE Smallcap gauge jumping 3.11 per cent and midcap index climbing 2.28 per cent. The broader market is outperforming the headline

indices, taking advantage of mid and smallcap as a bargaining strategy, analysts said.

SC reserves verdict on whether royalty on minerals is tax

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on the hugely contentious issue of whether the royalty payable on minerals is a tax under the Mines and (Development Regulation) Act, 1957, and if only the Centre is vested with the power to levy such exaction or states also have the authority to impose levies on mineral bearing land in their terri-

'Hindenburg attack was to politically defame India's governance practices'

PNS MUMBAI

US short-seller Hindenburg Research's damning report against the Adani group was not just to destabilise the apples-to-airport conglomerdefame India's governance practices, said Gautam Adani, chairman of Adani Group. In January last year,

Hindenburg published a report alleging malfeasance by the Adani Group. The allegations included cooking books of accounts, over-



invoicing of import costs and round-tripping of own money to push up share prices. Adani Group denied all allegations and won relief from the Supreme Court this year when judges ruled that it does not need to face additional inves-

The report set off an over USD 150 billion selloff in the conglomerate's stocks and led Gautam Adani - who was listed as the world's second rich-

est at the start of 2023 - to slip out of the top 20. The stock have since recovered most of the losses. At a private event here, Adani reflected on his life journey, recalling the opportunities he got and the challenges he faced. "Last year on January 24, we

were subject to a massive attack by a US short seller.

Tourism Ministry statistics,

over 17 lakh tourists visited the

island nation in 2023, out of

which more than 2,09,198 vis-



Hyatt Hotels to open 8 new properties in India

PNS NEW DELHI

Global hospitality major Hyatt Hotels Corporation on Thursday said it plans to open eight new hotels in India and Southwest Asia across various leisure and city destinations in 2024.

Announcing its plans for an aggressive expansion of Hyatt's brand portfolio in India and Southwest Asia, the company said,"This growth is timed to coincide with the expected rebound of leisure and business travel in the country and the sub-continent.'

The opening of eight new hotels will lead to addition of

The company said the brand expansion in India and Southwest Asia this year will continue with its 'Hyatt Regency', 'Hyatt Place' and 'Hyatt Centric' brands.

'Indian tourists shun the Maldives; industry feels the pinch

Indian tourists, who used to flock to the Maldives, are now shunning the island nation and its tourism industry is already feeling the pinch of declined revenue, prompting calls for mending the fence with New Delhi.

India has slipped to sixth position in 2024 compared to being a topper in visitor numbers in 2023, prompting voices from the local tourism industry to flag the danger for the tourism-dependent economy of the archipelagic coun-



try in the Indian Ocean. A full-blown backlash was directed at the Maldives following derogatory remarks against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media by three Maldivian officials after Modi posted photos and video of the pristine Lakshadweep Islands on India's west coast on January 6 on his

itors were Indians followed by Russians (2,09,146) and China (1,87,118).The number of Indian visitors was more than 2.4 lakh in 2022 while over 2.11 lakh Indians flew to the Maldives in 2021. The Maldives was also one of the few countries open

for international tourists dur-

ing the pandemic and nearly

63,000 Indians visited that

country during that period.

1,200 new keys (rooms) across leisure and city locations. Hyatt has 49 hotels in the region with over 10,000 kevs.

Air India building with 'numerous firsts' gets new owner

PNS MUMBAI

Standing on the land reclaimed from sea for more than five decades now, Air India building in the country's commercial capital in the 1970s had people queuing up just to have the experience of using an ele-

Designed by New Yorkbased architect John Burgee matching the aspirations of JR D Tata, the 23-storey building was among the first in those days to have elevators, neon signage on top and two levels of basement parking to name a few facilities.

The building had "numerous firsts" is how a retired senior official of erstwhile Air India put it on Thursday as he recalled his more than two decade-long stint there.

And the neon signage on top

of the building that displayed Centaur, the logo of Air India which was later replaced after the merger of Indian Airlines, was also a key attraction in the 1970s as not many structures boasted of such an element.

The building, constructed on the state government's land, is among the many commercial high-rises to come up on the Southern tip of the land reclaimed from sea that was developed as the city's business district Nariman Point.

With its central location, the iconic building, which completed 50 years in June 2020, also provides an expansive view of the Marine Drive from Nariman Point up to Malabar Hill.

On Thursday, the central government announced approving the transfer of the Air India building in Mumbai



to the Maharashtra government for a consideration of Rs

1,601 crore. Former executive director of erstwhile Air India Jitender Bhargava, who had worked out of the building for over 20 years, on Thursday told PTI that the building had "numerous firsts" and added that the board room was on the 23rd floor. Centralised air conditioning facilities and elevators with piped music were among the other attractions.

When Burgee designed the

building, it was one of its kind at that time in 1970.

Bhargava, whose office was on the 20th floor of the building during the period from 1989 to 2010, said that when the building was opened, people used to come to have the experience of taking the elevator from the ground floor to the first floor, which housed the airline's booking office at that time. There is also an auditorium and cafeteria, among other facilities at the building, where around eight floors were occu-

pied by Air India, he recalled. During the Gulf boom in the 80s, job seekers used to flock to the Air India booking counter. As many as 400 people would be visiting the place to book flight tickets to various Gulf countries, a retired airline offi-

ording to Godrej archives,

the Air India building was among the first few high-rises to be constructed on the new stretch of the reclaimed land.

The building had its share of

cinematic moments as many Bollywood movies have featured it in various scenes. During its more than fivedecade-long existence, the building, also earthquake-resis-

tant, was rocked by a bomb blast in 1993. The iconic building in many aspects also reflects the development journey of Mumbai and even as a link between the

past and the present. In its archive Volume 2, Issue 1 dated April-May 2014, Godrej said that back in the 1920s, when the post-war boom put great stress on land, the Development Directorate proposed the Backbay

Reclamation Scheme

'Rs 500 cr electric-mobility scheme reflects thrust on ÉV

PNS NEW DELHI

The Rs 500 crore Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024 shows the government's continued thrust on vehicle electrification as it is indispensable on a long-term basis to fortify the case for an EV ecosystem, industry experts said on

Thursday. Ministry of Heavy Industries has announced the new scheme to promote e-mobility in the country with an outlay of Rs 500 crore for four months beginning April 2024. The new scheme is

for 2-wheelers and 3-wheelers. Commenting on the government's decision, Srikumar Krishnamurthy, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA said the scheme is a favourable move towards the acceleration of the



electrification pace in the country. "The EMP scheme reflects the government's continued thrust on vehicle electrification, although the quantum of subsidy is seen lower in line with expectations," he said.

