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CHANGE STARTED IN TELANGANA WITH IN 100 DAYS LET'S BRING THE CHANGE AT CENTRE TOO

- Free rides for women in RTC have been implemented
- The limit in Rajiv Arogyasri has been increased to Rs.10 lakhs
- 200 units of free electricity given
- Gas cylinder delivered to the poor for Rs.500
- Indiramma Housing approved for the homeless
- Dharani cleansing... Relief from land related issues
- BC survey... support for the weaker sections
- Establishing Rythu Nestham, an advisory for farmers
- Re-establishing agri-produce insurance scheme
- Interest-free loans for women organisations
- Prajavani twice a week
- Advanced skill centers in 65 ITIs
- Insurance scheme for Gulf workers
- Job assurance for young men and women
- 21% fitment for RTC employees
- Rs. 1 crore insurance cover for Singareni employees
- Metro rail till Hyderabad Airport
- Elevated corridor on Rajiv Rahadari
- Bowenpally double decker elevated corridor.

Completed all these in just 100 days. We will sure complete all that we said.

Farmers' loan will be waived by 15th August

Will reopen Nizam Sugarcane Factories

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VOTE FOR CONGRESS INITIATE PROGRESS





If BRS wins 12 LS seats, CM might as well go home: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashttra Samithi working president KT Rama Rao has stated that if BRS wins 12 LS seats including Nagarkurnool, former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao "will rule politics in the state" again within six months, and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy might as well go home.

KTR participated in a road show organized at Kalwakurthy and campaigned in support of Nagarkurnool MP candidate RS Praveen Kumar. KTR said that Revanth Reddy should understand that running a government was not like running a pan shop and that administration was not as simple as talking.

KTR said that the Congress had promised scooters to girls. "There are no scooters, but the looting of Congressmen has



started... Revanth Reddy says that five guarantees have been implemented without shame. If you again vote for the Congress, Revanth Reddy will say that people voted for us even though we did not implement any promises. Chota Bhai Congress, Bade Bhai BJP is our competition." KTR sought to know what happened to BJP leaders' promises to double

the income of farmers, create 2 crore jobs every year, and make India a five trillion dollar economy. He said that the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift irrigation scheme should be given national project status. "The share of Krishna water is not settled", he said. "BJP, without doing a single thing, is asking people to vote for it because a dam is built.

'INC wants Rohit Vemula Act, but Revanth closes case'

Bharat Rashttra Samithi working president and MLA KT Rama Rao has said that Revanth Reddy and Rahul Gandhi are not in sync. He pointed out: "The Congress had earlier said that they would bring an Act for Dalits and name it after the Dalit student Rohit Vemula. But the Revanth Reddy government has given a report that Rohit Vemula is not a Dalit. That is why Revanth Reddy will not stay with the Congress after the Lok Sabha elections." KTR said, "Congress stalwarts are propagating that BJP and BRS are one and the same.

Power cut lasts for more than 24 hours in parts of city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

More than 24 hours of power cuts were experienced in parts of the city. BRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao came down heavily on the government for such long power cut in Chandanagar during his roadshow at Patancheru.

In areas like Chandanagar and parts of KPHB, the power cut was for more than 24 hours. A Ganesh from Chandanagar said, "We have been experiencing a power outage at Gangaram and Chandanagar since 6 pm on Tuesday, May 7, which has now lasted for almost 29 hours. I have lodged a complaint regarding the issue. The response from the team has been that the FOC team is addressing the issue, but there has been no resolution, and the team has not attended to the issue even after 29 hours.

This is an unprecedentedly long outage for Hyderabad in recent times."

'Is PM's promise for Madiga sub-quota in TG just a 'jumla'?'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a day Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigned in Telangana, the Congress on Wednesday asked him to clear his stand on the caste census after he promised a sub-quota for the Madiga caste and wondered if that would be another of his "jumlas" (rhetoric).

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also asked where the promised rail coach factory at Kazipet was and why the prime minister failed to deliver the Bayyaram steel plant.

"Today's questions for the PM as he heads to Telangana: Where is the rail coach factory at Kazipet? Why did the PM fail to deliver the Bayyaram Steel Plant and ITIR? In the absence of a Census or a Caste Census, is the PM's promise for a Madiga sub-quota just a jumla?" he asked in a post on X.

Ramesh claimed that the



Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also asked where the promised rail coach factory at Kazipet was and why the prime minister failed to deliver the Bayyaram steel plant.

prime minister has recently started paying lip service to the cause of the Madiga community and their long-pending demand for a sub-quota.

"However, the best he can promise is a 'panel' to look into the demand, which appears to have not meaningfully materialised in the five months since he first committed to it. At the same time, the Prime Minister has refused to endorse a socioeconomic caste census, which would actually yield facts about the socioeconomic standing of the Madiga

community," he said. The Congress leader also said in fact, the prime minister has refused to hold even the usual decadal census that was due in 2021 and which would have yielded information on the population of the Scheduled Castes in Telangana.

The Congress Nyay Patra has committed to such a census nationally, and the Congress government in Telangana has already begun preparations to conduct a state-level census, he claimed.

INTERIM BAIL TO KEJRIWAL Apex court to pass order tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will deliver its order on granting interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam on May 10. Justice Sanjay Khanna, who headed the bench which heard Kejriwal's petition against his arrest in the case, said, "We will pronounce the interim order (on interim bail) on Friday. The main matter related to the challenge to arrest will also be taken on the same day."

Justice Khanna, who was sitting in a different combination with Justices MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, made the remark after Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who was appearing for the Centre in a matter related to Goods and Services Tax, sought clarification on the listing of Kejriwal's plea. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was arrested on



March 21 and is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under judicial custody. On May 7, the bench, also comprising Justice Dipankar Datta, had reserved its verdict on interim bail to Kejriwal.

The two-judge bench had risen without pronouncing order on granting Kejriwal interim bail to enable him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

The bench had reserved its decision after hearing the arguments put forth by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi and Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, who appeared for Kejriwal and the Enforcement Directorate, respectively.

Modi slams Congress over Pitroda's 'skin colour' remarks, hits out at Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday attacked the Congress over its party leader Sam Pitroda's comments over skin colour and asserted that the countrymen would not tolerate insults on the basis of skin colour.

Hitting out at top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Modi said he has now understood that the national party sought to defeat President Droupadi Murmu in the presidential poll as her "skin colour is dark".

As Pitroda's reported comments kicked up a row, Modi asked, "Will the ability of people be decided in my country on the basis of skin colour?" "Who gave the permission to 'shehzada' for this game of skin colour," he asked while addressing an election rally at Warangal in the state.

Pitroda's comments that people in the eastern parts of

the country resembled the Chinese, while those from the south looked like Africans, had kicked up a row.

"I am angry today. If anyone abuses me, I don't get angry, I can tolerate that. But, the philosopher of shehzada gave such a big abuse which has filled me with anger," Modi said.

Pitroda resigns as chairman of Indian Overseas Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Sam Pitroda on Wednesday resigned as the chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress after his controversial remarks spurred the BJP to label the party "racist".

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X that party chief Mallikarjun Kharge has accepted Pitroda's decision.



Pitroda resigns as chairman of Indian Overseas Congress



"Mr Sam Pitroda has decided to step down as Chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress of his own accord. The Congress

President has accepted his decision," Ramesh said in his post.

Pitroda, who held the post of chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, stoked a major controversy with his remarks during a podcast where he cited ethnic and racial identities like Chinese, Africans, Arabs and Whites to describe the physical appearance of Indians from different parts of the country.

'RR tax' surpassed RRR movie...

Continued from page 3

The Congress and BRS are working with the slogan 'Because of family, by the family and for the family'. The BRS and Congress were two sides of the same coin. They are cor-

rupted parties and destroy the dreams of the Telangana people," he commented.

Modi said everyone had expected that the dreams of people would be fulfilled if separate Telangana was formed. However, the BRS

party worked for the sake of their family benefits, while mortgaging the interests of the people of Telangana. The Congress too had worked for the sake of family interests after attaining freedom for the nation.

