







# Main parties gear up to intensify poll campaign

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Amidst the looming general elections in Andhra Pradesh, the State is witnessing a surge in political activity as key party leaders gear up for rigorous campaigning. Chief Minister and YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu have unveiled their election strategies, igniting anticipation among the populace.

Chief Minister Jagan is set to embark on a 21-day bus yatra named 'Memantha Siddham', marking the commencement of his election campaign. Simultaneously, Nara Chandrababu Naidu is prepared to kickstart his electoral journey under the banner of 'Prajagalam'. The synchronised initiation of public engagements by both leaders has captured the attention and anticipation of the people across the State.

With the upcoming elections



perceived as vital by both the YSRCP and TDP, ambitious victory targets have been set, prompting detailed planning to secure success at the polls, including the finalization of candidates representing each party. While TDP, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Jana Sena Party have come together as an alliance, YSRCP has opted for an independent contest once again.

Having already conducted significant public gatherings, YSRCP, led by CM Jagan, is poised to reconnect with the masses through the bus journey, com-

mencing from Idupulapaya and concluding at Ichhapuram. CM Jagan will inaugurate the journey from his Tadepalli residence, commencing at 10:56 am on Wednesday, and will begin with prayers at Rajasekhara Reddy Ghat before embarking on the bus tour.

Meanwhile, TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu is gearing up for an intensive campaign under the 'Prajagalam' banner, scheduled from the 27th to the 31st of this month. The campaign will span multiple constituencies each day, including Palamaneru, Nagari, Nellore rural, Raptadu,

Shinganamalai, Kadiri, Srisailem, and Kurnool, with additional focus on Chandrababu's constituency, Kuppam. Actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan is also poised to launch his election campaign from Pithapuram on the 30th of this month. The campaign will commence with a visit to the local temple, followed by meetings with key leaders and interactions with local intellectuals.

As the state braces for the elections, the political arena anticipates heightened activity in the days ahead, with leaders fervently seeking the support of the electorate.

## YSRCP nominates Budi Muthyala Naidu for Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a calculated strategic manoeuvre, the YSRCP has revealed its contender for the Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat, setting the stage for a riveting electoral battle. Deputy Chief Minister Budi Muthyalanaidu emerges as the party's choice, injecting a fresh dimension into the forthcoming polls.

YSRCP's decision to unveil its Anakapalli MP candidate comes after the party had already revealed its nominees for 175 MLA and 24 MP seats. The delay in announcing the Anakapalli candidate underscores the party's careful consideration, particularly regarding its commitment to allocate the seat to a candidate from the BC (Backward Classes) community. The eventual selection of Budi Mutyala Naidu Koppula, representing the Koppula Velama social group, aligns with this commitment, reflecting a strategic balancing act on the part of the party.

Budi Muthyalanaidu's entry



Budi Muthyalanaidu's entry into the electoral fray brings with it familial ties, as his daughter is contesting for the Madugula seat, further consolidating the party's position in the region. This move signifies a departure from the previous MP's tenure, introducing a fresh face to represent the constituency.

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This move signifies a departure from the previous MP's tenure, introducing a fresh face to represent the constituency. The decision-making process within YSRCP was undoubtedly influenced by the alliance dynamics, particularly with the BJP securing a foothold in the Anakapalli constituency. The BJP's nomination of CM

Ramesh added another layer of complexity, prompting YSRCP to carefully weigh its options before making the final announcement.

The preference for a candidate from the same social background as the outgoing MP underscores YSRCP's strategic calculations, particularly given the significant voter base in the West. Budi Muthyalanaidu's candidacy from the Koppula Velama group adds an element of intrigue to the electoral narrative, further intensifying the

competition for the Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat. Despite speculation regarding YSRCP's potential inclination towards candidates from other demographics, the selection of Budi Muthyalanaidu reflects the party's strategic calculus aimed at maximising electoral prospects.

As the electoral fervour continues to build, the Anakapalli Lok Sabha seat emerges as a focal point of interest, poised to shape the broader political landscape in the upcoming elections.

## Ex-CBI director...

Continued from Page 1

Expressing scepticism about the BJP's recent alliance with the TDP, the former CBI director questioned how BJP members in Andhra Pradesh would reconcile their deep-seated animosity towards the TDP and sever ties with Jagan. "Overcoming these entrenched hostilities to collaborate effectively with TDP and Jana Sena Party members for the success of all three parties' candidates poses a significant challenge," he remarked.

Nageshwar Rao called upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and BJP national president JP Nadda to issue stern warnings to any individuals suspected of acting as moles or saboteurs for Jagan within the Andhra BJP, emphasizing that the success of the NDA relies on securing a majority of assembly and Lok Sabha seats.

He stressed, "It is imperative for the BJP's central leadership, particularly Modi, Shah, and Nadda, to rein in these alleged moles of Jagan within the Andhra BJP and rally them to work wholeheartedly towards the success of all NDA candidates contesting assembly and Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh."

It's worth noting that former Narasapuram MP K Raghunath Ramakrishna Raju also accused Somu Veerajulu of acting as a mole for the YSRCP within the state BJP, hindering his chances of securing a party ticket for the Narasapuram LS seat.

## Aditi unveils vision for Vizianagaram

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In the run-up to the upcoming general elections, Aditi Vijayalakshmi Gajapathi Raju, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA candidate for Vizianagaram, has unveiled ambitious plans for the development of the constituency.

Speaking exclusively to The Pioneer, Aditi outlined her vision to prioritize civic amenities across all divisions, extending her focus to the outskirts of Vizianagaram with plans for expansion on all sides.

Raju's blueprint for Vizianagaram encompasses crucial aspects of infrastructure, with a primary focus on road connectivity, drainage systems,

electricity provision, and dedicated water supply. These initiatives, she asserts, are pivotal for the prosperity and advancement of the constituency's populace. Her commitment to tackling these pressing issues arises from a deep understanding of the challenges confronting Vizianagaram.

Despite facing defeat in the 2019 general elections to YSRCP nominee Kolagatla Veerabhadra Swamy by a margin of 6,417 votes, Aditi remains undeterred, prepared to contest against him once more. She exudes confidence in her capacity to effect positive change, aligning herself with the TDP's steadfast dedication to Vizianagaram's progress. Raju



draws inspiration from her father's legacy, who previously represented the Vizianagaram constituency, attributing the region's developmental strides to his leadership. She views her candidacy as a continuation of this legacy, committed to building upon the foundation laid by her father.

Engaged in rigorous door-to-door campaigns across all wards, Raju is buoyed by the enthusiastic reception received from constituents regarding the TDP's 'Super-Six' assurances. This endorsement underscores the resonance of her campaign pledges and reflects the electorate's aspirations for tangible improvements in their daily lives. With the electoral battle intensifying, Aditi Vijayalakshmi Gajapathi Raju's propositions for civic progress and infrastructure development in Vizianagaram set the stage for a dynamic contest. Voters eagerly anticipate the realization of her vision, heralding a promising future for their constituency.

## Pawan donates...

Continued from Page 1

He expressed gratitude towards individuals from various walks of life who have contributed, ranging from labourers setting aside a portion of their earnings to retirees donating from their pensions.

Pawan Kalyan clarified that his donation of Rs 10 crore to the Jana Sena Party comes after fulfilling his tax obligations from his earnings in the film industry. The event was attended by prominent party members including JSP vice-president B Mahendra Reddy and national spokesperson Vemulapati Ajay Kumar, among others.

## TDP struggles to find a candidate for Vizianagaram Lok Sabha seat

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) finds itself in a challenging position as it strives to secure the Vizianagaram Parliamentary constituency, with the Turpu Kapu community's discontent looming large. The allocation of Assembly seats has sparked dissatisfaction among the Turpu Kapu community, with only four out of seven constituencies within the MP segment designated to upper castes.

To address these issues, the TDP is considering fielding a Turpu Kapu leader as its MP candidate. However, this move presents its own set of challenges. With only one candidate finalised for the Gajapathinagaram constituency, the decision for Cheepurupalli remains pending. Local political intricacies, including upper caste dominance in various constituencies, further complicate the party's efforts to ensure community satisfaction.