ICRA expects the penetration levels of e-2w and e-3w (excluding e-rickshaws) to reach 6-8 per cent and 14-16 per cent, respectively in fiscal 2024-25, he added.



Vijayawada | Friday March 15, 2024

Sydney Sweeney just had her first flop, but she isn't too concerned

ctress Sydney Sweeney, who rose to Approminence for her parts in television dramas such as *The White* Lotus and Euphoria, in a recent interview with the Los Angeles Times, the actress, expressed her thoughts on all of the mocking surrounding Madame Web. According to the source, Sydney is 'unfazed by the severe, sarcastic response to the recent disappointment of *Madame Web.*' They also reported the actor as saying she was committed to the Marvel film no matter how it turned out. She went on to say, "I was just hired as an actress in it, so I was just along for the ride for whatever was going to

Sydney portrayed Julia Cornwall, an iteration of Spider Woman, in the film starring Dakota Johnson. After the film received bad reviews from both critics and fans. Sydney remarked on Saturday Night Live, "You definitely didn't see me in *Madame Web*." Fans also noticed Dakota's indifference to promoting the film during her press tour. Jimmy Kimmel also made a *Madame*

Web joke when hosting the Academy Awards. During his monologue, he stated "The people in this room have produced so many wonderful films and memorable performances. This night is full of incredible talent and untapped potential, but so was *Madame* Web." According to Collider, the film's global gross is \$96 million, with a 15% Rotten Tomatoes

In 2023, Sydney starred in Reality, Americana, and Anyone But You, for which she also served as executive producer. She will soon appear in Michael Mohan's

Immaculate, a psychological horror thriller that will be released on March 22. The film had its debut at the South by Southwest Film and TV Festival on



She previously collaborated with the filmmaker on Everything Sucks and The Voyeurs. She will also soon appear in Echo Valley and Eden

Neha Dhupia recalls being fired from a show during her pregnancy

what's brewing?

eha Dhupia, a Bollywood performer, has previously spoken about having difficult chats during casting sessions. Reflecting on her own experiences, she described times in which she received comments about her weight as well as advice to reduce weight for particular roles, despite the fact that those roles had minimal screen time. "When I joined the business, there was a stereotypical mold that women were supposed to fit into, and if you didn't fit into that mold, then you were not good enough. Now that everyone is so diverse, casting is so real, but you know things still happen. I have been fired for both having a sharp face and not willing or wanting to lose 7 to 10 kg of a body that I thought was super fit in my definition."

The actor continued, "When I was pregnant, I was fired from a show that I was on, and there was no news of that show being shot for the next 8 months. When I went and revealed to them that I was pregnant and told them that they were not shooting for 8 months, they just said no, we don't want to work with you. I am talking about people who have said and done unreasonable things, but I am ok now, at that time, it bothers you.

Neha explained that she knows the importance of physical modifications or specialised requirements for various parts, especially in action films where agility is essential. She was pleased, however, that the world has gotten more inclusive, allowing for a wider choice of actors with

various characteristics and skills. Neha and Gulshan Devaiah are working together on a new online series called Therapy





Triptii Dimri reportedly increased her

remuneration for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3

> riptii Dimri has become a highly sought-after name in Bollywood following her sensational performance in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Animal, where she captured hearts with her talent and charisma. Triptii Dimri has reportedly increased her costs dramatically for her upcoming production, "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3," according to News

According to sources, the aspiring Bollywood actress has opted to double her pay for

her part in the future movie because of her Instagram following, which tripled after she posted the picture Animal. Considering her growing prominence in the industry, the Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 makers have apparently acceded to her demands. In light of her expanding fan following and market worth, Triptii's salary for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 has increased to Rs 80 lakh from the Rs 40 lakh she

received for her

performance in

Animal. Though

Triptii commands a high charge, there are rumours circulating about how much less she is paid than her costar, Kartik Aaryan. According to reports, Kartik is being paid between Rs 45 and 50 crore for his role in the movie, whereas she is reportedly paid Rs 80 lakh.

Rumours are circulating in the meantime about her possible forays into South Indian cinema, including the possibility that she and Prabhas would feature in the movie Spirit.

Olivia revealed how BCRAS 'saved her life' from breast cancer

livia Munn has revealed that she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a double mastectomy, thanking her doctors and encouraging fans to perform their own risk assessments. "I am lucky. We caught it in enough time for me to have options. I wish the same for every woman who may have to face this one day," the 43-year-old actor wrote on Instagram, alongside photographs and video of herself being treated at a hospital. Olivia stated that she took a genetic test in February 2023 that tested for 90 distinct cancer genes and came out nega-

Nonetheless, her doctor chose to calculate her Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Score, which "saved my life," she stat-

Olivia received imaging tests followed by a biopsy, which revealed she had an aggressive form of cancer in both breasts. She underwent a double mastectomy 30 days after the biopsy and has had four surgeries in the last ten months. She explained that she kept it private because "I needed to catch my breath and get through some of the hardest parts before shar-

ing."
She praised her family

tive on all of them. and friends, particularly her partner, comedian John Mulaney, "for being there before I went into each surgery and being there when I woke up, always placing framed photos of our little boy Malcolm so it would be the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes." Olivia was a correspondent for Jon Stewart's Daily Show, and her film credits include Magic Mike, The Predator, Office Christmas Party, and X-Men:



ARCHIE







CALVIN AND HOBBES







Apocalypse.



