



TDP leader joins YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Visakhapatnam senior TDP leader Gampala Venkata Ramachandra Rao and his wife Sandhya Rani joined YSRCP in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Camp Office here on Monday. Ramachandra Rao (Vada Balija community) worked as TDP in-charge for

Visakhapatnam South and East constituencies. He also officiated as APCC Joint Secretary and OBC wing working president besides working as Visakhapatnam Port Trust Director and Censor Board member. YSRCP regional coordinator YV Subba Reddy and Vizag Smart City Corporation former Chairman G. Venkateswara Rao were present.

Buoyed by ‘Siddham’ success, Jagan set to ...

Continued from Page 1

A bus tour, named "Memanta Siddham," will be undertaken as part of this endeavour. Raghuram noted that excluding the four districts where preparatory meetings were conducted, the bus yatra will cover the remaining 21 districts. He confirmed that the bus yatra is scheduled to commence on March 26th or 27th. Furthermore, Raghuram highlighted that large-scale public meetings under the banner of Siddham have already been conducted to prepare party members for the election campaign. Region-specific public gatherings were organized

under the Siddham initiative in four districts of the state, marking a historic milestone. Massive crowds assembled in these areas, expressing their readiness (Siddham) to support Jagan's leadership. Raghuram elaborated that the "Memu Siddham, Maa Booth Siddham," and Memanta Siddham election campaign aims to galvanize party workers and leadership in every village throughout the state. He underscored that the bus yatra will be executed in a manner reminiscent of the Odarpu Yatra and Praja Sankalpa Yatra, key components of YSR's political engagements.

Achieves 1:900 doc-to-population...

Continued from Page 1

Delivering the welcome address, Anil Rajput, Chairperson, SOCHAM National CSR Council, said, "This initiative was launched in 2014 with the belief that we have the scientific knowledge to create a world in which most of the diseases could be either eliminated or controlled by preventive healthcare awareness. We are driven by a commitment to promote health and wellness for all with a focus on empowerment, education, collaboration and sustainable impact." "Over the years we have endeavoured to maximise outreach and impact, from organising camps and awareness

campaigns on a slew of critical ailments, to holding regular webinars on key health developments with the overarching objective of providing remedies and motivation," he added. Delivering the keynote address, Dr Ashok Seth, Chairman, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute, Delhi, said wellness is a state of mind, spirit and body and illness a deficiency of social, physical, mental and spiritual factors. "A new India for the world has to encompass health towards wellness. The 20th Century was the most scientific 100 years ever lived by mankind, the various discoveries and inventions has turned man into demi-gods and we forgot spirituality," Dr Seth

Volunteers flout norms

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold move amidst the electoral preparations, volunteers have reportedly defied regulations mandated by the election authorities. Despite clear directives instructing ward volunteers to refrain from participating in election duties, reports indicate their active involvement in influencing voters, particularly through digital platforms. The Election Commission has issued stern warnings against the utilization of ward volunteers in any capacity during the electoral process, emphasizing that any breach of these orders will result in disciplinary actions as per the Commission's guidelines. However, on the ground, a different narrative unfolds. Numerous instances have surfaced, suggesting that volunteers are maintaining close ties with local YSRCP leaders and actively engaging in relevant WhatsApp groups.



Organized into clusters of approximately 50 households each, these volunteers manage these groups to disseminate information and potentially sway opinions. Despite directives to distance themselves from such activities upon the announcement of the election schedule, it appears that around ten thousand volunteers in the city are still deeply entrenched in these WhatsApp groups. Efforts to curtail this activity have faced resistance. Some volunteers, upon receiving

orders from superiors, initially quit these groups. However, a new trend emerged shortly thereafter, with volunteers disseminating information with alternative contact numbers, urging individuals to reach out through these channels instead. While some volunteers maintain a cautious distance from local leaders, others openly display allegiance by hoisting YSRCP flags and participating in campaign events hosted by YCP leaders across

various constituencies. Amidst growing concerns and criticisms, the electoral mechanism appears to be oblivious to these breaches. Critics lament the apparent lack of attention and enforcement of regulations during this crucial period leading up to the elections. As the electoral process unfolds, the defiance of regulations by volunteers raises significant questions about the integrity and fairness of the upcoming elections in Visakhapatnam.

Putin declared winner in ...

Continued from Page 1

Putin has led Russia as president or prime minister since December 1999, a tenure marked by international military aggression and an increasing intolerance for dissent. Russia's Central Election Commission said Monday that with nearly 100 per cent of all precincts counted, Putin got 87.29 per cent of the vote. Central Election Commission chief Ella Pamfilova said that nearly 76 million voters cast their ballots for Putin, his highest vote tally ever. (AP)

Speculations rife over Bandaru's party shift

TDP leader unhappy as Pendurthi was allotted to JSP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Close on the heels of the Mana Pendurthi-Mana Bandaru rally, where demands were made for a ticket allocation to Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy for the upcoming general elections from Pendurthi, speculations are rife regarding a potential party shift amid ongoing political alliances. With Pendurthi being allotted to Jana Sena Party as part of the alliances, Murthy's reported dissatisfaction has fuelled rumours of his departure from TDP.



horizon. Sources reveal that key leaders are in talks, paving the way for a potential shift to the YCP camp, with murmurs of a grand welcome awaiting Murthy and his associates. Furthermore, amidst ongoing political maneuvering, speculations abound regarding the allocation of the Anakapalli MP ticket, with murmurs suggesting Murthy as a potential candidate. While candidates for various constituencies have been announced, the suspense lingers over Anakapalli, with assurances of representation for BC candidates. Meanwhile, Murthy has been actively engaging with disheartened individuals overlooked by TDP in the joint Visakhapatnam

district, with efforts reportedly underway to consolidate support for a possible transition to the YCP fold. However, staunch TDP loyalists remain steadfast in their support, expressing confidence in the party's prospects in the upcoming elections under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu. Notably, Murthy's familial ties to Srikakulam MP Rammoohan Naidu, coupled with his son Appalanaidu's dedicated party involvement, have underscored expectations of a political trajectory within TDP. However, recent expressions of discontent on social media and calls to diversify political options suggest a potential shift in allegiance. The current MLA of Pendurthi, Annam Reddy Adep Raju, nominated by the YCP, further complicates the landscape, as simmering tensions between Adep Raj and the Bandaru family cast doubts on potential cooperation within the party ranks.

Disclose complete ...

Continued from Page 1

On March 11, the SBI, which unsuccessfully sought an extension of time till June 30 to disclose electoral bonds details, faced searching questions from the top court which wanted to know about the steps taken to comply with its directions. Last Friday, the SC admonished SBI for furnishing incomplete information and issued a notice to the bank to explain the reasons for the non-disclosure of unique alphanumeric numbers. On Monday, the bench noted the submission of senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the SBI, that there is no reservation on the part of the bank in disclosing all the details of electoral bonds which are in its possession. "In order to fully effectuate the order and to obviate any controversy in the future, the chairman and managing director of SBI shall file an affidavit on or before 5 pm on Thursday (March 21) indicating that SBI has disclosed all details of the electoral bonds which were in its possession and custody and that no details have been withheld," the bench said.

During the hearing, the bench asked the SBI to disclose all conceivable information on electoral bonds, including bond numbers. "We had asked all details to be disclosed by the SBI which includes electoral bond numbers as well. Let SBI not be selective in disclosure," the bench mentioned orally. It said the apex court had, in its verdict in the electoral bonds case, asked the bank to disclose all the details of the bonds and it should not wait for further orders on this aspect. The bench refused a hearing on unlisted pleas of industry bodies, Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in the case. The industry bodies, through senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, wanted an urgent hearing on their interim application against the disclosure of bond details. Salve told the bench it should not seem that the bank is "playing with" the court as they have no difficulty in disclosing the details of electoral bonds.

UNIQUE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Vij Rural mandal encompasses 2 MP & 2 MLA segments

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Rural mandal stands out in the combined administrative structure, encompassing two MP and two MP constituencies. Situated around Vijayawada City, the mandal comprises villages spanning from 1 km to 15 km radius from the city centre. Despite its strategic location, half the number of the villages are part of the Gannavaram Assembly constituency and the Machilipatnam Parliamentary constituency.

and electoral processes. While Gudavalli, Nidamanuru, Enikepadu, Prasadampadu, Ramavarappadu, Nunna, Pathapadu, P Nainavaram, and Ambapuram fall under the Vijayawada Lok Sabha constituency, the remaining villages come under the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha constituency.