Former MLA Kala Venkata

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Rao's focus on his constituency and the reluctance of Cheepurupalli TDP in-charge Kimidi Nagarajuna to contest the MP elections add to the party's dilemma. Additionally, Gedela Srinubabu, a prominent figure within the AP Backward Classes Association, has expressed willingness to contest from Vizianagaram, offering a potential solution.

In a surprising turn of events, Narasapuram MP K. Raghunath Krishna Raju has expressed interest in contesting from Vizianagaram after failing to secure a BJP ticket for his constituency. However, local TDP leaders express concerns about fielding non-local and upper-

caste leaders, highlighting potential backlash from the community.

Reflecting on past defeats in the region, a senior TDP leader emphasises the party's need to prioritise the interests of the Turpu Kapu community to avoid political setbacks. Balancing internal aspirations, community expectations, and electoral viability presents a formidable challenge for the TDP as it navigates the complex political landscape of Vizianagaram.

The party's ability to address these challenges will be crucial in determining its electoral success in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

## Use Suvidha portal to obtain permission for meetings: CEO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena requested that the Suvidha portal should be used to obtain prior approval for the meetings, rallies, processions, door-to-door campaigns, distribution of leaflets etc. in the context of the implementation of the model code of conduct for elections in the state. For this, the application has to be made 48 hours in advance through the Suvidha app or directly to the concerned returning officer. Permissions are granted within 24 hours of application, he said.

He said that ECI has designed the Suvidha Portal for filing online nominations, affidavits and online applications for grant of prior permissions. A meeting is being held under the chairmanship of the CEO in the state secretariat with the



representatives of all the recognized political parties to explain the procedures to be followed by the political parties and their representatives and the permissions to be taken in advance in the context of the implementation of the model code of conduct for elections in the state.

Additional CEO MN Harendhira Prasad along with representatives of Aam Aadmi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, BJP, CPI (Marxist), Indian National Congress, National People's Party, TDP, YSRCP and other parties participated in this meeting.

## Lotus wilting...

Continued from Page 1

Criticism within the BJP ranks focuses on the perceived nepotism in candidate selection, with five out of six Lok Sabha seats awarded to defectors from other parties, and a disproportionate allocation favouring a specific community, further exacerbating discontent. Former state BJP chief Somu Veerajulu's disappointment at the rejection of his candidature echoes sentiments of disapproval within the party.

Amidst speculations, the party contemplates fielding Satya Kumar from the Dharmavaram assembly seat, while Somu may be urged to contest the assembly elections from the Anaparthi constituency.

## Several oppn leaders defect to YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The ruling YSRCP witnessed a series of high-profile joinings from the opposition alliance, notably from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena Party (JSP), on Tuesday. The grand gathering took place in the presence of the party president and Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Gorumuchhu Gopal Yadav, the TDP in charge of the Eluru Lok Sabha constituency, made a notable switch to the YSRCP, solidifying the party's position. The event unfolded at the Camp Office in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Accompanying Yadav were prominent YSRCP candidates including Karumuri Nageswara Rao from Tanuku Assembly constituency, K Abbaiah Choudhary from Denduluru, and Karumuri Sunil, contesting for the Eluru Lok Sabha seat. Another sig-

nificant defection came from the Rajampet constituency, where Ganta Narahari, the TDP in charge, decided to align himself with the YSRCP. This move was also sealed at the Camp Office with Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. PV Mithun Reddy, the YSRCP regional coordinator, and Cheverreddy Bhaskara Reddy, contesting for the Ongole Lok Sabha seat, were present during the event.

Adding to the momentum of defections, a former Member of the Legislative Council (MLC), Angurui Lakshmi Siva Kumari of Payakaravupeta, joined the YSRCP fold. This significant move was made official at the Camp Office in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, with YSRCP regional coordinator PV Mithun Reddy witnessing the transition.

Additionally, Venkatagiri Assembly constituency's senior TDP leader, Dr Mastan Yadav, decided to shift his allegiance to the

YSRCP, a move indicating the growing support for the ruling party. The ceremony took place in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, PV Mithun Reddy, and N. Ram Kumar Reddy, the YSRCP candidate from Venkatagiri.

The wave of defections extended to Vijayawada, where several former TDP corporators and Jana Sena leaders opted to join the YSRCP. The event was marked by the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the Camp Office. Notable personalities making the switch included Ganduri Mahesh, Nandepu Jagadeesh, Kokkiligadda Deva Mani, Kosuru Subrahmanyam (Mani), Gorantla Srinivasa Rao, and Bathina Ramu. Among those present to welcome the new entrants were Vijayawada MP Kesineni Nani, MLA Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao, MLC Ruhulla, and Vijayawada East YSRCP candidate Devineni Avinash.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

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

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

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

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

Rahukalam: 12:21 PM to 1:52 PM

Yamagandam: 7:48 AM to 9:19 AM

Variyam: 10:25 PM to 12:10 AM

Gulika: 10:50 AM to 12:21 PM

Amritakalam: 09:08 AM to 10:55 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 38°

Humidity: 55%

Sunrise: 6:06 AM

Sunset: 6:20 PM

Updated: March 26, 2024 5:00 PM



# Security stepped up at Inter-state checkpoints

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In preparation for the upcoming general elections, an Inter-State Borders Coordination meeting was conducted between district-level officers from the NTR district of Andhra Pradesh and the Suryapet district of Telangana. The gathering took place at the Ramco Cement Learning Centre meeting hall near the Chillakallu Toll Plaza in Jaggaiahpet.

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, Police Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata, Suryapet District Collector S Venkata Rao, and SP Rahul Hegde participated. The agenda centred on fostering collaborative efforts to thwart illicit transportation of cash, liquor, and other valuables across the Andhra Pradesh-Telangana borders.

An inspection of the Garikapadu Check Post, serving as the inter-state checkpoint between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, was conducted to evaluate surveillance measures. Discussions during the meeting revolved around strategies to curb the inter-state



smuggling of money, liquor, narcotics, gold, and other valuables.

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao highlighted the bolstered security measures implemented at inter-state and inter-district checkpoints in anticipation of the general elections. He underscored the imperative of stringent vigilance and dedicated attention to all checkpoints.

Furthermore, Dr Rao emphasised the continuity of all preventive measures orchestrated by the district administration, in conjunction with the support of various departments including police, forest, revenue, commercial tax, GST, and banks, among others, until the conclusion of the elec-

tions. He stressed the significance of cooperative endeavours between Suryapet and NTR district administrations to ensure peaceful elections and adherence to guidelines stipulated by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata of NTR District Police lauded the significance of the inter-state borders coordination meeting in curbing illegal transportation between the NTR and Suryapet districts. He disclosed plans for further augmenting the number of combined check posts, inter-state check posts, and other checkpoints in the district.

Assuring full cooperation from Suryapet district, Collector Venkata Rao cited

the positive collaboration received from the NTR district administration during the 2023 assembly elections. SP BK Rahul Hegde underscored the pivotal role of Ramapuram X Road and Dondapadu Cross points, highlighting their integration with the Control room and the election control room for enhanced operational efficiency.

In addition to the key officials mentioned, the meeting was attended by NTR district joint collector Dr P Sampath Kumar, Nandigama RDO A Ravindra Rao, Kodad RDO Ch Suryanarayana, NTR District ADCP and Police Nodal Officer M Krishna Murty Naidu, LDM K Priyanka, and other dignitaries.

## Endowments Commissioner visits Durga Temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The Commissioner of the Andhra Pradesh Endowment Department, S Satyanarayana, visited the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The temple authorities accorded him a warm welcome.

Commissioner Satyanarayana was accompanied by temple Executive Engineer KVS Koteswara Rao and other officials. Vedic scholars blessed the Commissioner at the Veda Ashirvachanam Mandapam on the temple premises. EE Koteswara Rao also presented Seshra Vastram, Laddu Prasadam, and Durga Devi's portrait to him.

Meanwhile, Durga Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao inspected the ongoing development works at the temple, including the elevated queue complex and Kanaka Durga Nagar parking area. He instructed the contracting agencies involved to complete all these works within the stipulated time.