GARFIELD







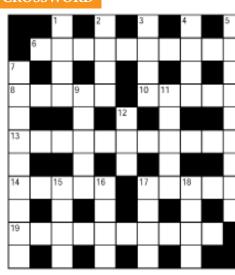
REALITY CHECK







CROSSWORD



NANCY









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

SUDOKU

						Ye	Yesterday's solut					
						6	2	7	1	4	5	
	4			3	5	8	3		5	6	1	
	-	_		Ÿ	_	1	5	9	8	7	1	
1		2		4		4	7	5	3	2	Ť	
ī						9	1	2	6	5	8	
						3	6	8	4		Î	
		3				7	8	3	9	1	(
4		-	_		_	5	9	1	2	8	1	
		9	6		8	2	4	6	7	8		
١		5	1			Ru	les					
4		J				 Each row and col 						
	7				9	contain each nun exactly once.						
-	_			-		■ The sum of all nu						

-	Ye	ste	rda	y's :	sol	ıtic	n		
	6	2	7	1	4	9	3	8	5
	8	3	4	5	6	2	9	7	1
-	1	5	9	8	7	3	2	4	6
	4	7	5	3	2	1	6	9	8
	9	1	2	6	5	8	4	3	7
	3	6	8	4	9	7	1	5	2
	7	8	3	9	1	6	5	2	4
	5	9	1	2	8	4	7	6	3
	2	4	6	7	3	5	8	1	9
	Ru	les							

any row or column must

equal 45.

- 1 Bitter-tasting 2 Cold winter crystals 3 Moist

ACROSS

10 Snapshot

DOWN

6 A traffic circle where

indicates direction

14 Salty water from the eyes

17 Rubber covers on wheels

19 Getting better after illness

roads cross 8 A pointy thing that

13 A greeting (4,7)

4 A song for one singer 5 The most powerful Female children

9 A command

11 Bees make this 12 A fishing pole

15 A curved support

under a bridge

18 Wear this on a finger

16 Rescue

17 Grow weary

GINGER MEGGS









the pioneer ayawada

Follow us on

@TheDailyPioneer

facebook.com/ dailypioneer

Friday March 15, 2024

'Despite the challenges, the breathtaking beauty of Ladakh often outweighs the fears'

TEJAL SINHA

adakh is a paradise not only because of its stunning mountains and environment but also because ✓of its people. Ladakh is attractive not only for its breathtaking scenery but also for its incredible people and culture. The way everyone gets together, as well as the distinctive traditions, add to Ladakh's fascinating beauty. And renowned television actress Samikssha Batnagar recently got to experience the beauty of seren-

ity.
"Ladakh's culture is rich with Tibetan Buddhist influences, evident in its monasteries, prayer flags, and stupas," begins the Baal Veer actress. "The people are known for their warm hospitality, unique festivals like Losar and Hemis, and traditional attire. I really enjoyed the Ladakhi cuisine, with dishes like Thukpa and momos, which reflect the region's heritage and climate." Samikssha observed that the Buddhist culture in Ladakh is deeply rooted in Tibetan Buddhism, with monasteries serving as spiritual centers. The people, she says, follow Buddhist teachings, evident in their daily rituals, festivals, and reverence for the Dalai Lama. "Monastic life plays a

significant role, with monks and nuns practicing meditation, chanting, and preserving ancient texts. Art, architecture, and rituals reflect a blend of Tibetan and local Ladakhi traditions, creating a unique cultural landscape," she says, adding, "I had a great time interacting with Ladakh's locals; they offer a glimpse into their vibrant culture through shared meals, conversations, and participation in cultural activities like traditional dance or attending festivals. Their warmth and openness created a memorable experience that fostered deeper connec-tions and understanding of their way of life."

Engaging with Indo-Aryan locals, she says, offers a deeper appreciation for their authenticity and contributes to a richer understanding of Ladakh's multicultural iden-

Apart from Ladakh, for the Kumkum Bhagya actress, one of the best and most unique places in India is the backwaters of Kerala. "This network of interconnected rivers, lakes, and canals, especially in areas like Alleppey and Kumarakom, offers a serene and picturesque setting unlike anywhere else in the world. Visitors can experience the beauty of the backwaters by cruising on traditional houseboats, known as "kettuvallams," which glide through the calm waters while providing a glimpse into the traditional lifestyle of the region. The lush greenery, serene waters, and peaceful ambiance make the

backwaters of Kerala a truly unforgettable

Actress Samikssha Batnagar, who recently got to witness the beautiful serenity of Ladakh, gets candid with The Pioneer, sharing her travel tales

for our

weekly

Trave -

logue.

exclusive

column in

Travelouge

Her hotel experience in Ladakh was likely characterised by stunning views of the Himalayas, comfortable accommodations, and warm hospitality. Many hotels in Ladakh she shares offer a blend of traditional Ladakhi architecture with modern amenities, ensuring a comfortable stay amidst the rugged terrain. Additionally, "the staff often goes above and beyond to cater to guests' needs, providing insights into local attractions and offering delicious Ladakhi cuisine. Overall, my Ladakh hotel experience likely added to the memorable moments of your trip, providing a comfortable retreat after adventurous days exploring the region. I have experienced the low oxygen levels in Ladakh, and it was frightening to a certain point due to the potential risks of altitude sickness. Symptoms such as dizziness, shortness of breath, and headaches were quite alarming, especially if you are unaccustomed to high altitudes. It's crucial to take precautions, such as acclimatising slowly, staying hydrated, and seeking medical assistance if symptoms worsen. Despite the challenges, the breathtaking beauty of Ladakh often outweighs the fears, making it a memorable and ultimately rewarding adventure."

She further goes on to share, "For me, travelling to Ladakh was liberating due to its remote and untouched beauty, providing a sense of escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The wide-open spaces, majestic mountains, and serene atmosphere create an environment where one can disconnect from the stresses of the modern world and reconnect with nature and oneself. Additionally, the region's rich cultural heritage and welcoming locals contribute to a feeling of freedom and exploration, making the trip to Ladakh a truly transformative experience.