The distance between these villages and Gannavaram ranges from 5 km to 25 km, while it extends from 65 km to 85 km from Machilipatnam, the Krishna district headquarters. Despite being incorporated into the NTR district following district reorganization, no adjustments were made to the Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies. However, owing to the presence of the mandal headquarters in Vijayawada, the entire mandal falls under the purview of the NTR district. Comprising 16 village panchayats, including Gudavalli, Nidamanuru, Enikepadu, Prasadampadu, Ramavarappadu, Nunna, Pathapadu, P Nainavaram, Ambapuram, Jakkampudi, Kothuru Tadepalli, YSR Gram Panchayat, Rama Raju Nagar, Gollapudi, Rayanapadu, and Pydurapadu, the mandal's unique composition poses challenges in administrative

Consequently, areas of both the Vijayawada and Machilipatnam parliamentary constituencies, as well as the Gannavaram and Mylavaram Assembly constituencies, fall within its jurisdiction, presenting hurdles in governance and electoral procedures. With a significant number of voters, around 1.50 lakh, as per the final publication of the voters' list by the Election Commission of India (ECI), Vijayawada Rural Mandal holds substantial influence in both Gannavaram and Mylavaram constituencies. Despite efforts from the local populace to designate it as a separate Vijayawada Rural Assembly Constituency, akin to other rural constituencies in neighbouring districts, this demand has yet to be realized since 2009. Furthermore, Vijayawada Rural mandal hosts five police stations within the NTR District Police Commissionerate. However, the dispersed nature of its villages poses challenges to effective policing, requiring a strategic approach to ensure comprehensive law enforcement across the region.

SSC exams off to ...

Continued from Page 1

District Level Observers, District Educational Officers, Assistant Commissioners for Government Examinations, and Flying Squads monitored 1,220 Examination Centres across the State. In a significant development for the School Education

Department, the evaluation of answer scripts for the Intermediate exam has commenced at 25 district centres. Approximately 23,000 evaluators will assess scripts until April 4, with each evaluator tasked with evaluating 30 answer scripts per day, collectively examining around 60 lakh answer scripts.

EC RESPONDS TO YSRCP COMPLAINT

Instructs TDP to remove derogatory post

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to a complaint filed by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) regarding the violation of the Model Code of Conduct in certain social media posts by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer Andhra Pradesh has instructed the TDP to remove the derogatory posts within 24 hours.



YSRC general secretary and MLC, Lella Appi Reddy, lodged a formal complaint with the CEO, presenting evidence of TD social media content portraying Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in a derogatory manner, accompanied by objectionable comments. Responding promptly, the CEO dispatched a letter to the State President of the Telugu Desam Party, addressing the circulation of a derogatory social media post by the party's

account, which depicted YSRC leader Jagan Mohan Reddy in an offensive light at specific timestamps and in the thumbnail of a particular URL link (<https://x.com/JaiTDP/status/1768268344556474793?s=20>). Upon verification of the provided URL link, it was confirmed that the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct, about maintaining a respectable level of public dis-

course during campaigning and upholding dignity, especially by star campaigners and recognized national and state political parties (Instruction No. 3.1(a) & (b) issued by ECI), were indeed violated. Consequently, the Election Commission has directed immediate action to be taken to remove the derogatory portions of the footage and mandated compliance within 24 hours.

TDP-BJP-JSP playing the same old game: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Advisor (Public Affairs) and YSRCP State general secretary, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has said that after 10 years, the alliance (TDP-BJP-JSP) had resumed the same old game. Alliances among the trio of parties are not new, he noted.

Speaking to the media, Sajjala criticised that all the promises made by the alliance 10 years ago were forgotten after coming to power. He recalled that Chandrababu had insulted Prime Minister Modi at will and now had stooped so low as to ally personal interest.

Sajjala pointed out that after the past dirty episode, all three parties shamelessly came together on the same stage only to criticize Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Sajjala alleged that instead of explaining what the trio alliance will do for the people of AP, they have been criticizing the police for the poor show and poor organization of the meeting.

The alliance wanted to come to power urgently, Sajjala pointed out, and asked what happened to the promises given to the people in 2014, seeking an



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Sajjala said that the opposition has only one job: to strive for an alliance, then break up and rejoin, seeking an explanation from the people. He further asked for an explanation to the people of how many out of the 600 promises made have been

implemented. He alleged that the alliance promised to give plots and to build houses for free; the alliance further cheated the farmers in the name of loan waivers and DWCRA women of loan waivers. Once again, the same old trio alliance shared the dais to deceive the

people of Andhra Pradesh with false promises.

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Sajjala further questioned why Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan didn't ask PM Modi about the unfulfilled promises to the state by the BJP government at the centre. A leader must have unwavering honesty, he emphasised.

Sajjala stated that 87 per cent of families have benefited under Jagan's government welfare schemes. That is why the people of Andhra Pradesh want Jagan Mohan Reddy as the Chief Minister again and again.

He also commented on Sharmila, saying that the APCC chief can compete in the 2024 elections from anywhere in AP. "We don't need to care because the Congress party got fewer votes than Nota," said Sajjala.

AE in ACB net

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Officials of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) caught in-charge AE Thota Eswar Kumar red-handed while accepting a bribe. The accused was working in the office of the Executive Engineer of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Division-IV. ACB officials stated that Sheikh Saddam Hussain of Vijayawada, New Ajit Singh Nagar, sought a work order for the process of M/s AS Eco-Management Engineering Solutions for the collection of plastic waste within Vijayawada Corporation limits. In-charge AE Thota Eswar Kumar demanded a bribe of Rs 50,000 to complete the process. Saddam expressed his inability to provide the bribe amount, but the AE remained adamant, leading to a complaint lodged with the ACB officials.

Officials from the Vijayawada Range Anti-Corruption Bureau laid a trap on Monday and caught in-charge AE Thota Eswar Kumar red-handed while accepting a bribe of Rs. 50,000 from the complainant in his office. AP DGP Rajendranath Reddy emphasized that everyone should take advantage of the 14400 number, made available exclusively for the public by the ACB, to lodge complaints against corrupt officials and to restrain corruption.

Sharmila to contest for Kadapa Lok Sabha seat?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), YS Sharmila, is reportedly gearing up to vie for the Lok Sabha seat from the Kadapa Parliamentary constituency.

Sources within the Congress party suggest that the party's high command views Sharmila as a fitting candidate for the Lok Sabha contest from Kadapa.

Speaking to The Pioneer, APCC vice-president Kolanukonda Sivaji disclosed that the official announcement regarding Sharmila's candidacy for the Kadapa Parliamentary constituency is expected from the Congress high command in the coming days.

A senior Congress leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, informed this correspondent that both YS Sharmila and YS Vivekananda Reddy's daughter, YS Sunitha, are determined to challenge YS Avinash Reddy in the upcoming elections for the Kadapa Parliamentary constituency. However, the final decision rests with the Congress high command, the leader stated.

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leader of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) has hinted at YS Sharmila's

readiness to contest the Lok Sabha seat from the Kadapa Parliamentary constituency.

NTR Collector holds inspection of SSC exam centres on Day 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A total of 27,693 students from the NTR district participated in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) public examination, which commenced statewide on Monday. Although 28,458 students initially registered for the exam, the first-day attendance stood at 97.31%.

According to UV Subba Rao, the District School Education Officer (DSEO) for NTR, the educational department set up 178 examination centres across the district. Notably, 765 candidates were absent for the first language exam on the opening day. However, DSEO UV Subba Rao affirmed that there were no reported cases of malpractice within the district.

In other developments, Praveen Prakash, the Principal



NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao inspecting the Class 10 examination centre at the CVRMC High School at Governorpet in Vijayawada on Monday.

Secretary of the School Education Department, visited St Joseph EM School in Gunadala and FIITJEE School in Labbipet, overseeing the examination process. Additionally, K Srinivasulu Reddy, a district-level observer, and S Suresh Kumar, the Commissioner of the School Education Department, con-

ducted inspections at various examination centres.

Furthermore, Dr S Dilli Rao, the NTR district collector, conducted a surprise inspection at CVR Municipal Corporation High School on Monday. During his visit, he instructed officials to ensure all necessary facilities were provided to the students.