## 'Memanta Siddham' from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After the resounding success of the regional 'Siddham Sabha', YSRCP Supremo and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is poised to launch an extensive poll campaign with the 'Memanta Siddham' Yatra on March 27, commencing from Idupulapaya, Kadapa District. MLC and CM's tour program coordinator, Talasila Sarvarajupeta, VN Palli (K a m a l a p u r a m), Gangireddypalli, Urutur, Y e r r a g u n t l a (Jammalamadugu), and

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will commence his journey by paying tribute to his late father, former Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy at YSR Ghat in Idupulapaya at 1:00 pm. Subsequently, the CM will embark on the yatra by bus at 1:30 pm.

The route of the yatra will cover several pivotal locations including Kumarunipalli, Vempalli, Sarvarajupeta, VN Palli (K a m a l a p u r a m), Gangireddypalli, Urutur, Y e r r a g u n t l a (Jammalamadugu), and

Podladurthi," stated MLC Talasila Raghuram.

The highlight of the yatra will be a public meeting scheduled at 4:30 pm on the Proddutur bypass road, where Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will address the gathering.

"After the public meeting, the yatra will proceed to the night camp situated on the Allagadda bypass road of Nandyala district, passing through Sunnapurallapalli, Duvvur, Jillela, Nagalapadu, Bodhanam, Rampalle Cross, and Chagalamarri," added MLC Talasila Raghuram.

## Federal Skill Academy empowering graduates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Federal Bank continues to expand its footprint in Vijayawada with the inauguration of a new branch in Kanpur, furthering its commitment to both business and community development. The newly established branch also serves as the regional office, catering to the needs of the local people.

Speaking on the initiative, Jaya Shekhar Reddy, Regional Head and Deputy vice president, emphasised the bank's commitment to empowering graduates who may be facing unemployment post-graduation. "Federal Bank is proud to leverage its CSR funds to establish the Federal Skill

Academy, which serves as a beacon of hope for unemployed graduates," stated Reddy. "With a total of six skill academies already operational across the country, the establishment of the seventh academy in Vijayawada Kanuru underscores our dedication to providing meaningful opportunities for the youth."

The Federal Skill Academy invites all graduates in Vijayawada to take advantage of its training programs and explore new avenues for personal and professional growth. Together, the Federal Bank and the Federal Skill Academy aim to unlock the potential of every graduate, fostering a brighter future for the community.

## STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS POTABLE WATER SHORTAGE IN VIZAG

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to combat potential drinking water shortages, District Collector Dr A. Mallikharjuna has called for immediate action from concerned officials in Visakhapatnam. With the looming threat of low rainfall and increased demand during the summer months, Dr Mallikharjuna stressed the urgency of advanced planning and coordination among various departments.

During a crucial review meeting held alongside GVMC Commissioner CM Saikanth Varma, the Collector emphasized the imperative of preventive measures to safeguard water resources. This includes



repairing essential infrastructure such as bores, motors, and pipes, while also launching awareness campaigns to promote responsible water usage, particularly in rural areas. Commissioner CM Saikanth Varma outlined ambitious plans to source water from

multiple locations across the district, including Eleru, Godavari, and Rayapudi. Notably, a groundbreaking proposal to pump water from Eleru to Mehadi Gedda aims to significantly augment the daily water supply, addressing the anticipated surge in

demand during the summer season.

Key officials from various departments, including rural water supply, Zilla Parishad, GVMC Water Supply, and Water Resources, were present at the meeting, highlighting the collaborative effort underway to tackle the impending water crisis. With a comprehensive strategy in place, authorities are optimistic about ensuring uninterrupted drinking water supply to both urban and rural areas of Visakhapatnam. These proactive measures signify a united front in confronting the challenges posed by water scarcity, providing reassurance to residents amidst the approaching summer season.

## 'Samskritika Sirulu' empowers disabled individuals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A two-day dance extravaganza titled "Dance Festival-Samskritika Sirulu," orchestrated by renowned dance master Pakki Manzoosha, unfolded as a captivating experience geared towards the mental enrichment of approximately 80 disabled individuals at the Asha Jyothi Handicapped Welfare Society an NGO in Hanuman Junction. The event was organised under the auspices of Arunodaya Kala Samiti of Vijayawada at Pavana Bhavani Kalyana Mandapam in Appanaveedu, Eluru district.

The festival showcased a melange of classical and folk performances, igniting the stage with vibrant energy and artistic prowess. Among the mesmerising acts were the Ganesh Kowtham Kuchipudi dance by Niveditha Sree from Vijayawada, Swagatha Nrutyam by Varsha Institute of Dance from Hyderabad, Annamacharya Keerthana-Vachenu Alamelumanga by disciples of Arunodaya Kala Samithi, Vijayawada, Thandava Nrutyakari by Nataraj Dance Academy, Gannavaram, Ayigirinandini by Tanvitha from Vijayawada,

Bhamakalapam by Lakshmi Sahasra from Hyderabad, Paras Thillana by Pilli Varsha from Hyderabad, and folk dance by Abhinaya Natyalaya from Vijayawada.

Distinguished guests graced the occasion, including Ambati Madhu Mohana Krishna, president of the AP Film Chamber of Commerce, who lauded the role of Indian arts in enhancing health and fostering inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. Mareedu Madhavi Latha, director of Asha Jyothi Handicapped Welfare Society, who presided over the event, commended the young performers' talents in Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam, urging parents to nurture their children's interest in classical dance and music.

Former chairman of the Child Welfare Committee (Krishna District), BVS Kumar, extolled the innate artistic abilities nurtured through dance, while the guest of honour, senior journalist K Kalyan Krishna Kumar, and educationalist K Ramaa Gayatri, who represented Empower and Excel (USA) organization, emphasised the event's significance in bringing joy to disabled children.



## Paddy dues will be cleared in two or 3 days, farmers assured

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Civil Supplies Department Commissioner H Arun Kumar has assured the farmers that the pending dues for the Kharif paddy procurement will be cleared within two or three days. He added that the department has already taken steps to complete the payments for the pending bills.

He made this promise after the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham staged a protest in front of his office at Kanuru near Vijayawada on Tuesday. AP Rythu Sangham president G Eswaraiah, general secretary KVV Prasad, and AP Tenant Farmers' Association general

secretary P Jamalaiah participated in the protest, along with the farmers.

The Kharif paddy procurement ended three months ago. Since then, the government has not credited bills into their bank accounts. With the Rabi season set to end on March 31, the government is still not serious about the pending bills. As a result, the farmers face severe problems in starting the Kharif agricultural activities.

During the protest, the farmers raised slogans demanding to clear the dues. Later, Commissioner Arun Kumar spoke with the farmer leaders and assured them of clearing the pending bills within two



Farmers, under the aegis of the AP Rythu Sangham, staging a protest at the Civil Supplies Department headquarters at Kanuru on Tuesday, demanding that the government clear the dues of paddy procurement.

Civil Supplies Commissioner made the announcement following AP Rythu Sangham protest

days. However, he refused to receive the representation as the election code of conduct is in force. The process of bill pay-

ment started in the afternoon.

Later, AP Rythu Sangham leaders Eswaraiah,

Prasad and Jamalaiah said that farmers are finding it hard to repay their debts and the moneylenders will double the interest rate. As of now, around Rs.900 crore is due from the government. The largest amount is due to Srikakulam district, Rs.150 crore, followed by Vizianagaram (Rs.70 crore) and Parvathipuram Manyam (Rs.48 crore), they added.

Further, they pointed out that the State government had assured the farmers of clearing all bills

within 21 days after procurement, but failed to fulfil the promise. As a result, the moneylenders who provided investments for agricultural activities are pressing the farmers for money. The government should take the steps to pay the bills immediately after selling the paddy, they demanded.

AP Rythu Sangham leaders M Yallamanda Rao, M Uma Maheswara Rao, G Ramu, H Surendranath Benarji, V Azad, A Prasad, M Narasimha Rao, V Ratnagiri, Venkata Ratnam, Peyyala Naga Raju, Bhogeswara Rao, Ch Yugandhar and others were also present.