The primary religion in Ladakh is Tibetan Buddhism, which permeates every aspect of life in the region. Monasteries, adorned with colorful prayer flags and intricate murals, serve as spiritual centers where monks and nuns engage in prayer, meditation, and rituals. Buddhism in Ladakh, she says, is deeply intertwined with the culture, traditions, and daily practices of the people, emphasising principles of compassion, mindfulness, and nonviolence. Additionally, there are small Muslim and Hindu communities, contributing to the religious diversity of

"Experiencing Ladakh's high mountain passes is thrilling. Amidst breathtaking scenery, you'll conquer some of the world's highest motorable roads, like Khardung La and Chang La, encountering local nomads and colorful prayer flags along the way," says the *Anthology End* actress, signing off the chat, saying, "Travelling with close friends is a fantastic way to strengthen bonds, create unforgettable memories, and add an extra layer of fun and support to the journey."



Unseen effects of sleepless nights on pregnant woman

Sleep disturbances affect most of the pregnant women. About 79% of pregnant women experience sleep disorders. It can pose risks like gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, convulsions, premature birth, and prolonged labor. Various factors contribute to these disturbances, including hormonal changes, anxiety, acid reflux, changes, anxiety, acid reflux, increased bladder activity, snoring, sleep apnea, leg cramps, back pain, heightened baby movements, and the expanding belly.

the expanding belly.

Apart from all this, stress and anxiety can also impact your ability to fall asleep. Lack of sleep can also increase your postpartum depression. Untreated sleep disturbances during pregnancy can have long-term effects on maternal health and may increase the risk of chronand may increase the risk of chronic sleep problems even after child-birth.

- Stick to a consistent sleep schedule to regulate your body's clock.
- Reserve your bed for sleep to avoid confusing your body Limit caffeine and chocolate, especially
- in the afternoon. Manage anxiety through meditation and
- Enjoy warm baths and massages to relax, and more.
- Remember, sleep is crucial during pregnancy. If these tips don't work, consult your obstetrician for further

(The author, Dr. Rajeev Agarwal, is the IVF specialist at Renew Healthcare.)

Nitanshi Goel, the fresh face, makes a splash on the

SHIKHA DUGGAL

ne of the leading actresses in Kiran Rao's Laapata Ladies, a film that is currently making waves around the nation and in which the filmmaker has discovered a hidden gem, says, "We have our grounds for considering Nitanshi Goel, the newcomer, to screen because I wanted them to look rusty. At that time, I discovered how Madhya Pradeshi be a gem."

The sixteen-year-old already exudes such selfassurance! Her surroundings have been providing her with so much love and encouragement that her selfesteem has grown to such an extent that we were astounded by how professionally she conducted an exclusive interview with us regarding the success of her debut film. Amazing!

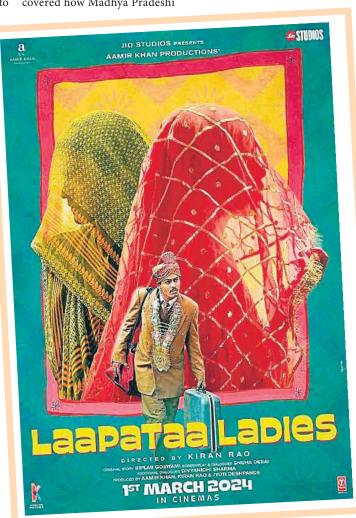
"The day I auditioned is the same day I got select-ed for the part," a confident Nitanshi says, churning out as much as we could from the encounter with this young woman. "I had no idea whether the script was being produced by Aamir Khan or directed by Kiran Raa of directed by Kiran Rao when I first held it. I started preparing by watching every old 2001 film as well as the television series Balika Vadhu."

What followed, however, wiped the *Laapataa Ladies* notoriety off the ground. "I become crazy when the team informs me that Aamir Khan wants to meet me. I kept asking myself, Is this a joke or what? I will always remember our first meeting. He told my mother, "You have given birth to a diamond, trust me on this," for that reason. "She doesn't need to seek roles right now; they will find her,"

Nitanshi said with emotion.

"After that, I made the decision to work three times as much as I could," she said. "I first got tanned in preparation for my part! We filmed in Nashik, where the heat was unbearable. I chose to perform my scenes without using sun-screen because I wanted them

opportunity to watch the women in 'ghoongat' surrounding me on my daily commute to shoot because it was intended for every woman to have a bashful, sly appearance in the movie. My eyes and body lan-guage were meant to speak for themselves, even though I didn't have an excessive number of



people talk. I never missed an lines in the movie. The remain-

der was pure Kiran Rao genius." She goes on to elaborate a lit-She goes on to elaborate a little more about the transformation: "When I was first approached, I was this era's Gen Z girl; as soon as I read the script, my mind said, "Transformation, Nitanshi, it's time'. I felt good about it because I was meant to be

channelling my intense fem-inist energy at such a young age. When I realised that even my character comes from a protective family, I was able to relate to her even more."

Are promotions stressful or enjoyable? Here's what the debutante has to say: "I was excited to attend the screenings in nearly every state. Women were applauding for us as soon as we began marketing the movie. That's when I realised I had what it takes to win folks over! I felt more excited than anxious. Even at this age, I could comprehend the film's themes, therefore, I wasn't averting my eyes from them. I knew a lot of stuff. For instance, I learned a lot about the value of a girl having her own finances when we were filming."

"She was like a mother

figure to me on the sets, she didn't even mind me calling her 'mumma," she says, expressing her deep affection for her director, Kiran Rao. "She was aware that I was a novice, but she nevertheless allowed me complete latitude to investigate the plot. I'm overjoyed that my debut movie focussed mostly on women and was excelThe awardwinning teen actress Nitanshi Goel, who is also a much-loved social media influencer, speaks to **The Pioneer** over an exclusive chat and discusses being a part of Laapataa Ladies, preparations, and more.

Mumbai clinch Ranji Trophy for 42nd time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

omestic heavyweights
Mumbai ended their
eight-year barren run
to lift a record-extending
42nd Ranji Trophy title here
on Thursday, beating a
resolute Vidarbha by 169 runs
on the fifth and final day of a
thoroughly engrossing
summit clash.
The fate of the final

The fate of the final -Mumbai's 48th in the 90 years of the tournament's history here at the iconic Wankhede Stadium was sealed when the hosts set a 538-run target for the visiting team.