RWS officials told to solve drinking water shortage

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector Raja Babu has directed the Rural Water Supply (RWS) officials to tackle the looming drinking water crisis expected during the summer months in Pedana, Bantumilli, and Kruthivennu Mandals. Emphasising the urgency of the situation, he urged concerned officials to take proactive measures to avert water scarcity in these areas.

In anticipation of the impending summer season, Collector Raja Babu chaired a teleconference on Monday with RWS officers across the district, convening from his office in Machilipatnam. Highlighting the acute drinking water shortages faced by numerous villages in these three mandals, he



authorized the deployment of water tankers to deliver potable water to affected communities.

Specifically identifying areas in need, the Collector mentioned Parvathipuram of Intheru, Uppuluri, Ramapuram, Seetharampuram, and Matlam in Kruthivennu Mandal as experiencing water scarcity. Similarly, he noted drinking water challenges in Vadlagaruvu (a hamlet of Chorampudi), Mallampudi, Kotturu, and Bantumilli.

Elaborating further, the Collector underscored that a staggering 17 villages in Kruthivennu are grappling with inadequate access to safe drinking water. Among the severely

affected areas are Kamalapuram, Uppala Kalavagunta, Uppala Kalavaguntapalem, Koppalli, Muchiligunta, Mucharla, U l a m a r r i g u n t a , Guruvindagunta, Pullapadu, Chinapullapadu, and Devarapalli.

In response to the pressing situation, the Collector directed RWS officials to commence water supply operations via tankers to all 27 affected villages starting March 20. Additionally, he emphasized the need for Mandal Tahsildars, MPDOs, and RWS officials to jointly oversee and address the issue.

The teleconference was attended by RWS Engineering Officer T Siva Prasad, along with DEEs, AEEs, and other relevant officials, indicating a collective effort to combat the impending water crisis.

CM asks party coordinators to guide candidates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister and YSRCP President YS Jagan Mohan Reddy asked the Party candidates to make use of the plenty of time available for the general elections by visiting all village and ward secretariats and seeking people's blessings.

Addressing the YSRCP regional coordinators at the Camp Office here on Monday, the Chief Minister said that the candidates have got more time now to meet people since the elections in our State are scheduled for May 13.

Candidates should plan their schedule in such a way to meet the people in their respective constituencies by visiting all village and ward secretariats to interact with the people and seek their support, he said

and asked the regional coordinators to guide the candidates in formulating the road map.

He told them that changes were made in 81 Assembly and 18 Lok Sabha constituencies in the selection of candidates and regional coordinators should take steps to establish good coordination between the Party leaders and cadre in every constituency aiming at the target of winning all 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats.

"You should stand by the candidates and the cadre in all constituencies assessing the situation periodically and guiding them. You should also strive to make the forthcoming bus yatras successful akin to the Siddham public meetings" he told the coordinators.

ICCC ops inspected by Collector, CP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S. Dilli Rao and NTR District Police Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata paid a visit to the Integrated Command Control Centre (ICCC) located within the collectorate premises in Vijayawada on Monday to observe its operations. Stressing the importance of transparency and fairness in the upcoming general elections, they emphasized the significance of the ICCC as per directives from the Election Commission of India (ECI).

During their tour of the ICCC, they engaged with officials responsible for various functions such as C-vigil, Call Centre operations, Election Expenditure Monitoring System, Model Code of Conduct enforcement, and Grievance Cell management, among others. They provided necessary directives to

enhance efficiency in these areas.

Addressing the gathering, Collector Dilli Rao highlighted the role of the ICCC in facilitating coordination among district Nodal Officers, Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Flying Squads, Static Surveillance Squads, and the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee. He underscored the importance of promptly addressing grievances received and ensuring daily reporting on problem resolution.

Additionally, a special meeting was convened by Collector Dilli Rao to discuss strategies for monitoring and addressing issues related to paid articles in both print and electronic media.

Joint Collector Dr P Sampath Kumar, DRO V. Srinivasa Rao, AO Ch. Naga Lakshmi and other officials were present during the visit.

Learn techniques of mediation for speedy justice: APSLSA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Justice Akula Venkata Sesha Sai, Executive Chairman of Andhra Pradesh State Legal Service Authority (APSLSA) and Judge, of AP High Court has asked the advocates to strive to provide speedy justice to the parties by learning the techniques of mediation. On Monday Justice Akula Venkata Sesha Sai inaugurated a 5-day Advocate-Mediators' training programme on Mediation under the aegis of the Supreme Court Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee in the premises of High Court of AP along with Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge Justice U Durgaprasad Rao.

Speaking on this occasion, he said that mediation would be somewhat useful in solving the cases that are piling up in the court. He stated that mediation is not a new method and it has been a part of Indian tradition and culture since ancient times.



For Lawyers, he explained that learning techniques related to mediation and alternative dispute resolution methods, can lead to faster resolution of some litigation. Advocates expressed that such training programs would help in enhancing their skills.

Justice U Durga Prasad Rao said that mediation can help in solving matrimonial disputes. He asked the lawyers to identify the cases in which settlement through mediation methods would be useful and work towards a settlement.

The 40-hour (5 days) train-

ing programme started today and will conclude on March 22 and will be conducted by senior resource persons from Tamil Nadu who are experts in this field Ratna Tara and Sudarshan Sundar will continue training.

Majji Babita, Member Secretary of State Legal Services Committee, G Malathi, Secretary of AP High Court Legal Services Committee, Administrative Officer of AP State Law Services Committee Dr H Amara Rangeswara Rao, Advocates and staff were present.

Kapus' welfare possible under YSRCP rule: Adapa

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is a man of word and delivered on the promises he made to the Kapu community, Kapu Corporation Chairman Adapa Seshu said on Monday.

Speaking to media persons, Seshu said Pawan Kalyan from the Kapu community floated a political party some 11 years ago while YSRCP came into existence in 2011.

Seshu said that Jagan had given appropriate representation to the Kapus in his government. Several of them were elected to the State Assembly after the 2019 elections and some of them were given the Ministry by YS Jagan in his cabinet, the Kapu leader

remarked.

Taking a dig at Jana Sena Party chief, Seshu said Pawan Kalyan betrayed the Kapu community by agreeing to contest the elections on merely 21 assembly constituencies. He said that Chiranjeevi and Pawan Kalyan will forever

remain as actors for us. He strongly reacted to the comments made by Kolikapudi Srinivasa Rao in R a n g a ' s death.

Notably, a veteran Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham recently joined the ruling YSRCP. He said people have stopped believing in actor-turned-politicians after the legendary NTR. Jana Sena will begin disappearing into political oblivion, Mudragada predicted.



PM lauded AP govt's performance: Vijayasai

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rajya Sabha member and YSRCP national general secretary V Vijayasai Reddy has said that Prime Minister Modi was appreciative of the Andhra Pradesh government's performance during a public meeting organised by the opposition alliance (comprising TDP, Janasena, BJP) in Chilikaluripet on Sunday.

Reddy said that Prime Minister Modi's recognition of the State's effective implementation of various schemes related to housing construction, clean water supply, and healthcare reflects the successful track record of the YSRCP government.

Speaking on Monday, he underscored the significance of the Prime Minister's acknowledgement as a testament to the government's commitment to public welfare.

Regarding the Prajaagalam meeting orchestrated by the opposition alliance, Reddy expressed disappointment, branding it as a resounding failure that fell short of public expectations. He criticized the absence of any new promises, the lack of resolution concerning previous commitments, and the glaring omission of a developmental vision for Andhra Pradesh. Reddy lamented the alliance's apparent disconnect from the populace's concerns, dismissing their efforts as mere negative publicity rather than genuine engagement with pressing issues.



Follow poll code strictly: DC

PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Collector Krithika Sukla has asked the representatives of various recognised political parties to strictly follow the Model Code of Conduct and warned of action if the norms are violated.

Addressing the representatives of recognised political parties at a meeting held at the Collectorate here on Monday, she told them that all the banners, photos, and hoardings of various political parties arranged in connection with the election campaign would be removed within 72 hours after the election model code of conduct came into effect.