After June 5, I will...

Continued from page 3

Komatireddy criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, mentioning unfulfilled promises of the Centre. He accused Modi of bringing religious and caste factors for political gain.

Komatireddy pointed out that Modi had assured people that black money stashed abroad would be brought to India and from the money Rs 10,000 would be credited to

the accounts of each of the poor in the country. Yet, over the past 10 years of Modi rule, none of the poor received even Rs.15:00.

The wealth of the country was concentrated in the hands of a few like Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani, while middle class families struggled with rising prices. He said that should Modi be elected for a third term, India will become like Russia and China.

BJP deceiving God and...

Continued from page 3

However, the promised board is yet to see the light of the day.

Revanth Reddy said that farmers should vote for Jeevan Reddy if they were looking for solutions to their problems. "Jeevan Reddy is a model leader who has been in politics for the last 40 years. People should ensure the victory of Jeevan Reddy with one lakh vote majority," the Chief

Minister remarked.

Targeting former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, Revanth Reddy recalled the challenge he had thrown about depositing Rythu Bharosa money into farmers' accounts before May 9, and said: "We deposited the Rythu Bharosa money into the accounts of 69 lakh farmers". Now, KCR must rub his nose on the ground at Martyrs Statue or at Armoor Ambedkar statue, he said. He asked KCR to check

the accounts of farmers if he had any doubts.

Revanth Reddy reiterated that he would free 'Siddipet Shani' T Harish Rao by implementing the loan waiver scheme before August 15. He made it clear, "with Armoor Siddulagutta as a witness", that he would waive Rs.2 lakh loans of farmers by August 15.

Revanth Reddy said that farmers across the nation had a lot to learn from Nizamabad farmers.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Pratipada: May 08 08:51 AM to May 09 06:21 AM
Dwitiya: May 09 06:21 AM to May 10 04:18 AM
Tritiya: May 10 04:18 AM to May 11 02:50 AM

Nakshatram:
Krittika: May 08 01:33 PM to May 09 11:55 AM
Rohini: May 09 11:55 AM to May 10 10:47 AM
Rahukalam: 1:48 PM to 3:24 PM
Yamagandam: 5:50 AM to 7:25 AM
Varjyam: 03:09 AM to 04:41 AM
Gulika: 9:01 AM to 10:37 AM
Amritakalam: 09:41 AM to 11:10 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 AM to 12:38 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Showers
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 50%
Sunrise: 5:46 AM
Sunset: 6:39 PM
Updated: May 8, 2024 5:00 PM

Send CBI, ED...

Continued from page 3

Prime Minister Modi on Wednesday accused the Congress of having a "deal" with "Ambani and Adani", and asked if the party has received "tempo loads of black money" from the two businessmen for its leader Rahul Gandhi to stop "abusing" them.

"Since his Rafale issue got grounded, he started chanting about 'five industrialists'. Then he started saying Ambani-Adani. But ever since elections have been announced, these people (Congress) have stopped abusing Ambani-Adani. I want to ask from Telangana soil, let the Shehzada announce, how much has been lifted from Ambani-Adani. Has tempo loads of money reached the

Congress? What deal has been arrived at that abusing Ambani-Adani has stopped overnight?" he said while addressing an election rally at Vemulawada in Telangana.

"Certainly something is fishy. For five years, (they) abused Adani-Ambani and it stopped overnight. It means you have received some tempo loads of 'chori ka maal' (loot)... Kaale dhan ki kitti boriya bharkar ke rupaye maar hai (how many sacks of black money you have taken). You have to answer the nation," the prime minister said.

The Congress has been accusing the prime minister of favouring the top five industrialists in the country, including Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani.

Will check rising...

Continued from page 3

The Karnataka government accepted a proposal and gave 2.25 TMC of water from the Narayanpur dam to Telangana.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that ex gratia sum would be paid to the families of those who had died due to thunderstorms. He said that the government would extend ex gratia also to farmers who had suffered loss.

Alleging that the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Bharat Rashttra Samithi were responsible for the suspension of Rythu Bharosa, Uttam Kumar Reddy sought to know why the BJP

failed to complain to the EC when the BRS was in power under similar circumstances.

The Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was making baseless allegations against the Congress government. Modi was working only for the sake of Adani and Ambani.

He mentioned that AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge was coming to Telangana on Thursday. The Congress will win a majority of the seats and the BRS would not get a single seat. The BJP will get fewer seats than its tally in the previous LS elections.

'RR tax' is Rs 75...

Continued from page 3

The reputation of state is being damaged. The Coring Company, which was supposed to be in Hyderabad, has gone to Madras due to lack of trust in this govt. IT companies are going away". KCR said that people were being emotionally blackmailed by the BJP by bad-mouthing Pakistan. "Pakistan is a small country and if India gives one shot, the country will take 25 years to recover."

KCR said, "People from all walks of life are being harassed.

SC to Centre: Don't...

Continued from page 3

It should be voluntary and there should not be use of any threat or coercion," the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the Centre.

Raju did not discount the possibility of use of force in the past but said mostly the payment during search and seizure is voluntary.

"Yes, there is possibility of both ways but mostly the payment is done voluntarily or after a few days as the alleged offender wanted to consult his advocate for pay-

ment of liability. Yes, there may have been some instances in the past but that is not the norm," he said during the day-long hearing.

The bench said several petitioners have alleged that the authorities exercised threat and coercion during search and seizure operations. It said, "We know what is on paper and what happens in reality when a person is subjected to search and seizure. If there is denial of payment, you can provisionally attach the properties but you have to give some time to consult, think and clear the liability.

Revanth Reddy has become the Chief Minister of the state accidentally. A donkey doesn't lay an 'egg'; however, Revanth Reddy made the donkey do it. He made the Congress party symbol as a donkey's egg. He only knows how to collect 'RR tax' and abuse people. He does not know how to govern



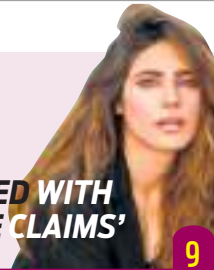
-- G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister

P5

RBI Guv discusses ways to scale up UPI ecosystem



I ENSURE MY NAME IS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH ANYTHING THAT HAS FALSE CLAIMS



I am on the edge of accepting a few Tamil films : SATYADEV



DON'T MISS... DRC teams must perform...

Emphasising the importance of effective performance by the Distribution and Reception Centres (DRC) teams during the parliamentary elections, District Election Officer Ronald Rose held training sessions at Komaram Bheem Avasi Bhavan in Jubilee Hills, where they were briefed on their duties, responsibilities and election management protocols. Rose highlighted the need for smooth operations at the distribution and reception centres, urging vigilance...

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Police suspect Hyd man...

The Delhi Police suspects that Arun Beereddy, the national coordinator of the Congress' social media team, is the 'main' creator of the fake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the official sources said on Wednesday. Beereddy, a native of Hyderabad, was arrested on May 3 from West Delhi. Following his arrest, he was produced before a court in Delhi and it sent him to three days in custody...

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India overtook Japan to become...

Rapid solar energy deployment in India pushed the country past Japan to become the world's third-largest solar power generator in 2023, according to a new report. The report by global energy think tank Ember said India ranked ninth in solar energy deployment in 2015. Solar produced a record 5.5 per cent of global electricity in 2023. In line with the global trend, India generated 5.8 per cent of its electricity from solar last year, as reported in Ember's 'Global Electricity Review'. Ember's Asia Programme director Aditya Lolla said, "Increasing clean electricity is not just for reducing..."

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Resurgent RCB take on...

A resurgent Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look for their fourth consecutive victory when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings as the two sides fight for survival in the Indian Premier League, here on Thursday. After a horrendous start to the season, RCB have managed to claw their way back into the tournament. They have the winning momentum on their side, having won their last three games comprehensively. The wins have not only boosted their sagging morale but also taken them to the seventh spot in the points table. With eight points from 11 games, RCB can still make the playoffs if they win all their...