Vidarbha captain Akshay Wadkar (102) and the unheralded Harsh Dubey (65) kept Mumbai at bay for the entire first session on the last day after Vidarbha resumed on 248 for five, needing another 290 runs to win.

The team was eventually bowled out for 368 in a contest that ebbed and flowed with Vidarbha frustrating the hosts for long periods of play on the last two days.

Wadkar led the fight for his side with his first century of side with his first century of the year which also helped him cross the 600-run mark consuming 255 balls in 194



first-class career.

this season. Dubey brought up only the second fifty of his little after the resumption of

the second session on the final

Wadkar fell shortly after play resumed — leg before off Tanush Kotian (4/95) — and once the pair was broken, it all

ended in a jiffy for the visitors who have now lost the Ranji Trophy final for a third time after winning two titles.

balls, 5 x4s, 2x6s) and Aditya Sarwate, who missed the majority of the game owing to Tushar Deshpande continued to employ the short ball to While Kotian cleaned up Yash

dismiss Dubey (65 off 128 Thakur (6) for his fourth Dhawal Kulkarni wicket, signed off from all forms of cricket with the final wicket of the game in the form of Umesh Yadav for a fairytale ending.

Mumbai skipper Ajinkya Rahane praised Vidarbha for their gritty display before lifting the trophy and rightly

For a team which paid a heavy price for a poor first-innings score — 105 to concede a 119-run lead in response to Mumbai's 224 — Vidarbha showed resilience to gave a fine account of themselves in

the second innings.

Mumbai began the final day hoping to break the sixthwicket stand between Wadkar and Dubey early but their wait only extended since the batters overcame all challenges that the hosts threw at them.

With the pace bowlers not being able to trouble the batters, Mumbai hopes were pinned on their spinners but their own error cost Rahane's side early on.

Kotian appealed for a bat-pad catch at silly point against Dubey in the 101st over of the innings but the appeal was turned down.

In a show of desperation, Mumbai went for the DRS intervention which confirmed the ball had not grazed the bat and was also going to miss the leg stump.

Kotian then found an outside

edge off Wadkar's bat which fell close to Rahane.

Mumbai's frustration was evident when Kulkarni held his ground at the end of his follow through after being declined a leg-before appeal

against Dubey. Kulkarni made some gestures and even exchanged a few words with the umpire but replays confirmed that the ball had pitched outside the legstump.

Dubey was also lucky when Kotian pinned him in front of the wickets but Mumbai could not get it overturned since they had no reviews left.

The Vidarbha batter continued to ride his luck, getting another decision in his favour when replays showed the ball had missed his bat and gloves off Shams Mulani.

Wadkar completed century shortly after lunch but once he was dismissed, the rest of the batting collapsed soon after.

Brief scores

Mumbai: 224 & 418

Vidarbha: 105 & 368 in 134.4 overs (Atharva Taide 32, Aman Mokhade 32, Karun Nair 74, Akshay Wadkar 102; Tanush Kotian 4/95) by 169

Pant resilience, mental strength was quite something: **Medical staff that worked with**

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The medical staff that nursed Rishabh Pant back to full fitness after the horrifying car crash in 2022 has raved about the resilience and mental strength shown by the cricketer, saying he persevered through a "frustrating" recovery process.

Pant is set for his cricketing return in the IPL on March 23 when he will captain Delhi Capitals against Punjab Kings in Mohali.

"I feel very close to normal," Pant told 'bcci.Tv' with a radiant smile.

It seemed far fetched 15 months ago when he suffered multiple injuries in the crash. thanks to the expert care he got from the likes of Dr Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai, and some dedicated staff at Cricket National (NCA) Academy Bengaluru.

Pardiwala remembered how arduous Pant's recovery

journey was. "As surgeons and as doctors, it's very important for us to inform our patients, their family and all the stakeholders of the actual status of the injury. Rishabh's mother was with him. She knee injury, the traumal the stakeholders of the actual status of the injury Rishabh's mother was with him. She knee injury, the traumal the scillarity and the scilla was very concerned whether he would ever be able to walk

again," Pardiwala said.
"I told her that 'this is such a critical injury and we will definitely aim for him to get back to competitive cricket. But that's going to be a longdrawn process."

However, Pardiwala was left astonished when he saw Pant's confidence as he capability," he said.



entered the recovery phase. "When I told Rishabh 18 However, it has come true months, he said 'okay, I am going to show you I can do it in 12 months," he said. Dinshaw Pardiwala, Director, Centre for Sports Medicine, Pant stayed true to his words as he put in the hard yards at as he put in the hard yards at the NCA during his

recuperation.
"When I started walking without crutches, that was a high point. Then started jogging a little bit, that was a high for me, then started batting, then started keeping as I took joy in everything," said the 26-year-old.
But each of those baby steps

knee injury, the trauma following the accident and Pant's own frustration at being away from the cricket field had to be dealt with in an effective manner.

"For any surgeon, knee dislocation is one of the worst injuries because everything breaks. You need to get back

MCA DOUBLES

Mumbai team to receive additional ₹5 crore

The triumphant Mumbai team will receive an additional Rs 5 crore for its unprecedented 42nd Ranji Trophy title after the state cricket association doubled the prize purse on Thursday.

Mumbai won a record-extending 42nd Ranji title after beating Vidarbha by 169 runs on the fifth and final day of the summit showdown at the Wankhede Stadium.

"MCA President Amol Kale and Apex Council has decided to double the Ranji Trophy prize money. The MCA will pay additional sum of Rs 5 crore to the winning Mumbai Ranji Trophy team," a statement from MCA secretary Ajinkya Naik

"It has been a great year for the MCA as the association has won 7 titles and we have made it to

knockout stage in all age groups in BCCI tournaments."

Mumbai ended an eight-year wait to lift a record-extending title here, getting the better of a resolute Vidarbha.

The fate of the final -- Mumbai's 48th in the 90 years of the tournament's history -- here at the iconic Wankhede Stadium was sealed when the hosts set a 538-run target for the visiting team.