The Collector explained to



them about the election schedule, electoral rolls, election officials details, forms filed regarding the 6, 7, and 8, details of polling centres, the number of EVMs, awareness on usage of VV pods, storage

points, counting centres, control rooms, and the election code of conduct.

She said that as of March 17, in all seven assembly constituencies put together, there were 16,11,171 voters. She further said that for effective enforcement of the election code of conduct, special teams such as flying squads, statistics surveillance teams, and regular police were deployed.

DRO D Tippe Naik, YSRCP leader Ravuri Venkateswara (YSRCP), TDP leader Gadula Saibaba, BSP leader Sabbarapu Appa Rao (BSP), Congress leader Akula Venkataramana and BJP leader Ch. Ramesh Babu (BJP) were among those who attended.

Exporters visit Visakhapatnam Port

Assess its potential as an alternative route for exporting goods overseas

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A delegation led by Potluri Bhaskara Rao, president of AP Chambers, recently visited the Visakhapatnam Port to assess its potential as an alternative route for exporting goods overseas. The delegation comprised exporters from various sectors like textiles, agriculture, and engineering. This visit follows a Trade Meet held in Guntur on January 19, which saw participation from over 200 exporters and importers. Currently, most exporters rely on Chennai Port for their shipments. However,



due to the presence of agro-based export clusters in Vijayawada and Guntur, AP Chambers is exploring Visakhapatnam Port as a viable option for agricultural exports.

The delegation thoroughly examined the port's facilities, interacted with cargo ship liners, and discussed factors

like vessel frequency, costs, and turnaround time. Discussions were held with key stakeholders including port officials, shipping line officials, and representatives from industry associations. Port officials assured the delegation of world-class infrastructure and competitive

pricing to address sector-specific challenges. They committed to continued dialogue to address concerns raised by exporters and create a favourable environment for increased shipments through Visakhapatnam Port.

This collaborative effort involving industry associations like the All-India Chillies Exporters Association, AP MSME Industries Association, and AP Textile Mills Association signifies a collective push to explore new avenues for export growth in Andhra Pradesh.

BRS, YSRCP on the verge of extinction

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

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

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

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

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



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

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

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

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

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

Addresses of printers must on election campaign posters: DC

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar said that the address of the printers must be printed on the election campaign wall-posters, pamphlets and flex banners.

The Collector held a meeting with the printing press owners, their representatives and officials here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, Collector and District Election Officer Dinesh Kumar explained the measures to be taken and guidelines to be followed by the printers while printing pamphlets, wall posters, banners and other campaign materials related to the election campaign in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Election Commission. The Collector said that according to Section 127A of the Representation of People Act, leaflets, wall



posters and flex banners should not be printed without the names and addresses of the relevant printer and publisher at the time of printing election campaign materials. He warned of cancelling the license and taking appropriate action if they violate the guidelines and norms. The Collector

told the printing press owners, who print the election posters, leaflets and wall-posters that they will have to submit the declaration in Appendix-A and Appendix-B pro-forma prescribed by the Election Commission. Collector Dinesh Kumar instructed the printing press

owners to submit the details of printing to the Election Department within 3 days after printing the election campaign materials. Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna, DRO Srilatha, Printers Association president Raju, Secretary Sridhar and the officials concerned were present.

Trough runs from Jharkhand to N Coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in the same area during the next four days and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 20.

Light rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh & during the next five days, in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh from March 19 to 21 and in Rayalaseema on March 20 and 21. Hot, humid and uncomfortable weather is likely to prevail at isolated places in Rayalaseema during the next three days.

Dry weather is likely to prevail in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 23, and 24, in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 22, 23, and 24 and in Rayalaseema from March 21 to 24.

Modi shielding Jagan from corruption charges: APCC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vice-president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), Kolanukonda Sivaji, has strongly criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent remarks at a public gathering, accusing him of shielding Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy from corruption allegations.

Addressing the media on Monday, Sivaji recalled instances where the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had issued notices to leaders like Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, questioning why similar scrutiny has not been applied to Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is allegedly embroiled in corruption scandals.

Expressing disdain for Modi's accusations against the Congress, Sivaji emphasized Jagan Mohan Reddy's involvement in significant corruption cases, noting his imprisonment for several months. He stated, "The Narendra Modi-led



Central government is shielding Jagan Mohan Reddy. Despite being on bail for a decade, there seems to be a lack of effort from agencies to expedite his trial. This points to Modi extending full protection to Jagan Reddy."

Sivaji further asserted that Modi has forfeited his moral authority to criticize the Congress, suggesting a nexus between Modi and Jagan. Referring to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda's previous allegations of corruption in Andhra Pradesh, Sivaji questioned the delay in expediting the trials against Jagan Reddy. He mocked Modi's recent rhetoric, insinuating a political

game involving three leaders, and criticized the lack of progress in the investigation into YS Vivekananda Reddy's murder and the allocation of Gangavaram Sea Port to Gautam Adani.

Highlighting the failure to address key issues affecting Andhra Pradesh, such as the granting of Special Category Status and the development of the Polavaram project and Amaravati as the capital city, Sivaji accused Modi of deceiving the people. He emphasized that mere rhetoric in Telugu and praise for NT Rama Rao do not suffice.

Shivaji also referenced Rahul Gandhi's promise to grant Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh and YS Sharmila's efforts to raise awareness about the injustices faced by the state under BJP rule. He claimed that the Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi has garnered significant support, unsettling the BJP.



Collector inspects examination centre

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector P Ranjit Basha inspected an SSC examination centre here on Monday.

The 10th class examinations began across the state on Monday. Collector Ranjit Basha inspected an examination centre at a municipal high school in which 198 students attended the examination.

The Collector said that all the students attended the examination on Monday at the

examination centre. The Collector visited some of the rooms.

He said that 108 examination centres were set up across the district. As many as 16,806 students attended the examination on the first day out of a total of students 17,436. The Collector directed the officials to provide all facilities to the students at the examination centre.

Tahsildar Srevan Kumar was among those who accompanied the Collector.

India, US to strengthen disaster response cooperation

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Underscoring the deepening strategic partnership between India and the United States, a large-scale Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise, designated Tiger Triumph-24, commenced on Monday on the Eastern Seaboard and will continue until March 31.

This bilateral exercise signifies a significant commitment from both nations to enhance interoperability and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for conducting joint HADR operations. It will involve the participation of Indian Navy Ships, equipped with helicopters and landing crafts, alongside Indian Navy aircraft, Indian Army personnel with their vehicles, Indian Air Force aircraft and helicopters, and the Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT). Representing the US will be US Navy Ships carrying troops



from the US Marine Corps and the US Army.

The exercise aims to solidify the existing partnership between India and the US in the domain of disaster response and humanitarian assistance. Through joint training and simulated operations, both nations will refine their ability to collaborate effectively during real-world HADR scenarios. The exercise will provide a platform to develop and stan-

dardise procedures for coordinated disaster response efforts. Improved disaster preparedness and response capabilities contribute to a more stable and secure regional environment. This initial phase will focus on fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. Personnel from both nations will participate in subject matter expert exchanges, joint training sessions, and social interaction events.

BJP won't topple or shield Cong Govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP will not topple the Revanth Reddy government but at the same time the BJP will not protect it if anyone topples it, the BJP's Rajya Sabha Member Dr K. Laxman said.

Addressing a public meeting in Jagtial on Monday, Laxman said that the way is being paved for a double-engine government in Telangana after the Parliament elections.

He asked whether a Congress government is needed in Telangana as it is nowhere in the nation.

Recalling the statement of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy that the Congress had opened its gates, Laxman said, "The Chief Minister said that he has opened the gates.

However, there is a chance that Congress MLAs may run away. Revanth should protect them.

Grand farewell given to Vasireddy Padma

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission (APWC) former chairperson Vasireddy Padma was given a grand farewell on Monday.

Vasireddy Padma's term as AP Women's Commission chairperson came to an end and Gajjala Lakshmi was appointed as new chairperson. At a programme held in the APWC office in Mangalagiri, APWC new chairperson

Gajjala Lakshmi, members SK Rukiya Begam, Busi Vinita, Gaddam Uma, Mahila commission secretary Dasari Srilakshmi, regional director Y Sailaja and Dr. K Vasundara felicitated Vasireddy Padma on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Vasireddy Padma said the APWC members had given her all support in doing justice to the victims. She thanked the members and staff of the Women's Commission office.