-SPORTS

'RR tax' surpassed RRR movie collections'

Modi slams Cong govt, Revanth Reddy at Vemulawada

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while asserting that everybody knew about 'RR tax' in Telangana, alleged that it had netted for the Congress far more than what the makers of RRR movie got from box office collections. "The RRR cinema collected Rs.1,000 crore; however, RR tax surpassed Rs.1,000 crore within a few days. There is a need to free Telangana from RR tax, Modi observed, endorsing the Bharatiya Janata Party's charge that 'Rahul-Revanth tax' is being illegally collected in Telangana from realtors and others to fund the Congress' election campaign. Modi said, "The discussion is going on RR tax across the nation, from Telangana to Delhi. One 'R' (Revanth) is looting in Telangana and giving the same to 'Delhi R' (Rahul Gandhi). The people are observing their game. The people would teach a lesson to the Congress party in these elections". The Prime Minister said that the bond between the Congress and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi was like that of 'fevicol' with regard to corruption. "They make allegations against each other in front of the people. But they become a syndicate behind the screen. The Congress made severe allegations against the BRS government in regard to the Kaleshwaram



PM Modi at Vemulawada Sri Raja Rajeshwari temple on Wednesday

- "Rahul-Revanth tax" is being illegally collected in Telangana from realtors and others to fund the Congress' election campaign
- Bond between the Congress and the Bharat Rashtra Samithi was like that of 'fevicol' with regard to corruption

Modi said that all along the Congress had criticized industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, but had stopped criticizing them now suddenly. "How much did the Congress take from Ambani and Adani? The Congress should answer people about the bundles of money," the PM remarked.

scam when it was in Opposition. However, there was no probe on it after the Congress came to power," Modi remarked. The Prime Minister alleged that the Congress and the BRS were working together for the victory of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen in Hyderabad. The Congress' policies would harm OBCs. The Congress was trying to withdraw quotas for BC and give them to Muslims. The Congress was

Modi said that BJP candidate Bandi Sanjay's victory from the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency was certain. "The Congress has fielded a candidate who doesn't know anyone", he alleged. The Prime Minister said that there was no influence of the BRS in Karimnagar. "Family is first for the Congress and BRS. However, the BJP gives first priority to the nation."

Send CBI, ED to probe Adani, Ambani

Rahul's retort to 'tempo loads of money' jibe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday dared Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold a probe by the CBI or ED into whether businessmen Adani and Ambani sent his party "money in a tempo". Rahul Gandhi's retort to PM Modi came after the latter attacked him at an election rally saying why he has "stopped" naming Adani and Ambani in his attacks and whether he has received money from them in return. Taking a swipe at the Prime Minister, Gandhi in a video message asked whether Modi was speaking from his "personal experience" about money being sent by businessmen. "The money that PM Modi has given to the two businessmen, the Congress party will give the same amount of money to the people of India through the various schemes that the party has promised," Gandhi said. "The country knows who is the driver and helper of the BJP's tempo of corruption," he said in a post in Hindi on X. "Modi ji, are you a little scared? Normally you talk about Adani



Taking a swipe at the Prime Minister, Gandhi in a video message asked whether Modi was speaking from his "personal experience" about money being sent by businessmen.

and Ambani in closed doors, but for the first time you have talked about Adani and Ambani in public," Gandhi said in the video message. "You also know that they give money in a tempo. Is it your personal experience?" Gandhi said. "Do one thing - send the CBI, ED to them and carry out a thorough investigation and don't be scared," he said.

BJP deceiving God and Hindus: CM

'Seeking votes in the name of God amounts to begging'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of deceiving God and Hindus by its irreverent acts. At a campaign stop in Armoor on Wednesday, the Chief Minister asked whether 'akshinthalu' could be distributed before Lord Rama's Kalyanam, and charged BJP leaders with distributing 'akshinthalu' 15 days before the recent Sita-Rama Kalyanam. "Is it not deceiving God and the Hindus? Do we need BJP leaders to teach us about devotion and poojas? God should be worshipped in the temple and devotion cultivated in the hearts; and only the ones doing this were 'real' Hindus. Those seeking votes in the name of



God are beggars". Revanth alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been speaking lies with regard to the establishment of Turmeric Board in Telangana. It may be mentioned here that in

Rahul, Priyanka and Kharge to campaign in Telangana today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC former president Rahul Gandhi is coming to Telangana on May 9 and will participate in Narsapur Jana Jatar Sabha at 4 pm and LB Nagar Jana Jatar Sabha meeting at 6 pm the same day. On May 10, AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge would come to Telangana and participate in the public meeting to be held at Nakrekal at 4pm. On May 11, AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi would come to Telangana and participate in Kamareddy and Tandur public meetings at 11am and 1 pm respectively.

Will check rising prices of rice: Uttam

PNS|Hyderabad

Telangana Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy has declared that the Congress government will control the rising prices of rice in the state after the Lok Sabha elections. He offered to initiate steps in this direction after a cabinet meeting. He was responding queries about sharply rising prices of rice while interacting with scribes at Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday. Uttam Kumar Reddy assured farmers that the Congress government would buy even soaked grain at MSP price. It had come to the notice of the government that the BRS regime, on Tuesday saw power cuts lasting 6-7 hours.



Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy in a chat with scribes at Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday. take wastage as they wished. Otherwise, the government would take strict action against them, Uttam Kumar Reddy warned. Uttam Kumar Reddy mentioned that the Karnataka government had been approached for the sake of drinking water.

After June 5, I will name 25 MLAs joining us: Komatireddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Minister for R&B and Cinematography Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has said cryptically that he will disclose "after June 5" the names of the 25 MLAs who are set to join the Congress party. During a 'Meet the Press' session in Hyderabad on Wednesday, he

asserted that these 25 MLAs were in contact with Bharat Rashtra Samithi chief and former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao. Komatireddy Venkat Reddy mentioned that he had participated in Meet the Press sessions only twice during his 30-year-long political career.

'RR tax' is Rs 75 per sft: KCR

Hyderabad's brand image is being destroyed by Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi chief K Chandrashekar Rao has alleged that the Congress government in Telangana led by Revanth Reddy is collecting Rs 75 per square feet as 'RR tax'. He pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself had spoken about 'RR tax'. KCR addressed three road shows



on Wednesday at Narsapur, Dundigal and Patancheru as part

of his Bus yatra. KCR said that the real estate pile had collapsed in Telangana. He said, "Hyderabad's brand image across the globe is being destroyed by the Congress. Hyderabad, which had not seen power cuts during the BRS regime, on Tuesday saw power cuts lasting 6-7 hours."

7 killed in wall collapse in Hyd



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Seven migrant workers, including a four-year-old child, were killed in a wall collapse in Greater Hyderabad following heavy rain, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday night at an under-construction apartment in Renuka Yellamma Colony in Bachupally in Medchal/Malkajgiri district. The bodies were recovered from debris by rescue workers in an operation that lasted till early Wednesday morning. The deceased were identified as Tirupati Rao (20), Shankar (22), Raju (25), Ram Yadav (34), Geeta (32), Himanshu (4) and Khushi. The victims were construction workers from Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Police shifted the bodies to Osmania Hospital for autopsy and took up investigation. Heavy rain, accompanied by strong winds lashed Hyderabad and some other districts of Telangana on Tuesday evening, inundating low-lying areas and uprooting trees.

SC to Centre: Don't use threats, coercion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to not use "threat and coercion" during search and seizure operations against traders for recovery of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and instead persuade them to clear the dues voluntarily. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, which is examining various provisions of the GST Act, said there is no provision under the law which empowers the authorities to exert force for payment of outstanding dues. "There is no power under the Act to compel any person to pay the tax



liability during the search and seizures. Ask your department that the payment should be voluntarily and there should not be use of any force. You have to give three-four days' time to the alleged offender to consult, think and clear the liability.