## Fire in Vijayawada oil refining facility

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A major fire erupted at an oil refining facility on the outskirts of Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday. No casualties were reported. Dense smoke enveloped the Kanuru area after the fire broke out at the facility.

Five fire engines rushed to the scene and brought the fire under control. No casualties were reported as there was no one on the premises.

According to police, the incident occurred at a facility

where crude oil is processed into grease.

Authorities suspect that a short circuit led to the fire. Fire Services Department officials said they received the information about the fire at around 9 a.m. The fire spread rapidly due to petrochemical products. An official said advanced

equipment were pressed into service and foam compound was used to douse the fire. He said there was no NOC for the facility from fire services. Police registered a case and took up investigation.



## INDIA bloc urged to allot 50 MP tickets to Muslims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Muslim United Front and the Muslim JAC Guntur have demanded that the Congress party give tickets to 50 persons belonging to the Muslim community in the 2024 Parliament elections. President of MUF and MJAC, Mohammed Kaleem said they wrote a letter to Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC president and INDIA chairman, seeking 50 MP tickets for Muslim minorities.

He further said that all the political parties that are part of the INDIA combine are announcing their candidates for the Lok Sabha seats, and the Congress party has also

released four lists. He said the Muslim community expects that at least 50 Muslim candidates will be fielded on behalf of INDIA at the national level. There are 27 Muslim members in the 17th Lok Sabha. Muslim organisations want INDIA to take the responsibility of making at least 50 in the 18th Lok Sabha.

"Muslims feel that there are not many people from their community among the candidates announced by INDIA," Kaleem said. "It is reasonable to give a chance to 50 Muslims in the INDIA combine, which is an alliance of about 26 or 27 parties. Except for Andhra Pradesh, the parties in INDIA

are in power in the rest of the southern States. The Congress party is in power in Karnataka and Telangana. In these two States, at least four parliamentary seats should be given to Muslims on behalf of the Congress.

In Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry also, INDIA should allocate at least six seats to Muslims.

"At least 10 seats should be allocated to Muslims in the rest of the southern States and in AP, the Congress should allocate majority seats to Muslim, Christian and Dalit communities in the elections," he demanded.

## Port City keen on conservation of Olive Ridley turtles'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The City of Destiny is making a concerted effort to safeguard endangered Olive Ridley turtles during their nesting season. The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC), led by Commissioner CM Sai Kant Varma, has unveiled a multi-pronged con-

servation plan to protect these magnificent creatures. "Protecting the turtles isn't just about them," Commissioner Varma emphasised at a recent press conference here on Tuesday. "It's about safeguarding the delicate ecosystem our city depends on. We need everyone's help to ensure the continued existence of these Olive



Ridley turtles."

The plan leverages the existing Eco Blue programme, part of the broader Eco Vizag envi-

ronmental initiative. Eco Blue uses beach cleaning machines to maintain the cleanliness and beauty of Visakhapatnam's beaches. This focus on cleanliness goes beyond aesthetics - it's vital for preserving the natural habitat that Olive Ridley turtles rely on. Recognising the turtles' nesting cycle (October/November to May),

Commissioner Varma said that the GVMC will implement targeted manual cleaning operations on critical nesting grounds like Ramakrishna Beach, Sagar Nagar, Kapuluppada, and Pedanagamayyapalem. These meticulous cleaning efforts aim to minimise disruptions to nesting and create optimal conditions for hatching success.





# Democracy will shine if the House represents more parties

If rulers are not democratic, people opt for change! Participants in the electoral process would do well to remember this always. Ruling parties often make tall claims for ensuring their comeback, thinking they are indispensable for the all-round development of the state. They pose as if they are the best rulers the state has ever witnessed. They base their assessment on the welfare measures taken up for the masses, who constitute a vital chunk of their vote bank. That does not mean people want to see the same person occupy the seat of administration again and again. If they want change, they will simply vote for another party to arrest certain undesirable tendencies. At the same time, a person cannot be written off as a loser basing on the latest verdict given by the people. For example, Kamaraj Nadar, a towering personality on the Indian political screen and former chief minister of Tamil Nadu was defeated in the Virudh Nagar Assembly constituency at the hands of a rival from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the elections of 1967. The DMK then swept the polls in TN for the first time, bringing curtains down on the Congress rule in the state. Shocked at his defeat, Kamaraj later learned from the dominant section of voters they had simply decided to try the young man who was in the electoral fray against Kamaraj! Kamaraj was famous for setting up of thousands of schools and



**Shocked at his defeat, Kamaraj later learned from the dominant section of voters they had simply decided to try the 'young man' who was in the electoral fray against Kamaraj! Kamaraj was famous for setting up of thousands of schools and providing mid-day meals for children across the state, despite facing financial crunch.**

providing mid-day meals for children across the state, despite facing financial crunch. Besides, he had adopted visible austerity measures during his tenure as the chief minister. Such integrity is lacking among most of today's politicians. 'Change' can be choice for the people to strengthen democracy. In fact, it is the responsibility of people to ensure that rulers discharge their functions as per the wishes of the electorate. Today, many sections in society remain as vote banks only, without getting their due share in the power structure. The utmost that various parties do is to set up corporations ostensibly for the welfare of every caste in society. It is a different matter that those corporations lack real power. Members of down-trodden sections of society, who work for different political parties,



RATNA KUMAR M  
Senior Journalist

strive to get an opportunity to contest the elections. But they seldom make it. The current alliance of three opposition parties, Telugu Desam Party, Bharatiya Janata Party and Jana Sena Party, has paved the way for more representation on the part of political organisations. It may be recalled that there was no major opposition voice except that of the principal opposition in the first House (2014-19) of the residual Andhra Pradesh state. The BJP, despite being an alliance partner of TDP, with four members in the House could not be considered as a voice of real opposition. There was literally no opposition in the House for a particular period when the then principal opposition YSR Congress Party decided to boycott the proceedings of the House. Unfortunately, this situation continued till the 2019 polls. The situation worsened in the next House, which witnessed no representation of any political party other than the ruling party and the principal opposition. The YSRCP

stormed to power in AP by bagging 86% of the seats in the 175-member AP Legislative Assembly. The principal opposition, TDP, won only 23 seats. One seat was won by the Jana Sena Party (JSP) headed by film actor Pawan Kalyan and even that lone member shifted loyalties to YSRCP. Now, with the coming together of TDP, JSP and BJP in AP, there may be relatively more representation in the House following the 2024 elections. There is a guaranteed representation of sorts, considering that JSP and BJP are contesting 23 and 10 Assembly seats respectively with the support of organisationally strong TDP. Despite power sharing, the three parties in the alliance would not hesitate to question the establishment on public issues. It may be mentioned here that, in the history of Legislative Assembly in the erstwhile undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, there was representation of 11 registered political parties in the Legislative Assembly in 2004. That is, the Congress, TDP, TRS, MIM, BJP, CPI, CPI(M), BSP, Samajwadi Party (SP), Janata Party, CPI-ML-New Democracy had representation in APLA then. SP, Janata Party members joined their parent party - the Congress later. The ruling party, with 180+ seats, and the principal opposition, with comfortable numbers, and with the presence of other parties, then House had a very good composition that could spread the fragrance of democracy.

## Action taken on complaints received through cVIGIL: DC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Sumit Kumar has said that action has been taken on most of the complaints received through the cVIGIL app and directed the officials of all departments to work efficiently to conduct elections transparently and impartially.

The Collector held a meeting with the election officials here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that various systems were made available to the people to make complaints. He said that all this would help people exercise their right to vote freely and fearlessly.

The Collector said that for the smooth completion of this most important election process, for the strict implementation of the election rules, and for continuous monitoring of the election process, an election control room has been established with various departments. Collector Sumit



Kumar said that the complaint cell is playing an important role in the election control room which was established immediately after the announcement of the election schedule.

The Election control room consists of C-VIGIL, Call Center, 1950 Helpline and other departments, he said, stating that the complaints and requests received by the respective departments are being scrutinized and immediate action is being taken on them by the concerned authorities. He said that so far, the complaints and requests received by various departments have been resolved in a large number.