Guv attends 'Bar Day' event of BBA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer attended as chief guest at the 'Bar Day' function organized by the Bezwada Bar Association at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Abdul Nazeer said that the legal profession is a noble profession as it upholds and protects the law and as one of the largest legal professions in the world, it plays an important role in the administration of justice in the world's largest democracy. The Governor said that the legal profession is a part of the judiciary in the administration of justice and it is the bedrock of justice as it is vested with the responsibility and accountability to uphold



fairness and justice in society. Justice A Venkata Sesa Sai, Judge, High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Aruna Sarika, Principal District Judge, Krishna District, A Satyanand, Metropolitan Sessions Judge-cum-II ADJ, Vijayawada, KB Sunder, President, The Bezwada

Bar Association, G Rama Rao, Chairman, Bar Council of Andhra Pradesh, Members of Bar Council of Andhra Pradesh and Bezwada Bar Association, Kanti Rana Tata, Vijayawada Commissioner of Police and other dignitaries have attended the programme.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Special Chief Secretary Medical & Health Department MT Krishnababu said that in the current circumstances, everyone is facing a lot of mental stress and the Avika app is a great boon for all such people. The special CS was the chief guest at the launch of the Avika app held at Indlas Hospital on Monday evening.

Later, Krishnababu said that the Avika app is the first of its kind in the country, designed to be useful for everyone with mental problems. He specially congratulated Indlas Hospital Director Dr Vishal India and the team of Avika Team CEO Shirisha Peyeti who created the Avika app.



K Hemachandra Reddy, chairman of APSCH, who was the guest of honour, said that the Avika app is a great tool not only for people with mental problems but also for people with problems like

exam stress, lack of concentration, betting, love affairs, drug addiction, suicidal thoughts and insomnia. The Avika app will also be made available to students of all universities in the state.

YSR Health University Vice Chancellor Dr K Babji said that the Avika app based on artificial intelligence and virtual reality will lead to a revolutionary change in the field of medicine. Indias Hospitals Chairman

Dr Indla Ramasubba Reddy presided over the programme

Dr Vishal, the Medical Director of Avika spoke and explained the features of the Avika app. He said that the Avika app will act as a good bridge for doctors and patients and in the coming days psychiatric services will be more easily accessible to all.

Avika Chief Executive Officer Sirisha said that their company is happy to partner with Indlas Hospitals, which provides advanced medical treatments for the growing number of mental problems, to provide innovative procedures. He said that very soon we are working to expand Avika's services not only in the country but also internationally.

INDIA CORNER

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

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



Naxalite couple carrying Rs 7 lakh reward surrender in Chhattisgarh

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



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

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



NSA Doval stresses on strategic partnerships in regional security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Monday emphasised on the importance of strategic partnerships in regional security and collaborative approach towards nation building process, as he also interacted with the Indian officers and delegates from over 20 countries at an event here, officials said. The NSA delivered a keynote address to the delegates of the maiden International Strategic Engagement Programme (IN STEP) at the National Defence College in New Delhi, the principal spokesperson of the Ministry of Defence posted on X. The spokesperson also shared some photographs of

the NSA's interaction with the delegates on the NDC's premises. "Ajit Doval underscored the importance of strategic partnerships in regional security and collaborative approach towards Nation building process and interacted with the IN STEP delegates," he wrote in another post on X. "The Programme IN STEP from 18 - 30 Mar 2024 has been explicitly curated as a two week strategic engagement at National Defence College, New Delhi which is being attended by 29 International delegates from 21 countries and 08 Indian officers," the principal spokesperson of the ministry wrote in another post. The National Defence College (NDC) is India's apex



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

institution of learning for study and practice of National Security and Strategy. Established in 1960, it has over the years earned a reputation for excellence and gained world renown. It is

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

for higher leadership positions and responsibilities, according to the website of the NDC. The NDC is housed in Bungalow No. 6, at Tees January Marg in New Delhi.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday raised questions about the PM CARES Fund, saying that four years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still not clear why it was set up, who its donors are and why its administrative structure is so 'lacking in transparency'. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that given the history of the Modi government, as shown by the 'electoral bond scam', one can only speculate that the lack of transparency was deliberately engineered to give the prime minister an unsupervised pool of funds to spend as he wishes. In a post on X, Ramesh said, "Now that the corruption, extortion and intimidation of the Modi Sarkar



received donations to the tune of Rs 12,700 crore at least, with large donations from a few corporations," he claimed. Some prominent donors who publicly pledged to donate to the fund include the Reliance Group (Rs 500 crore), Adani Group (Rs 100 crore), PayTM (Rs 500 crore), JSW Group (Rs 100 crore) and others, the Congress leader said. "PMCARES is exempt from CAG and RTI oversight -- allegedly, because it did not receive budgetary support from the government. However, it is well known that at least 38 PSUs, owned and operated by the government, have donated vast sums to the tune of Rs 2,105 crore to the PMCARES fund. An additional 150 crores came from PSU employee contributions," Ramesh said.

'LACK OF TRANSPARENCY'

Congress raises questions over PM CARES Fund

PROTESTORS BOYCOTT EVALUATION WORK UP: Teacher shot dead by constable over altercation

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

A teacher was shot dead by an Uttar Pradesh Police head constable following an altercation in the Civil Lines area here, an official said on Monday. Angry teachers from different colleges held a protest blocking the circular road. They demanded strict action against the accused and began a boycott of evaluation work of Uttar Pradesh Board exam answer sheets. The deceased -- Dharmendra Kumar -- was part of a team of the education department from Varanasi that had brought Uttar Pradesh Board examination answer sheets to the local SD Inter college here, Superintendent of Police (City) Satyanarain Parjapat said. The group included another teacher and two class four employees and was accompanied by a police team from Varanasi, Parjapat said. The teams from the education department and Varanasi police were waiting in a vehicle for the college gate to open when the incident took place on Sunday night, he said. Kumar had an altercation with head constable Chander Prakash while they were in the vehicle, following which the

latter shot at the teacher using his service weapon, the officer said. The injured man was rushed to the district hospital where he was declared dead, the SP added. Meanwhile, teachers from different colleges blocked the circular road in protest over the incident. According to the protestors, the policeman was under the influence of liquor and the argument broke out between the duo when he demanded tobacco from the teacher. In a memorandum addressed to the state government, the protesting teachers have demanded at least Rs 10 crore compensation for the deceased's family and job to a family member. They also warned that their dharna will continue until strict action is taken against the accused and demanded a written assurance by the district authorities. The teachers have also begun a boycott of the evaluation of answer sheets of UP board exams in protest against the killing of Dharmendra. The body has been sent for post-mortem and a case has been registered against the head constable. All others present in the vehicle have been taken into custody for questioning, the SP said.



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to ensure level-playing field in Lok Sabha elections, the Election Commission on Monday ordered the removal of home secretaries of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, sources said. It also ordered the removal of the West Bengal director general of police, they added. Also, the secretary of the general administrative departments of Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh have been removed. Days after announcing the schedule for the Lok Sabha elections, the poll panel under CEC Rajiv Kumar also ordered removal of Brihanmumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal, additional commissioners and deputy commissioners. The commission had directed all the state governments to transfer officers connected with election-related work, who have completed three years or are in their home districts. Maharashtra had not complied with the directions in respect of few municipal commissioners and some additional and deputy municipal commissioners.