AstraZeneca withdraws Covid-19 vaccine

Cites that there is surplus of available updated vaccines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

UK-based pharmaceutical major AstraZeneca has started global withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine, which was provided in India as 'Covishield' in partnership with Serum Institute of India, days after it admitted to rare side-effects of blood clotting and lowering of platelet counts. The withdrawal has been initiated due to a surplus of available updated vaccines since the pandemic, the company said in a statement. In India, the company's partner Serum Institute of India (SII) said it has stopped the manufacturing and supply of additional doses of Covishield since December 2021 while reiterating that it had disclosed all rare to very rare side-effects, including Thrombosis with



Thrombocytopenia Syndrome, in the packaging insert in 2021. AstraZeneca had partnered with Oxford University to develop the Covid-19 vaccine, which was sold in India as Covishield and as Vaxzevria in Europe. "As multiple, variant Covid-19

partners to align on a clear path forward to conclude this chapter and significant contribution to the Covid-19 pandemic." Earlier, according to global media reports, AstraZeneca had admitted that its Covid-19 vaccine could in very rare cases have the potential to cause a rare side-effect called Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS). Without referring to the side-effects, the company said, "We are incredibly proud of the role Vaxzevria played in ending the global pandemic. According to independent estimates, over 6.5 million lives were saved in the first year of use alone and over three billion doses were supplied globally."

POLL PREPAREDNESS DISCUSSED

DRC teams must perform duties efficiently: DEO

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Emphasising the importance of effective performance by the Distribution and Receptions Centres (DRC) teams during the parliamentary elections, District Election Officer Ronald Rose held training sessions at Komaram Bheem Adivasi Bhavan in Jubilee Hills, where they were briefed on their duties, responsibilities and election management protocols.

Rose highlighted the need for smooth operations at the distribution and reception centres, urging vigilance from the distribution centre teams. He stressed the importance of thorough preparation, including the timely arrangement of polling materials and checklists for presiding officers.

Rose instructed the staff on counter management and reminded them to strictly follow instructions from the authorities. He also instructed



District Election Officer Ronald Rose seen briefing officials on election duties

Rose stressed the importance of thorough preparation, including the timely arrangement of polling materials and checklists for presiding officers

Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) regarding the logistics of safe transportation of EVMs and polling materials.

Speaking on the occasion, Hyderabad District Collector and Returning Officer Anudeep Durishetti emphasised sector-wise distribution of EVMs and poll materials in the distribution centre and counter-wise organisation at reception centres. He also highlighted the need for adequate infrastructure and provision of cold drinking water.

Secunderabad Parliamentary Constituency Returning Officer Hemant Keshav Patil detailed all the arrangements, precautions and responsibilities for distribution and reception centres.

The DEO stressed that polling teams should face no problems and only the presiding officer should receive polling material. He also suggested special arrangements for tasty food supply to polling staff, with respective AROs being instructed to plan food distribution division-wise.

Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly Constituency Returning Officer Madhukar Naik, District Election Training Classes Nodal Officer Sunanda, Zonal Commissioner Hemant Borkade and Hyderabad DRO Venkatachary, along with AROs, Sector Officers, Engineers and ALMTs participated in the programme.

AIC, T-Hub select startups to drive innovation in mobility sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

T-Hub and the AIC Incubation Centre (AIC) on Wednesday launched a mobility cohort.

The programme aims to revolutionise the future of the automotive industry with a focus on shared mobility, EV development and battery technology.

The startups selected for the cohort include VPush Technologies Pvt Ltd, Sock8, Zeromatter Tech Pvt Ltd, Electriq, Savy Electrics, Blumotiv, Summit Electronics and Bambam Kart.

The 3-month programme aims to provide startups with exclusive 1:1 mentoring, collaborative group sessions, vital investor connections and opportunities for market pilots.

Mahankali Srinivas Rao (MSR), CEO, T-Hub, said, "Empowering startups to drive the wheels of innovation forward, AIC T-Hub's Mobility Cohort accelerates the journey towards a sustainable automotive future."

FOR ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS

ISB launches I-Venture Immersive programme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



The Indian School of Business (ISB) has launched a unique programme tailored for upcoming and promising entrepreneurs, called I-Venture Immersive or 'ivi', administered by the school's entrepreneurship arm on Wednesday. I-Venture at ISB, encourages keen innovators from across the country to pursue their passion with or without any formal educational qualification beyond Class 12.

The first round of admission for 'ivi' is now underway, for the founding cohort starting in October. The six-month immersive experience - billed as 'more than an incubator, more than a school' - will be conducted full-time on the Hyderabad campus of ISB. Designed to provide budding entrepreneurs with transformative support, the programme will also provide funding support for promising cohort members to bring their innovative ideas to life.

The programme is designed

we are focused beyond the usual big cities, with an inclusive focus on all tiers and towns."

The application and selection process will involve the candidate uploading videos explaining their motivations - a method of selection that is not bound to grades and marks. The programme emphasises problem-solving through innovative methods, including AI, machine learning, and data analysis. Additionally, students will acquire proficiency in accounting skills. The marketing segment will focus on branding, customer-centricity, and go-to-market strategies.

Saumya Kumar, Director, I-Venture at ISB, added, "We are shaping a more inclusive and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in India. 'ivi' realises our commitment to making entrepreneurship accessible to all." The 'ivi' fees will include on-campus lodging with several scholarships. Applications for the first cohort are open now at www.isb.edu/ivi.

Raj Bhavan celebrates World Red Cross Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A special programme was organised at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday to celebrate the World Red Cross Day. Telangana Governor CP Radhakrishnan, who is also serving as the Governor of Jharkhand and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, wished Red Cross representatives and volunteers on World Red Cross Day and appreciated their invaluable service during times of crisis.

The Governor said that this year's Red Cross Day theme is 'Keeping Humanity Alive'. This theme promotes the concept of reflecting the true humanity of the society by serving communities and nations. He opined that one can face the crisis effectively only when everyone undertakes sensitisation programmes with great determination, collective action and



Red Cross State representatives, district representatives and Raj Bhavan officials participate in the programme

coordination. "Everyone is requested to join the Indian Red Cross Society and contribute their services to the society," he added.

Governor's Principal Secretary Burra Venkatesham coordinated the programme. Burra Venkatesham and Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) State Branch

Chairperson Ajay Mishra, congratulated the Red Cross representatives and volunteers on World Red Cross Day. "Over 5 lakh members of Junior Red Cross and Youth Red Cross should be registered by May 5, 2025 and called upon the Red Cross mechanism to work in that direction," they added.

TSBIE announces Intermediate admissions to commence from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) on Wednesday announced the schedule for Intermediate admissions for the academic year 2024-25 which will be commencing from Thursday.

According to TSBIE officials, the last date for receipt of applications in the junior colleges is May 31. The classes will commence on June 1 and the deadline for concluding first phase admissions is June 30.

This schedule is applicable to all government, private aided and unaided, co-operative, TS Residential, Social Welfare Residential, Tribal Welfare Residential, Incentive, Minority, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV),

TMRJCs, TS Model Junior Colleges and composite degree colleges offering two year Intermediate course in general and vocational streams.

A senior official of TSBIE said, "The principals can make provisional admissions on the basis of Internet marks memos of Class X. The provisional admissions should be confirmed after the production of original SSC pass certificate and transfer certificate issued by the school authorities, where students last studied."

The TSBIE appealed to the parents and students to take admissions in affiliated colleges only. A list of affiliated colleges is provided on the official websites of the TSBIE <https://acadtsbie.cgg.gov.in/> and <https://tsbie.cgg.gov.in/>.

Online cricket betting racket busted, Rs 1.8 lakh seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The sleuths of Special Operations Team (SOT) and LB Nagar Zone team, along with Vanasthalipuram team and Chaitanyapuri Police, busted a cricket betting racket and seized Rs1.8 lakh cash from four persons, while freezing Rs12,50,967 in various bank accounts on Wednesday.

The accused are Ramesh Chand Chowdhary (30), Satavahana Colony, LB Nagar, Edukulla Jagadeesh (45), Vasavi Colony, Kothapet. (punter), Pallapu Pavan Kumar (23), SBI Colony, LB Nagar and Suresh Chowdhary (36),

Satavahana Nagar, LB Nagar (money collection agent).