The Collector said that the C VIGIL App is a great opportunity for people to complain about irregularities as fast as possible and with evidence to implement the code of conduct of elections. He said that any citizen can download this recently available app from the Google Play Store to their mobile. He asked the people to complain about any issue through C VIGIL, to take a photo or a 2-minute video of the relevant complaint in the window and upload it live.

## Mizoram Governor exhorts students to improve technological skills

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Mizoram Governor K Haribabu said that education plays a vital role in the development and exhorted engineering students to enhance their technological skills.

The Governor participated in the 44th Annual Day celebrations of SRKR Engineering College as chief guest here on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion he underlined the need for setting up skill development centres in engineering colleges to impart technical training to the engineering students.

He said that India is using the highest volume of data in the world, adding that India has achieved a lot of development and information revolution in the country. He exhorted the engineering students to gain expertise in



any discipline to get a lucrative job. He also asked the students to observe the research being carried out in the DRDA by the scientists and strive hard to serve in the organization. He emphasized the need to develop non-conventional energy resources to reduce the import of crude oil. He said that educational

institutions should change the syllabus according to the market requirements. He highlighted that the Central government has initiated providing solar generation to one crore households in the country. He said that scientists revealed that electricity could be generated from bamboo produced in Mizoram and

suggested that research should be carried out to generate electricity using agriculture produced. Governor Haribabu exhorted the students to come out with innovative concepts to establish industries. The Governor released a postal stamp of college founder late Sagi Ramakrishna Raju on the occasion.

SRKR Engineering College president Sagi Prasad Raju said that SRKR Engineering College was established in 1980 and the College was developed as one of the institutions which has high standards in the country. College Correspondent Sagi Ramakrishna Nishant Varma, honorary chairman P Krishnam Raju, director Dr M Jagapathi Raju and principal KV Murali were among those who were present.

## TDP activist killed as car hits bike

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

A Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activist was killed and another critically injured when the motorcycle on which they were going was hit by a speeding car at Aniganuru village in Ramakuppam mandal on Tuesday.

Police said that the two TDP activists attended the Telugu Desam party chief N Chandrababu Naidu's programme. When they were going back to their native vil-

lage, a car hit their bike killing Chalamalaiah (32) instantaneously. Another TDP worker Nagabhusanam was critically injured and he was admitted to the PES hospital.

Meanwhile, Chandrababu Naidu visited the injured activist Nagabhusanam in the hospital.

He inquired with the doctors about his condition. Naidu also consoled the family member Chalamalaiah. Naidu assured of all help to the two families.



## 14 kg silver articles seized from a marriage party

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

The police seized silver articles weighing 14 kg from a marriage party at the bypass road at Yadamarri village on Tuesday.

Police said that the police started conducting checks of vehicles after the notification was issued for elections. The

police checked the car in which a marriage party was going to Nellore from Bangalore. The police found silver ornaments weighing 14 kg.

The silver ornaments were being taken to be given to the bride in Nellore. Since they failed to produce the required documents, the police seized silver ornaments.

Meanwhile, the elders in the marriage party told the media that they were taking silver ornaments as part of marriage traditions to present to the bride.

However, the police did not listen to their version and seized all the articles. They condemned the seizure of ornaments of a marriage.



## Rs 1.79 cr in cash, 214 g gold seized so far

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district SP P Parameswar Reddy has said that Rs 1,79,95,000 cash and gold weighing 214 grams have been seized in the district so far.

In a statement here on Tuesday, the SP said that Rs 1,79,95,000 cash, 214 grams of gold jewellery, 1872 litres of illicit liquor and 80.3 grams of drugs had been seized so far in the district and the election code of conduct is being implemented strictly, adding that 18 check-posts were set up at the important places where checking of vehicles are conducted constantly.

The SP said that 426 electoral offenders and 887 rowdy



sheeters were bound over and route march was conducted by the central forces at the problematic and most problematic

villages. All needed steps were taken to conduct elections in a peaceful atmosphere and in a transparent manner, the SP stated.

## Examine applications received through Suvidha portal: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials to examine applications received through the Suvidha portal expeditiously and take action at the earliest.

The Collector held a teleconference here on Tuesday with the returning officials and nodal officials. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the officials to examine the application received through Suvidha Portal and issue permissions at the earliest.

He said that through the Suvidha portal, launched by the Election Commission of India as a single window system for processing all election permits, requests made by political parties or candidates seeking permission for election campaigns should be scrutinized immediately and permits should be issued without any delay.

For the approval of the permission request received online through the Encore system, the officer concerned should examine the permissions received by the nodal officers of various departments and take necessary action. In this regard, returning officers, nodal officers and concerned officers should work in coordination, he told them.

Static surveillance teams and flying squad teams should intensify checking against illegal traffic of cash, liquor and gifts against the code of conduct in the context of elections, he instructed them adding that there should be no laxity anywhere. The Collector told the relevant returning officers to conduct the inspections in this regard.



## Film writer Kona consoles Geethanjali's family

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Popular Telugu cine writer Kona Venkat consoled the family members of Geethanjali who allegedly committed suicide unable to digest humiliation and trolling on social media.

Kona Venkat went to their house in Tenali on Monday. He consoled the husband and two daughters of Geethanjali. He assured them of all help. He handed over Rs 50,000 financial assistance to the bereaved family. He also assured of taking care of the daughters of deceased Geethanjali.

Kona Venkat lamented that social media trolling cast the life of Geethanjali. He demanded the government to bring stringent new laws to check social media trolling.

It may be mentioned here that the AP government had given a house site to Geethanjali. On the occasion, Geethanjali spoke to a YouTube channel expressing her buoyancy on being allocated a house site. She also extolled the Jagan Mohan Reddy government for allocating a house site to her.

Her interview went viral on social media. However, some social media activists trolled her and humiliated her which allegedly forced her to end their life by jumping from a running train. Her controversial death created a sensation and racked the state.



## Waltair Railway Division hits Rs 10,000 Cr revenue landmark

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Waltair Division of the East Coast Railway (ECOR) has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing the Rs. 10,000 crore revenue mark for the first time in its history. This accomplishment was reached five days ahead of the financial year's closure, solidifying the division's strong performance. Saurabh Prasad, Divisional Railway Manager, commended the collective efforts of the team.

He designated March 26, 2023, as a historic date for the Waltair Division, highlighting the unwavering dedication and tireless work ethic displayed by the entire workforce in achieving this remarkable feat.

The achievement reflects a growth exceeding 10 per cent compared to the previous financial year (2022-23). This



success is attributed to a multi-pronged approach, including prioritising customer-centric strategies, fostering seamless coordination with patrons, optimising operational efficiency, expanding capacity, upgrading passenger amenities, and implementing efficient crew management practices.

Despite encountering various challenges such as natural calamities, security concerns, ongoing infrastructural expansion projects, and safety modernisation initiatives, all wings of the Waltair Division demonstrated exceptional performance, contributing significantly to this historic accomplishment.

## SFI's Polycet coaching classes from April 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Student Federation of India (SFI) NTR district committee is set to conduct free coaching for Class 10 students who are preparing for the Polytechnic Common Entrance Test (Polycet), at the SRR & CVR Government College at Machavaram in Vijayawada. The coaching will be starting on April 1.

SRR & CVR Government Degree College Principal Dr K Bhagyalakshmi unveiled the free Polycet coaching programme poster on Tuesday. The SFI Vijayawada city committee has provided students free coaching facilities for the past 10 years.

Speaking on the occasion, Principal Dr Bhagyalakshmi lauded the SFI for organising various activities which will be useful for the students in future,



SRR & CVR Government Degree College Principal Dr Bhagyalakshmi unveiling the poster of free Polycet coaching classes organised by SFI, on the college premises in Vijayawada on Tuesday

besides conducting agitations against many issues which students face. She assured the leaders of the SFI that the college would support its initiatives.

SFI NTR district secretary Ch Venkateswara Rao said that senior teachers will handle the coaching classes. Also, they will

provide free study materials. He said many of their students had achieved good ranks in the Polycet earlier and got seats in government polytechnic colleges.

SFI leaders Sk Zahida, Bhargav, B Madhav, T Praneeth, Manikantha, Santosh and others were present.