Winters quickly transitioning to summer-like conditions in north

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An analysis of temperature data since 1970 shows that winters are quickly transitioning to summer-like conditions in north India, shortening the spring season. Researchers at the US-based Climate Central, an independent group of scientists, conducted this analysis to place India within the context of global warming trends, focusing on the winter months (December-February). The analysis revealed abrupt changes in temperature occurring in late winter across north India. The average temperatures in states in north India showed either a cooling trend or slight



warming in January, followed by strong warming in February. This indicates that these regions are now experiencing abrupt transitions from cool winter-like temperatures to much warmer conditions traditionally observed in March, the researchers said. To show this change, the researchers calculated the difference between the warming

rates in January and February, expressed as the change in average temperature since 1970. The most significant jump in warming rates was observed in Rajasthan, where the average temperature in February was 2.6 degrees Celsius higher than in January. A total of nine states and Union territories, including Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand, showed a January-February difference of more than 2 degrees Celsius. This supports the reports that it feels like spring has disappeared in many parts of India, the researchers said.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Writer Shantanu Gupta has come up with a new comic, "101 Reasons, Why I Will Vote For Modi" that encourages voters to vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, starting on April 19. Touted to work as a compendium of different comic art styles, the book has used as many as 10 internationally

renowned art styles in its making, including semi-realistic style, manga style, disney style, traditional Indian comic book style and black and white style. It is essentially a conversation between a Modi critic and the author himself, and how the latter during the discussion ends up providing over 100 reasons to the critic to vote for Modi in the 2024 general elections. "I have collected most of the stories after directly talking to

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

When an accused is cooperating with investigation and is not likely to abscond, custodial interrogation should be avoided as great amount of humiliation and disgrace is attached with arrest, the Delhi High Court has said. Justice Amit Mahajan observed that the purpose of custodial interrogation is to aid the investigation and is not punitive, and that bail proceedings should not be utilized as means for recovery in monetary disputes which falls within the realm of civil proceedings. The court's observations came while granting anticipatory bail to certain individuals in an FIR being probed by the Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police for offences of criminal breach of trust and cheating under the Indian Penal Code. "It is not in doubt that order for grant of pre-arrest bail cannot be passed in a routine manner so as to allow the accused to use the same as a shield. At the same time, it cannot be denied that great amount of humiliation and disgrace is attached with the arrest," the court said in a recent order. "In cases where the accused has joined investigation,

cooperating with the Investigating Agency and is not likely to abscond, the custodial interrogation should be avoided. The purpose of custodial interrogation is to aid the investigation and is not punitive," the court stated. Granting relief to the accused persons in the present case, the court noted that proceedings in relation to enforcement of the settlement between the accused and the complainant was already pending and appropriate orders would be passed in those proceedings. It further stated that a charge sheet had also been filed by the police without feeling the necessity to arrest the accused persons and their custodial interrogation was admittedly not required at this stage. "It is trite law that bail proceedings should not be utilised as means for recovery in monetary disputes, since recovery of money essentially falls within the realm of civil proceedings," the court said. "The complainants are at liberty to initiate appropriate proceedings for recovery of their money or for compliance of the settlement arrived at between the complainants and the applicants," the court added.



Scientists find new drug to prevent Ebola

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists have found a new way in which Ebola reproduces in the human body, identifying a potential target for drugs to prevent the viral disease. The study also sheds light on how the deadly virus that affects people mostly in sub-Saharan Africa interacts with a human protein called ubiquitin. "We used a combination of experimental and computational (using computers) methods to investigate the interaction between the Ebola virus VP35 protein and ubiquitin chains," said study co-author Rafael Najmanovich, a professor at the University of

Montreal in Canada. "Advanced computational modeling by our team predicted the binding interface between a viral protein, VP35, and the ubiquitin chains in human cells, and identified potential chemical compounds that could disrupt this interaction," he said. Ebola is a type of viral hemorrhagic fever caused by several species of viruses from the genus Ebolavirus. Symptoms of Ebola start out flu-like but can progress to severe vomiting, bleeding and neurological (brain and nerve) issues. The finding, published in the journal PLOS Biology, not only deepens our understanding of how the virus works, but also offers a promising avenue for



the creation of more effective therapies, the researchers said. "In particular, it paves the way for the design of drugs capable of disrupting this interaction and slowing down viral replication," Najmanovich said. Notorious for its devastating outbreaks and high mortality rates, Ebola virus poses a significant threat to public health,

the researchers said. Understanding the intricate processes by which the virus replicates within the human body is essential for developing effective treatments, they said. The latest study unravels some of the molecular intricacies of Ebola virus replication, shedding light on key proteins and pathways involved in the

process. The researchers were able to clarify structural and functional aspects of viral and human proteins interacting in a manner critical for viral replication. One of the key findings of the study is the identification of one additional interaction for VP35, a multifunctional viral protein which plays a central role in viral replication. The study revealed insights into the intricate interplay between Ebola virus and the host immune system. By evading detection and subverting host defences, the virus is able to establish a foothold within the body, leading to unchecked replication and severe disease progression.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday asked IAS officers to make use of the latest technologies such as artificial intelligence and data analytics for an efficient and smart administration. Addressing the state civil services officers attending the 125th induction training programme at LBSNAA (Mussoorie) who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, she said they are in a position where they can be an inspiration to others. "As IAS (Indian Administrative Service) offi-



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

(artificial intelligence), blockchain and big data analytics for an efficient and smart administration," the president said. This is the time when collaboration and convergence are the need of the hour, she said. "Collaboration among various stakeholders at the organisational, state, national and international level is necessary for obtaining the desired results in shorter time periods. Similarly, convergence of new ideas and new technologies with rich and varied experiences can bring such impactful changes that one cannot even imagine," Murmu said.

Pursuit of power

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

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



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

PICTALK



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

Addressing the poll conundrum

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TEACHERS GET RECOGNITION

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

M Pradyu | Kannur

AI AND ELECTIONS

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

One nation, one election



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

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

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

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

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

PARENTS SHAPE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Surge in celiac disease calls for awareness

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

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



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

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

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



WAJIHA MEHTAB

FIRST COLUMN

THE INDISPENSABLE
ROLE OF MENTORS

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



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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

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



Along with professional guidance, they also support personal development by helping mentees in a variety of tasks such as setting goals, prioritising tasks, managing time effectively and even maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Mentoring is not only required in organisations but is also essential in schools and organisations as it fosters skill development, career guidance, personal growth, leadership development, diversity and inclusion, enhanced performance and well-being. It contributes to the overall success and health of educational institutions. Some of them and even seniors serving as mentors can pass on their knowledge, expertise and leadership skills and provide feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement and helping them progress in their careers thereby ensuring continuity and succession within the organisation.

Research has shown that employees who have access to mentorship programmes are more likely to feel engaged and satisfied with their jobs as they help them feel valued and supported thereby, increasing their loyalty to the organization and reducing turnover. Not only this, but they also even play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace by supporting underrepresented employees, advocating for their advancement and fostering a culture of inclusivity. Overall, mentors serve as trusted advisors, guides and role models who contribute to mentees' success and fulfilment in both their personal as well as professional lives.

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

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Gender bias in politics is a crude reality



ARCHANA DATTA

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



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

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

Many men, who do not strongly identify with hyper-masculinity, are equally or more liberal than women on various

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

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

A study in Spain, after it adopted a law in 2007, that obliged political parties to include at least 40 per cent of women on every list for every election, did not find any evidence that it had either worsened women's relative electoral performance or voters' lower electoral support for exogenous reasons (Bagues and Campa, 2020). Nevertheless, in the 2018 midterms in the USA, sex and gender did play a prominent role, leading to large partisan gaps between men and women in casting their ballots. A study in India revealed that a 'woman voter' is more likely to vote for a male candidate, than a man to vote for a woman, as it is more about perception of society, than the candidates' suitability'. Sadly, women's under-representation in electoral politics is a reality! World Economic Forum's Gender Equality Report, underlined that so far only 25% of a hypothetical 100% gender gap has been closed in women's political

participation. Many political scientists explained the gap from the angle of supply and demand constraints, as there is 'a shortage of potential candidates', and also 'lower appeal of women politicians in electoral battles'. Several socio-economic and cultural barriers keep women away from politics, and create 'a higher opportunity cost of running for elections' (Fox et al., 2001).

Women also tend to be less in number in professions that become a conduit for a political career (Welch, 1977, Clark, 1994). Studies also mentioned the 'ambition deficit', as many women, despite having the requisite professional and economic credentials, often fight shy of entering competitive politics (Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007 & Fox and Lawless, 2004). Family and relational considerations dissuade many of them, as recent research in Sweden found that female politicians in mayoral positions experienced a significant increase in the likelihood of divorcing their partner (Folke and Rickne, 2020). On the other hand, 'women are routinely demotivated by being told that they do not belong here, signifying a structured system of oppressive gender hierarchy in politics'. Sexism among party leaders is also rampant, more so, if they are aware of voters' bias against women, as a votes-maximising strategy.

While, India witnessed an increasing turnout of women voters, in the 2019 election, but, the number of women candidates

remained less than 9 per cent. Those who did get party tickets, mostly, have family political connections or are 'dynastic' politicians. The gender quota at PRIs 'hasn't created much larger candidacy responses at the state level'. However, a study (Bhalotra et al. 2018), analysing electoral data over three decades (1980-2007) found that a woman's electoral victory leads to an 18.5 percentage point higher probability of having a woman as a major party candidate in the next election.