While the other three accusers Md. Asim R/o. LB Nagar (bookie), Sai Prasad, Bairamulaguda (bookie) and Shivanarayana, Nagole (punter) were not available.

On Tuesday evening, the police jointly nabbed the sub-bookie, one punter and two money collection agents from one house situated Road No.3, Vasavi Colony, under the limits of the Chaitanyapuri police station.

The accused were accepting online cricket betting through numerous websites. The officials seized net cash of Rs 1,80,000, four mobile phone

and freed all the four bank accounts of the culprits, total seized amount being Rs 14,30,967.

They nabbed the culprits and registered the case under CR. NO.364/2024 U/S. 3 & 4 of TS Gaming Act of Chaitanyapuri PS of Rachakonda.

The above arrests were made under the direct supervision of Dr Tarun Joshi, Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda and under guidance of Ch Praveen Kumar, DCP, LB Nagar Zone by K Muralidhar, DCP, SOT, LB Nagar-Maheshwaram, SOT and Chaitanyapuri police personnel.

Poor water quality offered by restaurants draws flak

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the increasing poor quality of food and water served at various restaurants and local hotels, a Hyderabad activist raised a complaint on poor packaged drinking water quality served in Paradise restaurant near Prasads IMAX theatre via Twitter on Wednesday.

Speaking to The Pioneer correspondent, Activist Sai Teja said, "On Tuesday, I purchased a water bottle at Paradise restaurant near Prasads IMAX theatre. However, I noted that the

Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) is noted as 63, which is below the minimum TDS level prescribed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). FSSAI has mandated the rule which states that the minimum TDS for a packaged drinking water is 75Mg/L.

It should not be below the prescribed number. This violates the rule. Instead of selling normal packaged drinking water bottles which they sell in the market like Bisleri and Kinley, they have created their own brand of packaged water bottle, put MRP

and sell it to the customers in order to make more money, thereby violating all the norms implemented by FSSAI.

Recently, on May 2, the Telangana State Food Processing Society has seized water bottles worth Rs 68,400 from Air Live restaurant which is located at Kondapur, on suspicion of being sub-standard (very low TDS of 12 upon preliminary testing with portable TDS meter). I urge the FSSAI authorities to take strict action against such practices implemented by restaurants."



HMWSSB Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy inspects water tankers

Stress on desilting, reduced delivery time for water tankers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy on Wednesday called for reduced delivery time for water tankers and desilting in areas which face issues due to water stagnation amid rains.

Reddy inspected the water filling stations under the water board, Kondapur, Madhapur, Ayyappa Society, Banjara Hills

and Somajiguda. Officials were asked to maintain tanker booking and delivery timings in log books. The Managing Director also enquired regarding number of tankers and drivers and quantity of water.

"In view of the weather department's warning that there is a chance of rain for another three days, the authorities should be alert. Operation Directors should take measures to prevent water pollution," Reddy stressed.

Man electrocuted in Bahadurpura during rain

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Bahadurpura on May 7, a man was electrocuted after coming in contact with an electric pole amid heavy rain in the city.

The deceased was identified as Ahmed Khan (50), a resident of Kishan Bagh and a daily wage labourer. He was living in a banana godown following the demise of his wife;

the incident occurred at 7 pm when Khan was walking near the Bahadurpura X Roads.

Passersby said that the victim accidentally touched the pole. The police shifted the body to Osmania General Hospital for post-mortem. Khan's eldest son filed a complaint with the police and a case was registered under Section 174 of the Indian Penal Code.

IMA-T condemns suspension of doctor, calls for revoking it

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Medical Association (IMA), Telangana, on Wednesday condemned the suspension and reinstating the doctor immediately. IMA demands action against the culprits who attacked the doctor, paramedical staff and damaged the hospital. IMA supports Govt.

In its statement, the Telangana IMA said, "IMA State body, under the leadership of State president Dr Kali Prasad Rao, strongly condemns the suspension of Dr Shravan Kumar."

Kumar, Civil Asst. Surgeon of Area hospital, Korutla. The IMA is demanding revoking of suspension and reinstating the doctor immediately. IMA demands action against the culprits who attacked the doctor, paramedical staff and damaged the hospital. IMA supports Govt. Doctors Association and works with them to revoke the suspension of Dr Shravan Kumar."

Parishad (TVVP) Commissioner Dr Ajay Kumar issued a suspension order against Kumar following the death of an auto driver due to "medical negligence". The deceased suffered a severe sun stroke and was admitted to the hospital on May 5. He died as the vitals deteriorated drastically. The driver's demise led to protest by his family members.

DILAPIDATED HOUSES TO BE IDENTIFIED

Strict measures to prevent accidents during rains

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The town planning officials were directed to survey the dilapidated houses and submit a report by 18 May. GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose, along with the Commissioner of Town Planning, CCP, held a teleconference with circle town planning officials on monsoon preparedness on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Ronald Rose emphasised the need for strict measures

to prevent accidents during the rainy season in the city. He instructed the authorities to identify dilapidated structures circle-wise and take necessary measures accordingly.

He also directed to identify cellars that violate regulations and to take precautionary steps to prevent accidents. Ronald Rose warned that builders must be instructed to take proper precautions during the removal of dilapidated structures, retaining walls and cellars to avoid accidents.

He also stressed that failure to take appropriate measures would result in accountability for the authorities involved. Rose directed the officials to submit a detailed report on dilapidated structures and preventive measures in their respective circles.

Ronald Rose also ordered a report on the measures implemented and taken in the previous year, as well as preliminary measures to be implemented this year. He instructed the CCP to take necessary action in this regard.

Rs 47.21cr seizures by Excise dept

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Excise department made seizures worth Rs 47.21 crore in past four months. VB Kamalasan Reddy, Director, excise and enforcement, said that in the past four months, the excise enforcement focused on the sale of ganja and narcotic drugs, seized narcotic drugs worth Rs 7,20,92,740.

In all, 396 cases were registered against 553 people

and 2283.764 kg of dry ganja was seized. He said 427 cannabis plants were destroyed and 68,865 kg of cannabis chocolates were seized. The seizures included 1.25 kg of hashish, 30.33 grams of MDMA, 80 grams of heroin, 117.2 grams of charas, 1,56,565 grams of poppy straw, 3,69 grams of opium and 133 vehicles.

About 9,145 cases have been registered by the Excise enforcement mechanism in

the raids on country liquor in four days. The department included 4,010 people as accused and 47,640 liters of Gudumba, 2,48,094 kg of jaggery was seized and 29,04,094 liters of jaggery wash was destroyed. Alum weighing 14,302 kg was seized. Country liquor and other items worth Rs 39,15,35,990 were seized in the raids.

Prohibition and Excise enforcement has increased its raids in the past few months to send shivers down the spines of the gangs who smuggle ganja and other narcotic drugs.

In the wake of the Lok Sabha elections, the State Excise and Enforcement department has been carrying out special raids across the State for the past four months, seizing huge amounts of ganja and other narcotic drugs and cracking down on drug traffickers.

CONG SM TEAM BEHIND AMIT SHAH'S DEEP FAKE VIDEO

Police suspect Hyd man Beereddy to be 'main' culprit

Sources said a team of Special Cell campaign is camping in Telangana and conducted raids to collect evidences in the state

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Delhi Police suspects that Arun Beereddy, the national coordinator of the Congress' social media team, is the 'main' creator of the fake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the official sources said on Wednesday.

Beereddy, a native of Hyderabad, was arrested on May 3 from West Delhi. Following his arrest, he was produced before a court in Delhi and it sent him to three days in custody for further interrogation by the Delhi Police's Special Cell. He was sent to judicial custody on Tuesday.

According to a police officer, the investigations into the

fake video have revealed some more names who are suspected to be Beereddy's associates and who helped him in creating the fake video and sharing it on social media to spread misinformation during the elections.

The reports of electronic gadgets like mobile phones and laptop seized from Beereddy are yet to come from the forensic science laboratory (FSL). But the investigations so far have pointed that he was among the main creators of the fake video, an official source said.