INDIA CORNER

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

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



## Medication errors key challenge to patient safety: Study

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



## Origin of butter chicken: Daryaganj moves Delhi HC

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



### PM MODI DIALS BELGIAN COUNTERPART

# Discusses West Asia, Russia and Ukraine peace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday spoke with his Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo and agreed to enhance cooperation and support for early restoration of peace and security in West Asia and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. During the telephone call, Modi also congratulated De Croo on the successful hosting of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels last week. After the conversation, Modi tweeted, "Spoke to Belgium PM @alexanderdecroo. Congratulated him on the success of the First Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. Exchanged views on strengthening bilateral ties; advancing India-EU Partnership under Belgian Presidency; and cooperation on regional and global issues." De Croo also put out a tweet saying, "Called prime minister @narendramodi to



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

discuss the conflicts in #Ukraine & #Gaza and protecting shipping lanes in the Red Sea. We also talked about our growing commercial relations #semiconductors #pharmaceuticals #greenhydrogen and the upcoming royal trade mission to India." In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the two leaders "agreed upon the need to enhance coopera-

tion and support for early restoration of peace and security in the West Asia region and Russia- Ukraine conflict", adding they also exchanged views on global and regional developments. It said Modi and De Croo reviewed the excellent relations between India and Belgium. "They discussed ways to further strengthen the bilateral partnership in diverse sectors

including trade, investment, clean technologies, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, green hydrogen, IT, defence, ports, among others," the statement said. The two leaders affirmed commitment to further bolster the India EU Strategic Partnership under the ongoing Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

## Indian-origin mathematician Subramaniam dies in US

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Dr T N Subramaniam, an eminent mathematician of Indian origin and creator of Route One company & server for General Motors, passed away in Michigan on Tuesday. He was 76. Subramaniam, who migrated to the US in 1979, was renowned in academic circles in India and the US. He leaves behind him a rich legacy of mathematical models and theories for the world of maths. He taught Maths at Philadelphia university for some years and then shifted to Oakland where he taught for several years. Later, he founded the Route One company for the automotive manufacturing company, which handles auto-financing for all GM cars and GPS systems. He was the architect of the server for the site for General Motors in Troy, Michigan, in the US. The then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also met him personally while on tour and encouraged him to be innovative and do things that the country could be proud of him.

### ITS CIVILISATIONAL IMPRINT IS STILL VISIBLE IN THE REGION

# India has long, distinguished maritime tradition: Jaishankar

PNS ■ MANILA

India has a long and distinguished maritime tradition whose civilisational imprint is still visible in this region, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday as he hailed the docking of an Indian Coast Guard ship here signified the deepening of bilateral ties with Manila. Jaishankar, who is in the Philippines on the second leg of his three-nation tour, made the remarks during his visit to the Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Samudra Paharedar' during the vessel's port call to Manila. "My visit and the ship's presence signifies the deepening India-Philippines relations," he said. "India has a long and distinguished maritime tradition, whose civilisational imprint is still visible in this region. Today, our Act East policy and the Indo-Pacific Vision have given it a more contemporary form," the minister said. He said that another noteworthy development is the



Indo-Pacific maritime domain awareness initiative of which both countries are members that is aimed at fostering cooperation on a wide range of maritime activities and issues. "Our collaboration with the ASEAN is a vital aspect of those endeavours.. We have also seen the commencement of ASEAN-India maritime exercises. As seafaring nations, this is a strong bilateral bond between us," he said. He said that the ship's presence in Manila happens to coincide with his own bilateral visit. And each, in their own way, signifies a deepening partnership, he added.

"The cooperation between the Coast Guards of our two nations was facilitated by an understanding of enhanced maritime cooperation that was reached last year," he said, adding that he was glad to note that specialised training courses in India have commenced. "We value the presence of the Philippines in the search and rescue and pollution response exercises which have been conducted by the Indian Coast Guard. The visit of this pollution control vessel to the Philippines is significant because it highlights the shared challenges that we face in that domain," he said. "Like-minded countries of the Indo-Pacific should be doing more with each other," he said. "May it promote greater cooperation between our countries and may promote greater cooperation within the region and may it instill a greater sense of maritime interest and responsibility, particularly in the younger generations," he added.

## Atal Pension Yojana poorly designed: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after the Congress dubbed the Centre's Atal Pension Yojana as a "poorly-designed scheme" that "hoodwinks and coerces" people into participating in it, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday hit back at the grand old party accusing it of "hoodwinking" people in the name of vote bank politics. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the Atal pension scheme is a "fitting representation of the Modi Government's policy making: headline management, with few benefits actually reaching the people". His attack came after a media report claimed that nearly one of three subscribers who dropped out of the Centre's pension scheme for unorganised sector, did so because their accounts were opened without their "explicit" permission. The report cited a recent sample study by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). "The 'flagship' Atal Pension Yojana is a very poorly-designed scheme, a paper tiger that needs officials to hoodwink and coerce people into participating in it. It's a fitting representation of the Modi Government's policy making: headline management, with few benefits actually reaching the people!" Ramesh said in a post on X.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has quashed the bail condition imposed by the Orissa High Court on a man that he shall not be involved in any political activity, saying it will breach his fundamental rights. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta passed the order on a plea filed by Siba Shankar Das, a former Mayor of Berhampur Municipal Corporation, against the January 18 order of

the high court. The high court had dismissed his application seeking withdrawal of the bail condition which said that he "shall not create any untoward situation in public and shall not be involved in any political activities, directly or indirectly". The condition was imposed by the high court while ordering his release on bail in August 2022. "We find that the imposition of such condition would

breach the fundamental rights of the appellant and no such conditions could have been imposed," the apex court said in its March 22 order. "We, therefore, quash and set aside the condition imposed by the high court, to the extent the same is extracted above," it said. Das had approached the high court seeking modification of the condition imposed by it in the August 11, 2022 order while directing his release on bail.

### DELHI CM DIRECTS OFFICIALS FROM ED CUSTODY

## There should be no shortage of free medicines at Mohalla Clinics

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has issued directions from ED custody to address shortage of medicines and diagnostic tests at mohalla clinics and hospitals in the national capital, Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Tuesday. This is the second direction issued by the chief minister from ED custody. Later in the day, Bharadwaj said a session of Delhi Assembly has been called on Wednesday. "Tomorrow is the session of Delhi Assembly. The Chief Secretary has been ordered to

inform the status of free medicines and free tests in hospitals and mohalla clinics and if there is any deficiency, then come up with a complete plan to correct it. So that I can inform the assembly," he said in a post on X in Hindi. Sharing details of the chief minister's order, Bharadwaj told a press conference that healthcare in Delhi has always been Kejriwal's priority. He said Kejriwal believes that even though he has been arrested, people of Delhi should not face any problem in getting free tests and medicines in government hospitals and mohalla clinics. "Even though he is in cus-



tody, he is worried about the health of the people of Delhi. He has received information that medicines and free diagnostic tests are not available at many mohalla clinics and hospitals. The chief minister is pained to know about it.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission has sought "strict compliance" of its directive of providing assured minimum facilities at polling stations, including drinking water, shade and medical kit, for the Lok Sabha elections in the backdrop of the IMD predicting a harsh summer. It has also shared with its state chief electoral officers a set of 'dos and don'ts' issued by the National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) to minimise the impact of the impending heat wave. In a letter sent out to its CEOs on March 16, the day it announced schedule for the Lok Sabha elections, the EC reminded them about its earlier set of instructions on assured minimum facilities at polling stations. According to the June 2023 instructions on assured minimum facilities, which have been circulated afresh, during summer, every polling party shall be supplied with

### AS IMD PREDICTS A HARSH SUMMER

## EC asks state poll officers to ensure key facilities

oral rehydration salts (ORS) for their own use as well as for any voter needing the same due to heat-stroke. "A hand bill on 'Dos and Don'ts' in case of heat stroke may be prepared and supplied to each of the polling parties. An appeal to the electors may be issued to carry wet towels to protect themselves against dehydration and also advise women electors to avoid bringing children along with them to polling stations during hot weather

conditions," the instruction said. The commission has cited IMD to note that there is a high probability of above normal temperatures during summer season, "which may translate into stronger and longer spells of heatwave especially during months of March to June, 2024". Lok Sabha elections will be held in seven phases from April 19 to June 1 for which nearly 11 lakh polling stations are being set up across the 543 constituencies.