Now, as of November 2021, gender quotas have been adopted in 132 countries, either in the form of voluntary party or compulsory legislative quotas. A study (1995-2012) disclosed that such measures enhanced women's representation from 11 percent to 21 percent. Some critics argued that it is 'anti-democratic', and 'manipulate voters' choices', while, a section of women's rights activists claimed, they are 'disrespectful in the assumption that women cannot get seats on their own', and are often negatively labelled as 'quota women'. Nevertheless, it brought women in many least-developed countries like Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania to the political front, and increased their substantive representation on issues that are traditionally seen as gendered. India has already passed the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, its implementation cannot be put off to an uncertain date!

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

From awareness to action: India's fight against thalassemia

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

Thalassemia, characterised by an inherited blood irregularity resulting in insufficient haemoglobin production, impacts the functionality of red blood cells. Once unrecognised and daunting in India, thalassemia now faces resilience and has been acknowledged as a benchmark disability under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act of 2016. With advancements in medical research, increased awareness campaigns, and collaborative efforts between government bodies, healthcare professionals, and philanthropic organisations, India stands at the forefront of combating thalassemia.

Government Initiatives

The Government of India has actively addressed this issue



KIRIT P SOLANKI

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

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

India, known as the thalassemia capital of the world, harbours over 1.5 lakh people living with thalassemia major (i.e., blood transfusion-dependent) and diagnoses approximately 10,000 new cases annually, despite its preventable nature. Living with thalassemia, a genetic blood disorder, is a constant struggle,

especially when ensuring a sufficient and readily available blood supply is a continuous challenge. However, the Government of India has been working to address this issue and continues to do so. In 2020, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare inaugurated a Thalassemia Screening and Counseling Center at the Indian Red Cross Society's National Headquarters (IRCS NHQ) Blood Bank to educate the public on the prevention of this disease. Additionally, there are currently 10 transplant centres in India. In 2023, Vinod K. Paul from NITI Aayog announced that the model used to screen people in tribal belts for sickle-cell disease would be applied to thalassemia screening as well, urging the Union Government

for a national mission to tackle thalassemia. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)'s decision to provide blood transfusion therapy to thalassemia patients free of charge is a welcome move that will significantly ease the patients' lives. On the research front, the ICMR National Institute of Immunohematology (NIH) and the National Institute of Research in Tribal Health (NIRTH) are researching haemoglobin disorders such as thalassemia, engaging in field investigations, and enhancing diagnostic techniques. Furthermore, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, launched the third phase of the Thalassemia Bal

Sewa Yojana (TBSY) to commemorate World Thalassemia Day. The minister emphasised the importance of increasing awareness, screening, and treatment facilities for blood disorders like thalassemia and sickle-cell anaemia. The launch also included the unveiling of the Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana Portal and the release of Standard Treatment Guidelines for Sickle Cell Disease. Thalassemia can be prevented through early detection and intervention. Recognising this potential, the government has prioritised raising awareness and implementing screening programmes to reduce the national burden of the disease.

Lack of Public Awareness

A significant barrier to bridg-

ing the blood supply gap in India is the lack of public awareness about voluntary blood donation. Additionally, a lack of clear understanding about the donation process and accessible locations creates further barriers to participation. This, coupled with the continued practice of replacement donation in many hospitals and blood banks, despite government regulations, hinders the creation of a sufficient and diverse blood bank inventory, especially for emergencies.

Way Forward

Effective thalassemia management requires stricter enforcement of standardised blood screening guidelines. Collaboration between patient advocacy groups and healthcare providers can

address concerns about blood safety, transmission risks, and social stigma through accurate information dissemination. Implementing advanced screening methods is crucial, but robust implementation is also key.

Upgrading healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare workers, and investing in new technologies are essential for significant progress. Collaboration between patient advocacy groups like the Thalassemia Patients Advocacy Group (TPAG) and healthcare providers can address concerns about blood safety, transmission risks, and social stigma.

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

MONEY MATTERS

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

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



Air India Express to operate over 360 daily flights

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



SUN Mobility partners with Revfin for EV financing

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



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

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



FM urges ADB to become partner in development agenda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

"Both exchanged views on how @ADB_HQ may partner with India to further the development agenda. They also discussed harnessing ADB's convening power to crowd in other public and private sector institutions to participate in India's growth," the finance ministry said in a post on X. ADB in September 2023, appointed Dasgupta as VP for a period of three years. Prior to this, he was MD and CEO of ICICI Lombard General Insurance.

Startups must adhere to self-regulating ecosystem



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It is very important that startups should focus on

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

Stock markets close higher in volatile trade

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

The gains were primarily led by metal, auto and commodity shares while IT and Tck shares capped the upside.

Reliance Industries which

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Krystal Integrated IPO subscribed 13.21 times

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

‘Innovation driving next versions of our biz’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Blinkit - the quick com-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women hiring from campus grows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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



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

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

The east, meanwhile, recorded the lowest participa-

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

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

REPORT: ELVISH YADAV ADMITS TO SETTING UP SNAKE VENOM AT RAVE PARTIES



Bigg Boss OTT 2 winner and YouTuber Elvish Yadav was detained by Noida Police in relation to an investigation into reports that he used snake venom as a recreational drug at a party. According to police sources, Elvish has admitted to preparing snake venom at rave parties he has thrown, revealed on Monday.

Elvish Yadav, who had previously denied any involvement in the snake venom case, reportedly acknowledged under questioning that he knew the other suspects who had been detained for giving snake venom the previous year. Gurugram-born YouTuber and singer Elvish Yadav rose to fame in 2023 after taking first place in Salman Khan's *Big Boss OTT 2* reality series.



Sidharth Malhotra on filming a fight scene in the restroom of an aircraft

The reactions that action flick *Yodha*, which was just released, has been receiving are currently making Bollywood star Sidharth Malhotra very happy. Produced by Karan Johar, the film features Pushkar Ojha and Sagar Ambre in leading roles alongside Raashii Khanna and Disha Patani.

In addition to all the action scenes in the movie, fans praised *Ittefaq* for a fight scene he had in the airplane restroom. In a recent video that Sidharth posted to Instagram, the *Ek Villain* actor discussed how he and his co-star were able to film a scene inside an airline restroom.

"I've done my fair share of action films in the past, but this is the first time I've fought inside a restroom," he remarked. "I'm not the tallest man here; the other characters and I are crammed into this little airline lavatory. My arms are so long that if I stretched them very far, they would pass through the other wall. As a result, we had to practice choreography or be really tense when throwing punches. We were working to capture this new side of me acting. We did a really unique job, in my opinion, of keeping it commando while still allowing you to watch this character perform this deed in a very raw and true way."



Mukesh Khanna rejects Ranveer Singh as Shaktimaan

Mukesh Khanna gained notoriety for his role as Shaktimaan, the first superhero in India. Fans were thrilled to learn who would be starring in the big screen adaptation of the people's superhero once it was announced. The seasoned actor has now refuted rumours that Ranveer Singh was chosen to play Shaktimaan in a YouTube video and an Instagram post.

He posted a collage photo of himself and Ranveer Singh on his Instagram feed. With a caption, the actor said, "On social media, there are rumours that Ranveer Singh would play Shaktimaan. And the whole world was upset about it. I said nothing. However, I had to say something when the channels began to announce that Ranveer had been signed. And I have stated that a person with such an image can never become Shaktimaan, regardless of how famous they are. I've made my stance known. Let's see what transpires next."

"I have told the producers that your competition is not with *Spider-Man*, *Batman*, or *Captain Planet*," the seasoned actor said. "Shaktimaan has developed into a wonderful teacher in addition to being a superhero. Now, the actor who accepts the part needs to possess the ability to make people listen to him when he speaks. Big actors do appear, although their roles are largely supporting roles." The video that was first uploaded on YouTube and then posted on his Instagram, both have now been taken down by Khanna. The reports have long been making the rounds on the casting for the reported superhero film; however, no confirmation has come. Reacting to the reports, Khanna made a video and shared it on his social media, which didn't make Singh's fans happy.