Another official source said a team of Special Cell, camping in Telangana since the case was registered on April 28, conducted raids at several places in Hyderabad on



Monday and Tuesday to collect the evidences related to the case. They have also questioned a few people.

The cell, on a complaint from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (14C), which comes under the home

ministry, had registered the FIR under IPC sections 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth), 465 (punishment for forgery), 469 (forgery for purpose of harming reputation) and 171G (false statement in connection with an election). The police added a section of criminal conspiracy later into the case.

The complaint was about the doctored video of Shah where his statements indicating a commitment to abolish quota for Muslims on religious grounds in Telangana were changed to make it seem that he was advocating scrapping of all reservations.



Congress and BJP cadres clashing in Shadnagar constituency on Wednesday

Tension as Cong, BJP cadres clash in Shadnagar

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Tension prevailed as a clash erupted between the activists of the Congress and BJP at Keshampet under Shadnagar Assembly constituency on Wednesday. The police had to use mild force to disperse the clashing activists.

The clash between the activists of the two parties broke out when they came face to face during the campaign rallies taken out in Shadnagar Assembly segment by Congress Lok Sabha candidate

Challa Vamsi Chand Reddy and BJP's Lok Sabha candidate, DK Aruna.

As workers from both national parties faced off, pushing and shouting slogans, local police intervened by setting up barriers between them and dispersing the crowd. Some skirmishes happened between the activists as leaders from both parties faced each other, exchanging slogans.

BJP workers chanted slogans like "Bharat Mataki Jai" while the Congress supporters hailed Vamsi Chand Reddy former

MLA Pratap Reddy in Keshampet mandal centre where DK Aruna's road show also reached.

Tensions escalated as activists and leaders from both sides gathered at the mandal centre. Police stepped in to defuse the tension, pulling both groups apart. BJP leaders accused Congress of trying to block DK Aruna's rally by obstructing the police, while Congress leaders maintained they were conducting their campaign democratically without targeting anyone.

PM fails to sanction funds for Vemulawada temple: Vinod

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

BRS candidate for Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency B Vinod Kumar on Wednesday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for failing to promise funds for the Sri Rajarajeshwara Swamy temple at Vemulawada.

Speaking to the media here, Vinod Kumar expressed the view that the prime minister's visit to the temple in Vemulawada was politically motivated. The Prime Minister did not sanction funds for the renovation of the temple.

He failed even to stress the importance of the historic temple. Modi, who allotted huge funds for the development of Varanasi did not allocate funds for temples in Telangana.

He wondered why local MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar sought funds from the Centre for the development of temples.

Aruna urges people to defeat divisive forces

BJP Lok Sabha candidate for Mahabubnagar conducted road show in Shadnagar Assembly segment

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

DK Aruna, BJP candidate for Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday countered Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the Congress party's claims that the grand old party would win majority of seats in Telangana.

The road show conducted by Aruna in Papeddyapalli and Vemulanarva villages under Shadnagar constituency saw enthusiastic support from BJP rank and file who welcomed her with band melas and crackers. Amidst chants of "Jai BJP" and "Jai Arunamma", she launched a scathing attack against the opposition party.

Aruna accused Revanth Reddy of resorting to dirty politics and using derogatory language against her. The dirt in Revanth's mouth would only disappear after being washed with



BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Mahabubnagar constituency interacting with voters in Shadnagar Assembly segment on Wednesday

phenol. She urged voters to support Modi's leadership, emphasising that this election is not just about her or Revanth Reddy but about deciding the future Prime Minister of the country.

Addressing the crowds, Aruna highlighted Modi's initiatives and accused Congress of spreading lies for political gain. Aruna highlighted the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya under Modi's leader-

ship, portraying it as a symbol of national security and unity. She urged voters to reject divisive politics and support the BJP for the progress and security of the nation.

In her closing remarks, Aruna emphasised the importance of educating the public about Modi's government schemes and actions, urging voters to cast their ballots for the country's welfare.

Revanth Reddy an accidental CM: G Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP State unit president G Kishan Reddy on Wednesday claimed that A Revanth Reddy has been an accidental Chief Minister. He said that the Chief Minister is spreading

misinformation against the BJP fearing defeat.

While addressing the media on Wednesday, Kishan Reddy alleged that Revanth Reddy was trying to mislead the people. Donkeys do not lay eggs. Revanth Reddy, however, kept saying "donkey egg."

The BJP leader caustically said that Revanth Reddy made "donkey egg" the Congress party symbol.

Kishan Reddy said that the Congress' campaign stating that the BJP would scrap reservations failed to impress people. The people are condemning the falsehood being spread

by the Congress. The beneficiaries of reservations are extending support to the BJP.

He exuded confidence that the BJP would win majority MP seats in Telangana in Lok Sabha elections.

He said that the Chief Minister's criticism is irresponsible.

Kishan Reddy said that intolerance is visible in CM Revanth Reddy's election speeches. He has been trying to sling mud on the Central government.

The Congress is indulging in a falsehood campaign in regard to reservations even though the Prime Minister stated that there is no need for concern over reservations till his last breath, he said.

Kishan Reddy said that CM Revanth Reddy's comment that the journalists would be set right if jailed showed his arrogance.

Koppula Eswar demands govt to buy even rain-soaked paddy

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Former Minister and Peddapalli BRS candidate for Lok Sabha polls Koppula Eswar has asked the farmers not to be disheartened and the BRS would fight on their behalf until the government bought rain-soaked paddy. He also demanded that the government pay compensation to farmers who had lost their crops due to lack of water for irrigation.

Campaigning in Sultanabad, Yelgedu and Julapallymandals at the paddy procurement centre at Peddabonkur and inspected the rain-soaked paddy there along with former MLA Dasari Manohar Reddy on Wednesday. Several farmers met Koppula Eswar and expressed their anguish to him. The former minister assured them that the BRS would take up their cause.

Because of the negligence of the state government paddy in the procurement centers got drenched, he said.

The state government is looking down upon the farmers posing them problems, he said.

BRS leaders Bandari Srinivas Goud, Mandal party president Marku Lakshman, Karupakala Sampath Kumar and others accompanied the minister.



Former minister Koppula Eswar with farmers at a paddy procurement centre at Peddabonkur in Peddapalli district on Wednesday

Kadiam Srihari is not a Dalit, alleges Rajaiah

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

Former MLA and BRS leader Tatikonda Rajaiah on Wednesday came down heavily on

Kadiam Srihari, who recently quit the BRS to join the Congress and alleged that latter is not a Dalit. He called him a 'fake Dalit'.

He alleged that Congress MLAs were angry with Kadiyam Srihari and none is coming forward in the party to support him.

Similarly, the Congress activists were seething with anger against Kadiam Srihari.

Turning his attention to

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Rajaiah demanded that the government implement Kalyana Lakshmi scheme.

In the recent Assembly elections, Srihari was elected to the Assembly on BRS ticket. Later, he, along with his daughter

Kavya joined, the Congress even after the BRS finalising the name of Dr Kavya from Warangal Lok Sabha constituency.

Prior to joining the Congress, Kavya addressed a letter to KCR explaining the reasons for not contesting the Lok Sabha elections. Later, Srihari and Dr Kavya joined the Congress.

Narrow escape for Madhu Yashki in road mishap

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Senior Congress leader and former MP Madhu Yashki Goud had a miraculously narrow escape on Wednesday near Alair when the driver of the car in which he was travelling hit the road divider while trying to avoid an oncoming two-wheeler.

None was injured in the incident. The incident took place when he was returning home after concluding his electioneering work in Warangal. Later in twitter message, Madhu Yashki said that he survived the accident due to the alertness of his driver Mukesh.

The message said, "My car met with accident near Alair while trying to avoid the two-wheeler. By God's grace none is injured in the incident."

Congress will win 14 Lok Sabha seats: Komatireddy

PNS ■ NALGONDA

"We will win all the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the State," said Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Wednesday.

He was speaking to the media at the Nalgonda camp office.

The Minister assured the farmers that the government would pay compensation to farmers who lost their crops due to unseasonal rains.