Mumbai head coach Omkar Salvi,

who was appointed to the post last year, lauded MCA's move to double the prize money considering that lot of players don't have full-time jobs of players don't have full-time jobs these days.

"For all the players, nowadays, there"

provide jobs. For youngsters, there is also a lot of lure towards franchise cricket (where) there is also a lot of the MCA taking that step forward the last two days.

"The BCCI is taking that step and raising that money along with that, the hosts for long the MCA taking that step forward the last two days.

are very less institutions which money," Salvi said.

"The BCCI is taking that step and

to equal that amount is a great help for the players who don't have some jobs or some earnings.

some jobs or some earnings.

"It is definitely an inspiration (and) it should be intrinsic -- the monetary help will give them that security and it will definitely stabilise them mentally and financially so that they can give more to the game," he added.
On the final day, Vidarbha captain
Akshay Wadkar (102) and the
unheralded Harsh Dubey (65) kept

Mumbai at bay for the entire first session on the last day after Vidarbha resumed on 248 for five, needing another 290 runs to win. The team was eventually bowled out for 368 in a contest that ebbed and flowed with Vidarbha frustrating the hosts for long periods of play on

RCB kick starts pre tournament camp, Kohli expected to join in next few days

 $R_{\text{Bangalore}}^{\text{oyal}} \quad \substack{\text{Challengers} \\ \text{began} \quad \text{their}}$ pre-tournament without their numero uno Virat Kohli, who might take a few more days to join before the team starts its IPL campaign against reigning champions Chennai Super Kings on March 22.

Most of the domestic players joined the camp under the guidance of new head coach Andy Flower and Director of Cricket Mo Bobat and they went through the paces on the opening day of the camp on Wednesday.

While skipper Faf du Plessis was in attendance along with West Indies fast bowler Alzarri Joseph, Kohli, easily



the biggest 'Box Office' in Indian cricket, is yet to hit the straps after a paternity break that ruled him out of the marquee five-Test series

against England. "Kohli is expected to join in the next few days," a BCCI source, who is tracking developments within IPL

Kohli might make his first appearance for the franchise during 'RCB Unbox', a highprofile annual event held at the Garden City in which fans get a glimpse of their favourite stars.

As RCB started their training session, skipper Du Plessis told the team it was lucky to have Flower as its coach.

"I think he's an incredible coach. So I feel team is very lucky to have him, kind and big hearted man," Du Plessis was quoted as saying on RCB 'Bold Diaries'.

Flower, on his part, said: "New chapter to write in RCB story, we have been given the chance to write and it is a privilege, something to be very excited about."

Former Lankan cricketer Lahiru injured in accident

PTI ■ COLOMBO

 $F_{\text{Lahiru}}^{\text{ormer Sri Lanka cricketer}}_{\text{Thirimanne}}$ Thirimanne sustained minor injuries after a road accident, leading to his hospitalisation in Thrippane, Anuradapura, local media reported on Thursday.

According to a report in 'Ada Derana', the 34-year-old Thirimanne was admitted to Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital "with minor injuries sustained in the accident". Anuradapura is a major city, located about 205km from

national capital Colombo. "Police mentioned that the car in which Thirimanne was travelling had collided with a lorry arriving from the opposite direction at around 07.45 a.M. This morning," it stated. "Three other individuals travelling in the car, the driver of the lorry and another person have been injured and hospitalised."

Thirimanne appeared in 44 Tests for Sri Lanka, scoring 2088 runs, including three hundreds.

He played 127 ODI for the island nation, scoring 3164 runs in all. He also played 26 T20 Internationals for Sri Lanka.

Thirimanne last played for Sri Lanka in 2022 before announcing his retirement

Domestic umpiring standards under scanner after CK Nayudu Trophy howler

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The dubious dismissal of Karnataka opener Prakhar Chaturvedi in the recent Col. CK Nayudu Trophy U23 final against Uttar Pradesh has raised concerns about the standards of umpiring in domestic matches. unsavoury incident happened in Karnataka's first innings after Chaturvedi played a pull against UP pacer Kunal Tyagi well away from his body.
The ball, which took a rather healthy edge off Chaturvedi's bat, moved further away from stumper Aaradhya Yadav who had to make a full-length dive to his left to make the collection.

ground. However, the on-field umpire upheld the appeal for caught behind much to the dismay of batter Chaturvedi, who made 33

But the ball rolled out of Yadav's

and 86 in Karnataka's maiden victory in the tournament which came by virtue of their first innings lead here at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

"Yes, it was a clear case of not out as I later saw the clippings. The ball came out of UP wicketkeeper's hands before he completed the catch. The umpire should not have given it out," a former First-Class umpire told PTI on conditions of anonymity. It is important to maintain top standards because these junior tournaments are stepping stones for several budding cricketers. Imagine how bad that boy (Chaturvedi) would have felt after spending close to an hour at the crease, only to get out like

gloves before he could complete the catch even as the wicketkeeper thudded on to the "Also, umpiring standards have a direct relation with the overall quality of a match," he said.

So, how can one ensure consistency and high level of accuracy in domestic umpiring?
"The BCCI has laid out some



strict parameters in the umpires' brushed it aside, thinking that selection process and many state associations themselves have umpires associations working hard to ensure a good level of

officiating.
"But I feel former cricketers should be encouraged to take up umpiring as they know the game closer than anyone else. We have had S Venkataraghavan, Peter Willey, David Shepherd and Dickie Bird who were excellent umpires as they leaned on their experience from their playing days," he added.

Recently, former India batter Manoj Tiwary had lashed out at poor standards of umpiring in domestic cricket.

Another former First-Class batter said instances of umpires making childish mistakes were quite common in domestic circuit. "It is quite common, especially in

junior cricket. But in one Ranji (Trophy) match, I was hit on my hips and the umpire gave that out they remain sharp," the umpire leg before. I was 48 then. I detailed.

mistakes can happen to anyone. "But in the next innings, when I was batting on 45, the same umpire gave me out caught behind off a left-arm spinner when my bat was tucked safely behind my pads while leaving the ball. Even the silly point fielder

could not hide his surprise," he

noted. There have been initiatives like the umpiring academy in Nagpur to better the standards but the lack of continuity has been the

"Those were good ideas but somehow did not take off as expected. There is an ICC online course too for the umpires.