Oscar-winning screenwriter, David Seidler passes away

Famous screenwriter David Seidler, who won an Academy Award for his work on the film *The King's Speech*, passed unexpectedly on March 16 at the age of 86 while fly-fishing in New Zealand, according to Hollywood media.

According to his manager, Jeff Aghassi, "David was in New Zealand, the place he loved most in the world, doing fly fishing, which gave him the greatest peace. It's exactly as he would have written it if he had the chance." However, the cause for his death was not officially stated.

Adrishyam will be streaming from April 11 on Sony LIV






Sony LIV's much-awaited thriller, *Adrishyam*, featuring Divyanka Tripathi Dahiya and Ejaz Khan is set to stream from 11th April on Sony LIV. The show will take the audience on a captivating journey through the life and challenges of a spy, providing a fresh perspective to the spy thriller genre.

Divyanka, known for her compelling performances, brings a mix of depth and authenticity to the character of Inspector Parvati Sehgal. Meanwhile, Ejaz Khan portrays the role of Ravi Verma with his charismatic presence.




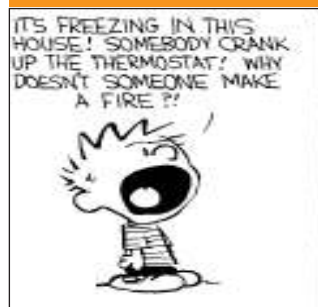
Ejaz Khan expressed his excitement about his role as Ravi Verma in *Adrishyam*, stating, "*Adrishyam* brings me a very exciting opportunity to play a character whose love for his country stands above everything. Ravi Verma embodies strength, determination, and commitment to protect his nation and brings the story of unseen heroes who work the people 24x7. It is an absolute pleasure to portray a character who speaks volumes about patriotism."

FUN



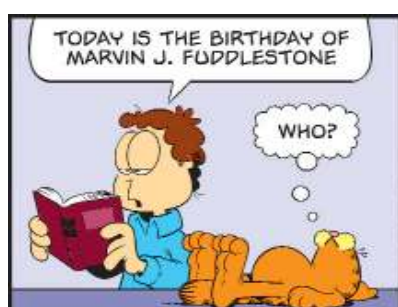
ARCHIE







CALVIN AND HOBBS




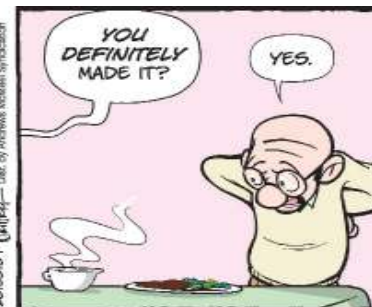

GARFIELD





NANCY



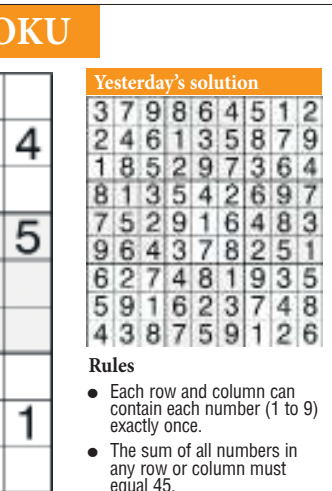
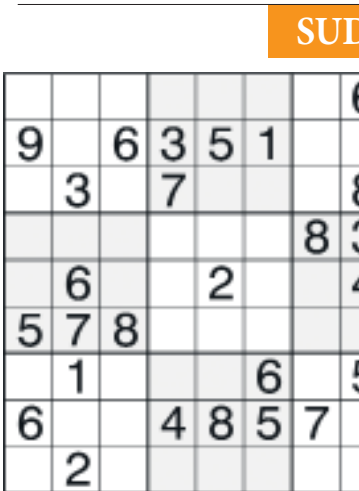
GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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9		6	3	5	1			4
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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Look at the stars through this
- Naming words
- Memorise
- Awful to look at
- Say again
- A team game with sticks
- Trip over
- A short spell of very wild weather with wind and rain
- Instructions for building houses
- Played make-believe

DOWN

- Of the same length
- A compass direction

WATCHING	A	E	A	E
S	P	E	A	R
P	A	R	D	E
A	U	T	H	E
R	R	B	O	U
A	R	M	S	B
G	E	T	T	R
U	N	D	E	R
S	A	I	L	S
S	C	I	P	P



KOHLI JOINS RCB TRAINING CAMP

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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



Pooran or De Kock to don keeping gloves in IPL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

It is unbelievable batting with Virat: Du Plessis

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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



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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

"We pushed but it would have been an uphill task that I would be fit for the World Cup semifinals or the final. When we pushed, it kind of triggered the injury and my recovery took longer (than expected)," Pandya admitted that his urge to represent India half-fit during World Cup semi-final was unjustifiable.

"I had a recurrence. My injury kind of expanded more and the question was that do I want to represent India at 50 per cent? The answer was no, because India deserves better than that and I myself would not be able to justify the fact that I am coming (back) not completely ready," he said.



"From there, the whole focus was that that I will come back as soon as possible, but with injuries and something like the freak injury which I had, you have to give time.

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

part of the Reliance One team at the DY Patil T20 tournament, which marked his return to professional cricket after a the lay-off.

"When I got fit, the Afghanistan series (had) just started. I have been fit since then (but) there were no games to play," he said.

"When I got injured, I had no clue how bad it was. When I went for the scans, it just showed just a little niggle which would be fine. But as a couple of hours progressed, it showed the real picture - my ankle was swollen.

"I straight away went to the NCA next day to fasten my process and make sure that I come back. Again, we tried everyday making sure that I am available for the World Cup

(end) and we had to take a call after the 12th day," he added. Asked if Pandya will bowl in the IPL, the MI skipper replied in "affirmative".

WAITING FOR UPDATE ON SURYAKUMAR YADAV: Meanwhile, MI head coach Mark Boucher said the team is waiting to hear from the Indian cricket board on the fitness status of star batter Suryakumar Yadav.

"We are awaiting updates on Suryakumar from the BCCI. We have always been under a cloud of fitness issues but we have a world-class medical team. We may lose one or two in terms of fitness but we have to move on as it is sport," Boucher said.

It has already been reported by PTI last week that world's No.1 ranked T20 batter, who is recuperating from a sports hernia surgery, is likely to miss the first few games but his rehabilitation as far as World T20 is concerned is on track.

MI WON'T HAVE A POLICY OF RESTING PLAYERS: Boucher, however, said that there would be no policy of resting the players keeping this year's T20 World Cup in mind.

"As the coach of Mumbai Indians, I am going to be a little bit biased and hoping to see my best players play all games. I have a soft spot for my players and I do understand that they might have niggles and that's when I will fall back on my medical team and work with them accordingly," he said. Talking about Rohit Sharma, Boucher said the Indian skipper was "fantastic" against England in the recently-concluded Test series and hoped to have his rich form continuing in the IPL.

"Rohit has been in a fantastic touch. The way he was hitting the ball against England was fantastic. I am looking forward to seeing him go out and express himself. If he has a fantastic season, we will be there in the dying stages of the tournament," Boucher said.

Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by four wickets

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM (BANGLADESH)

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

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

Last year taught us a lot of things: Mandhana

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

'I would not have regretted doing *Razakar*, not even if this had been my last film'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



'OM BHEEM BUSH ISN'T A COMEDIC ADULT FILM'

TEJAL SINHA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

"Unveiling



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

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

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

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

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

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

Mangli explained what happened on Instagram on Monday. "Dear everyone, I am safe and sound," she posted on Instagram Stories. "A few days ago, there was a minor accident that happened unexpectedly. Please don't believe the rumours that are being spread. I appreciate your kindness and care." Mangli and her group were returning from an event in the late hours of March 15 when the tragedy happened close to Tondupally within the boundaries of Shamshabad. Sources informed that "everyone traveling that day is fine. The event we were returning from happened on the Bengaluru-Hyderabad route. None of us, including Madam (Mangli), were in the car; therefore, it wasn't a serious accident. The rear light of the car was damaged when a truck struck it when it was parked on the side of the road.

There is nothing to fear for, and we are all safe." It is being reported that a police report has been filed in accordance with Indian Penal Code Section 279. Following their attendance at a spiritual event near Hyderabad, the singer and two members of her entourage were making their way back to Hyderabad.

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

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

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