The farmers were being given minimum support price for the paddy, he said. It is our responsibility to support and purchase the rain-soaked paddy. "We have paid pending dues of farmers."

He promised to waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh by August 15. As the elections are



Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy speaking to the media in Nalgonda on Wednesday

nearing, the Congress workers should work hard to ensure the victory of the party candidates with a huge majority.

In the days to come, Nalgonda constituency will be developed in an unprecedented manner. All the pending projects in the district would

be completed. "Corruption has reached its peak under the Modi government," he said, asking if there was any decline in the country's petrol and diesel prices. Only Adanis and Ambanis secured benefits under the BJP-led government, he said.

Vote for Congress for growth of nation: Bhatti

PNS ■ NIRMAL

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has said that Congress is the only party that would ensure welfare of all sections of society. If the country were to become prosperous, the people should vote for the Congress, he said.

He was addressing the important functionaries of the party here on Wednesday.

Later speaking to the media, he assured the Podu farmers that the Congress government would redress their grievances. The country would become disintegrated if the BJP was given third term, he warned.

The Congress is supporting Atram Suguna, an Adivasi, therefore the people of the dis-

trict should elect from Adilabad Lok Sabha constituency with a huge margin of votes. He pointed out that it was during the Congress regime several major irrigation projects were built. The State government would soon

execute the Triveni Sangamam and Pulimadugu projects and complete them. Water would be distributed through distributors to benefit the farmers, he said assuring the farmers that the Congress would stand by them.

The State government launched the portal Dharani to snatch the lands belonging to the poor, he alleged.

The BJP and BRS have been acting hand-in-glove with each other, he alleged.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

'Vizag has potential to become capital'

Naidu's relative gives rude shock to TDP: Opposes Amaravathi as the State's capital.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP's MP candidate from Visakhapatnam M Bharat, who is also a relative of TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, has dealt a rude shock to the party by opposing Amaravathi as the capital city. In an interview to a television channel, Bharat said it was not possible to develop Amaravathi as the capital city, as it required massive investments. "The State is not in a position to invest in Amaravathi," he said. The video has been making rounds on social media and WhatsApp groups ever since the interview.

Chandrababu Naidu had announced in his election manifesto that he would revive Amaravathi capital city, if his party is voted to

power. Along with TDP, alliance partner BJP's national leaders like Amit Shah and J P Nadda have endorsed Amaravathi as the State capital.

Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made fun of the three-capital concept of YSR Congress party president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, saying the latter could not build even a single capital and that the three capitals plan was only to make more money through corruption.

But interestingly, Bharat said it was not possible to develop Amaravathi as the capital city, as it required massive investments. Bharat went on to say that compared to Amaravathi, Visakhapatnam has the potential to become the capital



city. "It is a growth engine and has a lot of scope to be developed as a capital city in a short time. Amaravathi is a 20 years story," he said, adding if Visakhapatnam was developed as the capital city, the revenue from the port city could be used to develop Andhra Pradesh more.

He further said that as the debt burden of the State is already high, it is not prudent to take more loans to develop Amaravathi as the capital city, which has no resources to generate revenue. In a way, Bharat has endorsed the three-capital concept of Jagan Mohan Reddy, who has declared his steadfast commitment to making Visakhapatnam the executive capital of the State.

Meanwhile, speaking to The Pioneer, YSRCMP MLA Malladi Vishnu said that the opinion expressed by Bharat is the opinion of the people across Andhra Pradesh. He accepted that Vizag is the growth engine, which is a fact.

PM Modi 'cheated' AP for 10 years: Sharmila

PNS ■ KADAPA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y S Sharmila on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "ineligible" to enter the state as he has allegedly "cheated" it for the past 10 years.

Sharmila alleged that Modi is "shedding crocodile tears" for Andhra Pradesh because of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. "You are ineligible to enter the state. First, seek the forgiveness of Andhra Pradesh people."

For 10 years you have cheated the state and now you



are shedding crocodile tears," she said, addressing a press conference in Kadapa.

Displaying a radio, the APCC chief said she is sending it as a gift to the PM to listen to the 'Mann Ki Baat' of the Telugu people from the state. Referring to the recent reg-

ular visits of the PM, Sharmila claimed that he is coming because of the polls but not for developing the state.

After two back-to-back meetings in Andhra Pradesh on May 6, Modi will be participating in two more electioneering activities in the state on Wednesday, making it four election campaign-related events within a week from the polling day on May 13.

Challenging the Prime Minister to fulfil the promises made to Andhra Pradesh, she demanded that he give an affidavit that the promises will be kept, and also posed a string of questions.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The name game

Celebrities and influencers are equally liable for misleading endorsements, says the SC

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has declared that celebrities and influencers are equally liable if they endorse misleading advertisements. Hearing a petition filed by the Indian Medical Association against Patanjali's advertisements, the Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah has come down heavily on the influencers and celebrities who feature in such adverts. In the age of social media, celebrities and influencers wield considerable influence, with millions of followers taking their word as gospel truth. In many instances, the endorsements are misleading or false, leading to consumer detriment and eroding trust in advertising. The Supreme Court's ruling represents a crucial step towards ensuring transparency and accountability in advertising practices. With millions of impressionable individuals looking up to them, these personalities possess a moral obligation to exercise due diligence while endorsing products or services. The failure to do so jeopardises consumer trust. Furthermore, the court



emphasised the need for stricter regulations and enforcement mechanisms to deter deceptive advertising practices. While existing laws and guidelines provide some level of protection to consumers, they often fall short in holding celebrities and influencers accountable for their actions. The apex court's ruling sends out a clear message that no individual, regardless of their fame or influence, is allowed to mislead public for personal gains. The ramifications of the Supreme Court's decision are far-reaching for celebrities and influencers alike. Moving forward, these individuals must exercise greater caution and diligence when entering into endorsement

agreements. They are obligated to ensure that the products or services they endorse are truthful, substantiated and in compliance with advertising regulations. This heightened accountability serves as a powerful deterrent against unethical marketing practices and underscores the importance of transparency and authenticity in influencer partnerships. Of late, many film stars promote chewing pan masala under the guise of a mouth freshener. Other celebrities have promoted online gaming sites which are actually gambling sites smartly packaged as gaming sites. However, it is just the beginning and there is a long way to go before such advertising endorsements can be curbed. There have to be clear and concise guidelines (the existing ones are not enough) to stop surrogate ads. Moreover, to be fair to celebrities, they often do not know what they are promoting. Hollywood star Pierce Brosnan once featured in a chewing tobacco ad which he later said he was told was a mouth freshener. He can be given a long rope for not understanding the difference but Indian celebrities are supposed to know such underhand tactics. As celebrities and influencers navigate this evolving guideline, they must prioritise integrity and ethical conduct to maintain the trust and loyalty of their audience. This would be good for their reputation as well as for the society.

Tasks for new regime in turbulent times



KS TOMAR

As the nation braces for a new Government, all eyes are on the horizon of challenges awaiting the new administration

Keeping in view the confidence of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and the BJP to cross a magic figure of "Chaar Sau Paar" nothing is certain in politics but a new regime will take shape in New Delhi after the results of general elections on June 4.

In this backdrop none can deny that the new regime is poised to confront hordes of new challenges which include giving top priority to advancements in emerging technologies, adapting to shifting geopolitical equations, the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and formulating a long-term strategy to counter China's expansionist policies and security threats in the region. These challenges are pivotal for India's aspirations to join the League of developed nations in the future.

Experts say that Indian PM, Narendra Modi's push for digital technologies which proved a boon during Covid-19 crisis for the delivery of services besides emphasising renewable energy, a mission mode to put India back on the map of semiconductors production, setting a new target in space arena and formulation of a strategy to accelerate India's capabilities in AI has helped India to position itself to give a fillip to innovate and catch up with the US and China which have been trying to master the technological revolution to be relevant in future.