### SC DISMISSES DELHI HC VERDICT

## Orders CBI probe into death of Manipuri woman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The body of the deceased, A S Reingamphi, was discovered on May 29, 2013 by the landlord of the tenanted premises who alerted the Police Control Room at 11 am on the same day. The cause of death could not be ascertained in the post mortem report. The FIR was registered at the Malviya Nagar police station against unknown accused persons under Section 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The investigation was transferred to the Malviya Nagar Crime Branch, and pursuant to representations by her cousins, offence under Section 302 (murder) of IPC

was added. Later, two cousins of the deceased woman filed a petition in the Delhi High Court praying for direction for the investigation to be given to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The high court dismissed the plea saying the investigation has been carried out by the investigating agency seemingly without any bias and nothing has emerged on record if the landlord Raj Kumar and his brother-in-law Amit Sharma were having strong connection with any politician to influence the investigation. The deceased woman's cousins Awungshi Chirmayo and Thotreithem Longpinao challenged the high court order in the apex court, which in 2019 constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to monitor the investigation. The SIT in its report concluded that the woman had committed suicide by consuming some poison or medicine, though the viscera reports did not reveal the presence of any common poison or medicine in the Exhibits.



# Exposure to artificial light at night may increase stroke risk

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People being continuously exposed to outdoor artificial light at night may be at a higher risk of having a stroke, a new research reviewing more than 28,000 adults in China has found. The researchers said the excessive use of artificial light for enhancing visibility at night has resulted in about 80 per cent of the world's population living in light-polluted environments. The team, including researchers from Zhejiang University School of Medicine, China, assessed the adults' exposure to residential out-

door nighttime light using satellite images that mapped light pollution. Cases of stroke were confirmed by the hospital medical records and the death certificates, they said. Their analysis after following-up the participants over a six-year period showed that 1,278 people developed cerebrovascular disease, including 777 ischemic (clot-caused) stroke cases and 133 hemorrhagic (bleeding) stroke cases. The people with the highest levels of exposure to outdoor light at night were also found to have a 43 per cent increased risk of developing cerebrovascular disease compared to those with the lowest levels of



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

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

Children's Hospital, Zhejiang University School of Medicine, Hangzhou, China. "Therefore, we advise people, especially those living in urban areas, to consider reducing that exposure to protect themselves from its potential harmful impact," said Wang, one of the corresponding authors of the study published in the journal 'Stroke'. Continuous exposure to artificial light from fluorescent, incandescent and LED sources can suppress the body's ability to produce melatonin -- the sleep-promoting hormone, thereby disrupting the 24-hour internal clock and impairing sleep, the

researchers said. "We need to develop more effective policies and prevention strategies to reduce the burden of disease from environmental factors such as light as well as air pollution, particularly for people living in the most densely populated, polluted areas around the world," said Wang. While light pollution has been previously studied to increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, the researchers said this was one of the first studies to explore the relationship between exposure to light pollution at night and the potential risk to brain health and stroke.







FIRST COLUMN

LIFE SHOULD BE A PRECIOUS JOURNEY

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

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

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

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

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



The sacrosanct premise of life therefore should be to focus on its truly celebratory nature and savour its prepossessing moments. For all this to happen, we need to increase our prana/energy levels manifold. We derive energy from food, breath and rest provided to the body and by maintaining a calm and meditative mind. These sutras or tenets are imparted during the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living. However, the prana/energy level needs to be sustained to nurture the precious moments of life. Humans have to treat their minds and bodies as sacred.

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

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

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

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

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

# Conspiracy theories abound for terror attack



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

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

In the end, neither these corrupt politicians nor the manifestos of these inhuman actions, but unarmed civilians will have to pay the price. Over a hundred unarmed civilians were mercilessly killed by those brutal assailants, while hundreds more were wounded in Saturday's terrorist attacks on the outskirts of Moscow. Conspiracy theories, as in many other cases, are deepening. Some say it was an inside job orchestrated by certain parties to gain sympathy. Second, Ukrainians planned it with the help of Western intelligence agencies. Third, this was perpetrated by extremists. Consequently, conflicting yet interesting reports are emerging from all sides. Though these warning messages sound fishy, the amount of intelligence activities in the region certainly emphasises recent detailed reports on CIA activities in Ukraine published by The New York Times, stating that the US and UK were in Ukraine long before the war. "At the end of 2021, Putin was considering whether to launch a full-scale invasion. He met with the head of one of Russia's main spy services, who told him that the CIA, together with British intelligence MI6, controlled Ukraine and turned it into a staging ground for operations against Moscow."

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fect democracies". This paradox can only please a mind accustomed to duplicity but will never overcome common challenges such as normalising the global supply chain and achieving peace while mitigating the burning risk of a possible nuclear attack. The most powerful nations, despite engaging in dirty politics to reaffirm their supremacy, will never hesitate to engage in anything contradictory to their preaching. Nevertheless, determining whether this attack was carried out by ISKP or another group influenced by various integrated parties is a matter that requires verification. However, this attack has the potential to inspire other terrorists in countries facing genuine threats from IS, ISKP, and other extremist factions. We cannot underestimate the importance of security in the forthcoming Indian elections and ISKP's direct threats against China and its investments in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other places. In early September 2022, the ISKP published its most comprehensive critique of China to date, belittling the Belt and Road Initiative and calling on Muslims to take up arms against "red atheists whose hands are soaked with the blood of innocent Uyghur Muslims." Ironically, the tone of these threats is very similar to how the United States evaluates its competitors. Should we take lightly what the Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump repeatedly referred to as the president as 'Obama and Hillary Clinton are as ISIS co-founders'? Sometimes, political jokes, rhetoric and blabbering play a very important role in understanding the context of our day-to-day life and its reality.

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

# Controversial issues reignite India-Lanka relations

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

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



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

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

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

the Ram Temple at Ayodhya held in January. The DMK has declared its mission to destroy Sanatana Dharma once and forever. Udhayanidhi Stalin, heir apparent to the DMK throne and the chief minister-ship in the eventuality of Stalin leaving Tamil Nadu for an early rendezvous with his father M Karunanidhi and ideological father Ramasamy Naicker, have declared time and again that Sanatana Dharma is more dangerous than Covid and Cancer and should be banished from the face of the earth. Yet another promise made by the DMK is the retrieval of Katchatheevu, a small islet handed over to Sri Lanka by the Government of India in 1975. The decision to secede this 285-acre uninhabited islet

to Sri Lanka in 1975 was taken after a series of discussions involving top-level diplomats of Sri Lanka and India including G Parthasarathi, a close aide of Indira Gandhi. Katchatheevu is an uninhabited islet in the Palk Strait. The islet once used for pearl farming was strategically important for fishing activities and was owned by the Raja of Ramnad and later became part of the Madras Presidency after the delimitation of Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait during British rule between the then Governments of Madras and Ceylon. In 1921, both Sri Lanka and India claimed this piece of land and the dispute remained unsettled. The agreement signed by Indira Gandhi and her Sri Lanka counterpart Sirimao

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

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

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

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



MONEY MATTERS

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

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



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

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



## YouTube removes 2.2 mn videos in India over violation

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



# 'India needs to double down on electronics manufacturing'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

"We have to have the world



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

ensure that the enabling infrastructure for manufacturing is in place.

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

undertaken.

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

helped cushion the current account deficit.

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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



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

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

## Gold falls Rs 100; silver slumps Rs 250

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

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

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

## INDIAN FOOTFALLS TO AUSTRALIA SURGE

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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



sions, he said.

"The number of airlines connecting New Delhi, Bengaluru

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

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

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

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

## FRONT-RUNNING CASE

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

APSEZ said.

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

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

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

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

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

"In our view, the Gopalpur Port is all set for strong growth and margin expansion in FY25 with opportunities already identified for achieving higher operational efficiencies and infra debottlenecking, implying further value accretion for APSEZ shareholders," APSEZ said.