"But beyond all these, the board should increase remuneration for umpires and should also ensure that First-Class umpires officiate at state level or even some local matches so that there is no gap between the assignments and

Vijayawada | Friday March 15, 2024



Bandook director returns after 8 years

irector Laxman Murari, who won the praise of not only the people of Telangana but also critics and intellectuals with the film Bandook, is getting ready to make another experimental film in the background of social drama.

Laxman is getting ready to don the director's hat after almost 8 years of

Ahead of beginning the film, the director met Superstar Rajinikanth, whom he idolises in his career, to seek his blessings. Rajinikanth, who has a fan following not only in India but across the world, extended his best wishes to the director for his new

beginning.

Meanwhile, director Laxman expressed how happy and powerful he felt after meeting Rajinikanth ahead of his film's new beginnings.

RGV declares his entry into politics

n Thursday, filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma said something "suddenly" on X, formerly Twitter. He said that he would run in the Andhra Pradesh Lok Sabha 2024 elections. Ram Gopal said that he would run for the Lok Sabha from the state's Pithapuram seat.

"Sudden decision," tweeted Ram Gopal Varma. "I'm pleased to announce that Pithapuram will be my contest area." The director withheld further information.

The Telugu Desam Party-Bharatiya Janata Party-Jana Sena Party (JSP) alliance had nnounced that Tollywood actor and JSP chairman Pawan Kalyan would be fielded from the Pithapuram constituency. This announcement preceded Ram Gopal Varma's.

Naveen Chandra

Going to Hollywood is my
Actress Divi Vadthya is one of those performers, who is

of those performers, who is trying to experiment with roles and is succeeding each time. The actress, who is busy with the release of *Lambasinghi*, spoke to us exclusively about her role in **Pushpa 2**, working for Lambasinghi, her desire to play strong characters, and more.

K. RAMYA SREE

with an intoxicating beauty and performance with naturalism, actress Divi Vadthya, although she rose to fame with *Bigg Boss*, has been one of those very few Telugu actresses who is always bringing something very natural and unique to the audience with every single project of hers.

Divi is now playing the lead role in the film Lambasinghi that hit theatres today (March 15), and if you happen to watch the trailer of the film, she was looking divinely with little to no make-up in those simple churidars playing a village girl.

Speaking exclusively with The Pioneer ahead of the film's release, Divi confessed, "When I heard about Lambasinghi, I felt it was written for me. It was very beautiful, and there was nothing in the project to say NO to. I took it up as soon as the script was narrated to

From Maharshi to ATM to Chiranjeevi's Godfather, Divi has done a handful of projects in Tollywood, yet she still gives auditions, and she is okay to give them. We asked her about her character-choosing process, and given her history of doing varied roles, she informed us, "Initially, when I started my career, I got rejected 80-100 times, but now, when I give an audition, I almost get selected. The second thing is that I am ensuring that the roles I'm taking suit my personality and physique. Because I'm tall and strong, those kinds of

impact. In big films, I'm choosing roles; in small films,

I'm playing the main lead." Coming back to Lambasinghi, the film was completely shot in the jungles and tribal areas of Lambasinghi. Was it difficult for her to shoot there? Of course, it was very difficult, so much so that she was even hospitalised for three days. But it looks like her hard work is going to pay off, as the film so far has been receiving great responses from all corners. The Bigg Boss fame shared with us, "Shooting for Lambasinghi is the most beautiful thing I loved. We shot for 45 days, and it was a beautiful experience in itself. Every shooting will leave a lot of memories. I am carrying so many memories of Lambasinghi with me. This is the movie I have been waiting for. However, during the shooting, caravans were not available. The whole team was made up of men. We were shooting in the jungle, and there were no caravans, so if I had to pee, I had to go to the jungle; if I had to poop, I had to go to the jungle while shooting. Suddenly, I fell sick. I had diarrhea. It was difficult for me to cope in the end, as I fell sick. On my 38th or 40th day, I was admitted to the hospital for three days. And we came back and finished the song shoot, and we closed the schedule." The actress who started her career in Tollywood is looking forward to doing many things here. She is so passionate about acting that she even learned Tamil so that she can deliver a more organic performance if. at all, she happens to make her debut in Tamil. She is also learning Kannada, for that matter. However, she is happy with how things are going with her in Tollywood, as she mentioned, "A lot of opportunities are coming my way now, and I am hoping that Lambasinghi will give me more opportunities as a main lead. I also think that in big films, I am not getting the main lead roles. I am looking for a lead role in a big film. I am waiting for that day. Moreover, I have learned Tamil just because I wanted to get into the Tamil industry. I also learned a little Kannada. In acting, if you know the language, it's an added benefit. As actors, performance matters. I am

more of a performer, so for me, I need more

'It's

performance-oriented films. She spilled the beans, saying that she signed two to Telugu and is also trying to get her career started in other languages as well. However, she doesn't want to confine herself to just this; she is dreaming of even bigger things in life, and that is: "I am waiting for the day to shoot in other languages, but in Telugu I am doing well with good projects, but one day I hope to go to Hollywood. It is my dream to go to Hollywood. It may take 10 years or 15 years, whatever, but my ultimate dream is Hollywood.' Well, going by how

passionate she is about acting, we hope one day she gets to Hollywood an makes Indians even prouder of her work. Having played many roles, she is wondering what kind of roles she is looking forward to playing personally. Here is what she said: "In all the films I played, one was naïve, one was village belle. But personally, I want to do a rebellious kind of role that will suit me more. A village girl is strong, rude, and arrogant. want to have that kind of personality. I want to experiment with different kinds of characters and

all kinds of roles. But her role in Chiranjeevi's Godfather remains her all-time favourite character because: "All these days, I performed in songs and different characters, but the one with Chiranjeevi Garu is my personal favourite. I did a de-glam role, and people just saw my performance, then my glamour, and then my beauty. Performance plays the main role. Chiranjeevi Garu gave me a key role in the film. He is a humble person, and I am so glad that I was able to work with him." And here comes an important update about Pushpa 2, the most eagerly awaited film of Allu Arjun after the humongous success of Pushpa 1. "In Pushpa 2, I'm playing a journalist, which is going to be a very good role for me because I play a positive journalist role. I am also waiting to watch the film. I still have 20 days of shooting left for the film. We just started the shoot; so many days to go," concluded the

Yamadheera teaser out now

annada actor Komal Kumar starrer *Yamadheera*, in which we get to see Indian cricketer Sreesanth play the villain playing a negative role, is gaining attention for the cricketer's negative role in the film produced by Vedala Srinivas. Also starring Nagababu, Ali, Satya Prakash, and Madhu Sudhan in key roles, the teaser of the film was launched by popular veteran actor and producer Ashok Kumar on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Ashok Kumar said he was confident that Yamadheera. which is the first film of Sri Mandiram Productions, would do Meanwhile, actor

Komal Kumar, who has

acted in more than 90

privileged to act in this film. Moreover, the film is being shot in countries like Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka, as well as in Mysore, Chennai, Bangalore, and other parts of our country. With these many locations on the movie's list, expectations for the movie are increasing among Kannadigas and Telugu audiences. The release of the film will soon be announced, according to the makers.

Kannada films, said that he feels



a whole new world on coming back to Telugu films with Hero Heeroine Producer'

prerna Arora, who has produced impactful films such as *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, *Pad Man*, *Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran* and *Rustom*, is adding another feather to her cap as a filmmaker by producing a bilingual Hindi-Telugu film, titled Hero Heeroine. The film will feature Divyah Khosla Kumar in the lead role and is all set to go on floors. Talking about the project, Divyah said, "Just imagine, having enjoyed numerous Telugu films with English subtitles, appreciating their compelling subjects, stellar performances, and technical finesse Now, suddenly, I find myself cast in a Telugu film. No subtitles to rely on; I must speak the language myself. It's a whole new world." Divyah went on to add, "If there's any nervousness within me, it's solely because of this challenge. However, I've accepted it wholeheartedly and am eager to dive in. It's not just a

different chapter; it's like stepping into another universe. Prerna, my companion on this journey, constantly enlightens me about the nuances of working in the South and the aesthetic standards. It's bound to be an exhilarating experience, one that will demand utmost dedication to embody the essence of the film and cater to its pan-India audience." On the elegance of legendary actresses like Jaya Prada and Sridevi, Divyah expressed how she has always been captivated! She further shared, "They exuded such stunning beauty and grace. Whether it was in their native costumes or later in Hindi films, they always left a lasting impression. As someone relatively new to this scene, I'm genuinely excited to explore how I'll be styled in these films." On her anticipated look, she added, "I've entrusted Prerna (Arora) to provide all the necessary inputs for my appearance. I'm relying on director Suresh Krissna to guide me through the process, taking into account my character and status within the story. Additionally, since it's a film-within-afilm narrative, I'll need to prepare two additional looks.' The charismatic actor has also expressed her excitement and passion for the challenge she

has taken with Prerna Arora's Hero

Heeroine.

Venkaiah Naidu introduces RK Sagar as Vikranth IPS ogali Rekulu fame RK Sagar has signed a new film titled *THE 100*, written and directed by Raghav Omkar Sasidhar and jointly produced under the banners of KRIA Film Corp. and Dhamma Productions. The film got major backing, with former Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu launching the film's first look and motion poster. In the poster, RK Sagar is introduced as Vikranth IPS in a 'khaki' outfit with a gun in his hand. Sporting shades, we can see the

intensity on his face. The motion poster describes the prominence of number 100. "It's not just a



number; it's a weapon," reads the statement in the clip. While Misha Narang will play the female lead, Dhanya Balakrishna will be seen in a crucial role. The movie has some wellknown technicians handling different crafts. Shyam K. Naidu cranks the camera, while Harshavardhan Rameshwar provides the music. Amar Reddy Kudumula is the

Naveen Chandra's Inspector Rishi heads for OTT release

any role given to him, be it as a hero, a villain,

or any supporting character, is back with an

interesting project titled *Inspector* gained significant recognition in Telugu cinema, Naveen Chandra recently himself to the Tamil audience with the movie Jigarthanda Double XL. As a result, movies and web series in Kollywood are being made with him in the lead. It was announced on Thursday that

will be streaming

Inspector Rishi is a web series centered around a horror crime story, directed by Nandini J.S. and produced by Sukh Dev Lahiri under Make

Believe Productions. Ravi, Malini Naveen Chandra is working on interesting projects like *Eleven* and

Naveen Chandra stars in the title role as a formidable police officer who investigates clueless murders. The suspense and horror elements of who is behind these relentless murders are intriguingly captured in Inspector Rishi. The web series features Sunaina, Kanna Jeevaratnam, Srikanth Dayal, and Kumar Vale in key roles. Currently, Tamil-language films. Devi Sri Prasad will also be writ-

Satyabhama in Telugu.

Ajith Kumar's

first English film title in 22 yrs

been cancelled for a number of reasons. However, the most recent information is that Aiith will collaborate with Adhik

Ravichandran. The new title for Ajith Kumar's #AK63, which Adhik Ravichandran is directing, is Good Bad Ugly. It's interesting that after 22 years, Ajith decided to give his movie an English title! The actor starred in two English-titled films in 2002, Villain and Red, but since then, he has solely done

> ing music for an Ajith-starring movie for the first time in ten years with this

he movie that Thala Ajith was set movie. "Adhik Ravichandran was roped in for to star in with Vignesh Shivn has the project even before the release of his 2023 blockbuster Mark Antony,"

says Ajith's publicist. "The makers of this movie, Y Ravi Shankar and Naveen Yerneni, plan to premiere it on Pongal in 2025. Production is set to begin in the first week of June." Ajith apparently enjoyed the idea that Adhik pitched, but he did listen to scripts from other directors. It was requested that the director develop it right now. According to the sources, the team has finished writing the script and will now begin pre-production.The movie is receiving a sub-

stantial budget. Adhik is hoping to score a big hit after witnessing Mark Anthony's success.