# When SRK took Farah Khan in his van, she cried for an hour, and you may guess why!

Choreographer and film-maker Farah Khan discussed her close friend Shah Rukh Khan's attendance before, during, and following her pregnancy. In an interview, Farah discussed conceiving through IVF while she was in her forties and how Shah Rukh was the first person outside the family to learn she was expecting triplets. She stated that they were shooting *Om Shanti Om* when she conceived, and Shah Rukh tried to make her feel at ease on set.

In a recent interview with the Nova IVF Fertility YouTube channel, Farah stated that she would undergo artificial insemination both before and after the shoot. The clinic, she explained, was more than an hour away from the scene. After the first setbacks, she would cry back to the set, and Shah Rukh realised something was wrong once.

"For the first five-six months, there were only lows because they were retrieving eggs and planting them, and I don't know how many times I must have gone under general anesthesia. The first time I went to the doctor, I was so sure that I was pregnant, but I literally got my period in office. So I used to be sobbing back to the shoot."

One day, in the middle of the day, I got a call from the doctor, and she said it had not happened this time. We were shooting a comic scene, and Shah Rukh knew something was wrong because I was going to cry. So, he called for a break and took me into his van, where I sobbed for an hour."

Farah stated that Shah Rukh was the first person she informed about her pregnancy after her mother. "I said, 'I have to tell you something'. He looked at me and said, 'Are you pregnant?' We still had to finish *Darde-e-Disco*, and every time he'd remove his shirt, I would throw up. He would keep a bucket next to me. He was very sweet; he ordered this lazy boy couch instead of the director's chair, so that I could lie down with a mic and shout at people."

Farah also shared that on the day she gave birth, around 30 people jammed the delivery room because the hospital where she was admitted had not seen a triplet birth in decades. On the same day, Shah Rukh stopped by to congratulate her.



## KRRISH 4 IS EXPECTED TO RELEASE IN 2025 : SOURCES

The wait for *Krrish 4* never seems to end. It has been more than a decade since the release of *Krrish 3*, and fans continue to wait. While there have been several claims about the start of shooting for the Hrithik Roshan film, a new source suggests that *Krrish 4* will eventually hit screens in 2025.

According to a source, Hrithik is keen to complete the storyline for *Krrish 4* by this summer, with the superhero picture to go on floors in 2025. 'Dugru' has been working closely with his director father, Rakesh Roshan, to develop a concept that has never been done in film before. "Hrithik has planned brainstorming sessions throughout the summer. Both Rakesh Roshan and he want to deliver a story that will exceed expectations," said the source, adding that the producers intend to begin shooting in 2025.

"The team has explored and then rejected a number of possibilities. The creators are adamant that if the plot fails, they will not continue with it. That's why they've spent months looking for the proper plot to continue the superhero's adventure," the official stated. Rakesh Roshan stated in an interview with a portal that he would not film *Krrish 4* until he was completely satisfied with the script. The previous installments of *Krrish* were massive blockbusters, so expectations are sky-high.

## Arnold Schwarzenegger is recuperating from surgery to install a pacemaker...

Arnold Schwarzenegger is allegedly recovering after surgery to implant a pacemaker. The 76-year-old actor revealed the news during an appearance on his *Arnold's Pump Club* podcast.

"I have some personal news to share. Last Monday, I had surgery for a pacemaker and became a little bit more of a machine," he announced. Schwarzenegger said that talking about his health publicly "goes against so much of my upbringing in Austria," but he still wanted to be transparent.


"First of all, I want you to know I'm doing great! I had my surgery on Monday, and by Friday, I was already at the Cleveland Clinic. All of the doctors and nurses took amazing care of me




Fonda," he said, adding that Fonda is someone who is "healthy" and "looks fantastic." "Nobody would ever have thought I started the week with a surgery. I want to thank my whole team at the Cleveland Clinic. All of the doctors and nurses took amazing care of me

and made the surgery as painless as possible," he added. The surgery had to be done after some scar tissue from Schwarzenegger's previous procedures made his heartbeat irregular. "That's life with a genetic heart issue. But you won't hear me complaining," he said. He said that he is healthy today because he is "diligent and staying in touch with my doctors and listening to them." He also revealed that his mother, who did not get the valve replacement surgery, died in 1998. "I had my valves replaced for the first time in 1997, which required open heart surgery. They told me both valves would last 12 to 15 years," he said. Schwarzenegger had to then undergo surgeries to get both replaced again in 2018 and 2020. Schwarzenegger went for a normal checkup in March before going to the Arnold Sports Festival. Based on his results, his doctor told him a pacemaker was needed. He was set to film season two of *FUBAR* after that. "I can't do my serious training in the gym for a while, but I will be 100 percent ready for *FUBAR* next month," he said.


### ARCHIE




### GARFIELD




### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS




### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD

|    |   |    |    |    |
|----|---|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2 | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 6  |   |    |    |    |
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| 8  |   | 9  |    | 10 |
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| 14 |   | 15 | 16 | 17 |
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| 19 |   |    |    |    |

### SUDOKU

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

### ACROSS

6 Something chewed but usually not swallowed (7,3)  
8 With lots of sunshine  
10 A stand for an artist's painting  
13 Straight away  
14 Tossed  
17 Put words on paper  
19 Daily publications

### DOWN

1 Part of your face  
2 Absent  
3 One time  
4 Hens lay these  
5 People who work for a business

### SOLUTION

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



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

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



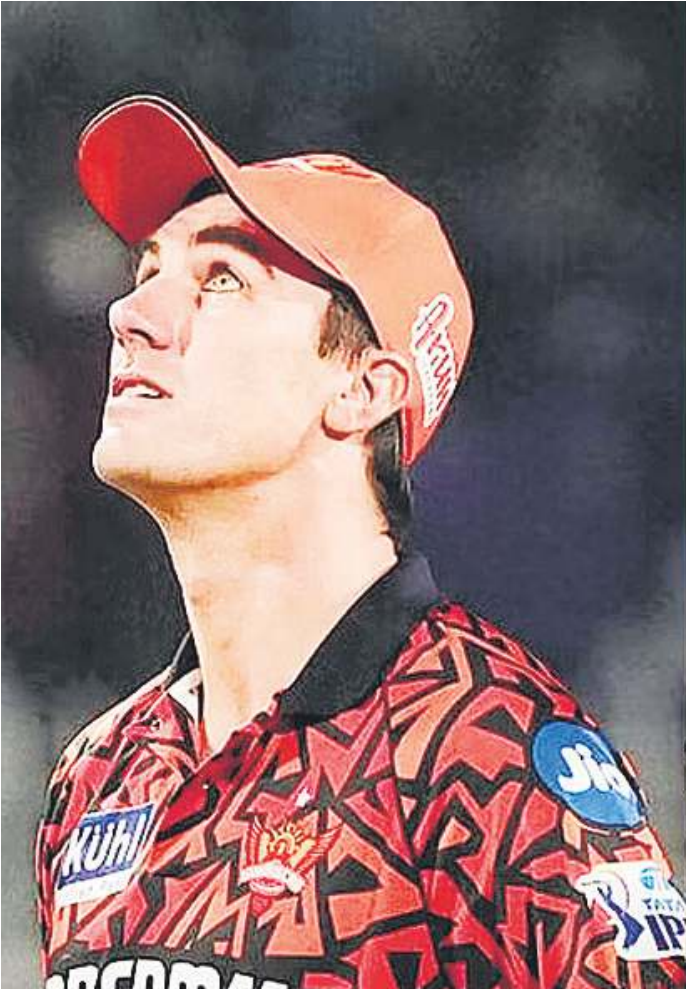


# MI, SRH LOOK TO MAKING WINNING COMEBACKS

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

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

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



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

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

## Mahipal adds depth to RCB batting

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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



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

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

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

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

PTI ■ CHENNAI

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



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

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

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

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

K. RAMYA SREE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## PRASHANTHI HARATHI ROOTING TO RETURN TO TOLLYWOOD SOON

K. RAMYA SREE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Banita Sandhu commences shooting for G2 in Bhuj

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Nani to strengthen Tollywood ties with UK

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

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

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

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

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

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

## JANHVI KAPOOR FINISHES DEVARA SCHEDULE IN GOA

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