Foreign policy experts highlight India's growing concerns over China's increasing influence in the region, particularly its impact on security along the Line of Control (LOC). Consequently, the new administration must focus on devising a strategic plan, possibly in collaboration with the United States, to address these concerns. China's recent tactics involve enticing India's neighbours with debt policies and offering substantial loans for projects like the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and defence-related ventures. For instance, China signed a "military assistance" deal with the Maldives, providing non-lethal weapons and free training to Maldivian security forces, a significant



departure from the earlier training provided by India and the United States. Ahead lies the crucial task for New Delhi to formulate an ambitious and practical long-term plan to counter China's advancements in "new productive forces," a term coined by President Xi Jinping. This involves focusing on economic development through innovation in advanced sectors. China's aim to surpass the United States in the production of advanced science and technologies poses challenges for India as well. Therefore, India must intensify its efforts to support the United States in its global technology coalitions with allies like Japan, Australia and India, along with the CHIP Alliance, while fostering deep bilateral partnerships in emerging critical technologies.

China's expanding ties in the region are evident and India needs to tread cautiously to counter its influence, as seen in the case of Nepal. The recent political shift in Nepal towards a communist Government ideologically aligned with China is concerning, especially considering China's "Debt Trap" strategy. Pakistan serves as a stark example, with China extending a massive debt of \$23 billion, a substantial portion of which is tied to the Belt and Road Initiative. Pakistan's mounting debt to China, totalling \$67.2 billion from



AHEAD LIES THE CRUCIAL TASK FOR NEW DELHI TO FORMULATE AN AMBITIOUS AND PRACTICAL LONG-TERM PLAN TO COUNTER CHINA'S ADVANCEMENTS

2000 to 2021, underscores the risks associated with this debt dependency. Despite facing economic collapse, Pakistan remains indebted to China, highlighting the potential peril of falling into a debt trap. Experts suggest that the incoming Government in Delhi may find solace in the recent normalisation of ties with Sri Lanka. A severe economic crisis in Sri Lanka had pushed it perilously close to the edge, but India stepped in with a \$4 billion economic assistance package and humanitarian aid, surpassing even the IMF's 48-month special package to stabilise the country. This move showcased India's commitment beyond traditional diplomacy and responded to the dire needs of its neighbour. It's noteworthy that China, previously involved, withdrew its support, while India's intervention has been perceived positively, reflecting a shift in Sri Lanka's outlook. Interestingly, former president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, had blamed India for interfering in the Sri Lanka elections which led to his ouster in 2015. The trend continued when Gotabaya Rajapaksa, president cancelled the East Container Terminal (ECT) agreement in the Colombo airport in violation of a 2019 project contract signed amongst three partners including Japan, India and Sri Lanka. Now Sri Lanka's speaker, Mehinda Yapa

Abeyardera thanked India for saving his country from the 'blood path' hence China stands exposed in the eyes of the people of this country. India's relations with Bangladesh remain strong, exemplified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts. During a joint event on November 23, 2023, Modi referred to India as Bangladesh's largest development partner, emphasising mutual benefits.

One of the notable features of election campaigning by all parties, unlike developed nations, is the lack of debates, discussions and narratives to enlighten the people about the relevance and significance of foreign policy. The manifestoes may dwell upon foreign relations and future strategy but no effort is made to emphasise its importance in achieving the goal of joining the elite club of developed nations. India's independent stand to import crude oil from Russia, despite economic sanctions by the United States and allies owing to the Ukraine war, has demonstrated to the world that such decisions are primarily governed by keeping national interest supreme. India's strategic approach towards Maldives and Nepal needs to be flexible and innovative to counter China's growing influence effectively.

(The writer is a journalist and political analyst, views are personal)

PICTALK



A child bathes his dog in a waterbody on a hot summer day, in Jammu

PTI

Insights into India's growing heart health crisis



NAVEEN BHAMRI

Aortic stenosis with a high mortality rate is a significant cardiovascular concern. Non-surgical aortic valve replacement emerges as a game-changer

Aortic stenosis stands as one of India's most prevalent valvular heart diseases, trailing only hypertension and coronary artery disease. Its prevalence surges with age, affecting roughly one in ten individuals aged 75 or older. The condition, characterised by a narrowing of the aortic valve opening, often manifests with symptoms such as chest pain, fatigue and shortness of breath, impacting the quality of life for affected individuals.



The primary causes include degenerative valve disease, congenital bicuspid aortic valve disease and rheumatic heart disease, the latter being the leading global cause of aortic stenosis (AS), particularly among children and young adults. Despite an initially asymptomatic phase that may last for several decades, the prognosis dramatically changes once symptoms develop. Without timely intervention, such as aortic valve replacement, the average survival rate dwindles to a mere 2-3 years, elevating the risk of sudden death. The early symptoms of aortic stenosis are frequently over-

looked or misattributed to other causes. Nevertheless, recognising the significance of symptoms and promptly seeking medical attention is critical in mitigating the progression of the disease. For individuals diagnosed with aortic stenosis, heart valve replacement surgery often becomes a necessary course of action. This surgical intervention aims to repair or replace faulty heart valves, restoring proper blood flow and alleviating symptoms. According to a report by GlobalData, approximately 69,592 heart valve surgeries are conducted each year in India. The heart's proper function relies on valves, ensuring blood flows in one direction. When valves malfunction, surgery becomes necessary to repair or replace them. This may involve fixing leaflets that don't open wide enough or don't close tightly, ensuring blood flows properly through

the heart chambers and arteries. Replacement valves can be sourced from animals, human tissue, or synthetic materials. TAVI & TAVR for AS Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation/Replacement (TAVI/TAVR) is a groundbreaking alternative procedure to open heart surgeries. TAVI/TAVR is a minimally invasive procedure that involves inserting a new valve inside the damaged aortic valve, often without removing the old valve entirely. The procedure itself involves inserting a catheter through an artery in the groin, which is then guided to the heart. The number of patients afflicted with blocked arteries and co-morbidities like hypertension, diabetes and chronic kidney disease is increasing day after day. The ideal solution for such patients is TAVI procedure, as it offers significant benefits over traditional treatments. However, only a small percentage end up opting for it. Addressing aortic stenosis early, especially in patients with multiple co-morbidities, is crucial for improving outcomes and enhancing quality of life.

TAVI Therapy Helps Mrs. Patel, a 78-year-old woman, was struggling with severe degenerative aortic stenosis. Mrs. Patel's condition, made it hard for blood to flow through her heart properly. This caused her heart to work harder, leading to symptoms like chest pain and feeling breathless. Her doctor suggested a treatment called TAVI (Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation), a less invasive procedure where a new valve is placed inside the damaged one. The deployment of the valve was successful, with Mrs. Patel responding positively to the procedure. Remarkably, within just three days, Mrs. Patel was discharged from the hospital. Subsequent assessments revealed no signs of valve issues or blockages in her heart. Her journey underscores the remarkable impact of interventions like TAVI in restoring health and well-being.

(The writer is Senior Director and Head of Interventional Cardiology at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLL BATTLE CONTINUES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Poll battle enters crucial Phase III," published on May 7, this is my response. The upcoming third phase of Lok Sabha elections is poised to be a crucial battleground, with political heavyweights from both ruling and opposition parties vying for victory. The BJP, having secured a significant number of seats in the 2019 elections, faces the challenge of maintaining its dominance, especially in key States like Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. With over 1,300 candidates, including a notable presence of women, contesting across 12 States and Union Territories, the electoral landscape reflects a diverse array of voices. The extensive deployment of security forces underscores the significance of ensuring a free and fair electoral process. Of particular interest are the contests in constituencies like Guna in Madhya Pradesh, where Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia seeks to reclaim lost ground and Baramati in Maharashtra, where dynastic politics adds an intriguing dimension to the electoral dynamics. As voter turnout fluctuates amidst challenging weather conditions, the outcome of this phase remains uncertain, with implications for the broader political landscape. It's a testament to the vibrancy of Indian democracy and the diverse aspirations of its citizens.

Anika Patel | Kolkata

CORAL CRISIS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Marine heatwave scorches pristine coral reefs of Lakshadweep," published on May 7, this is my response. As someone who reads the news daily, the plight of Lakshadweep's vibrant corals strikes a chord. It's disheartening to witness the gradual decline of such natural wonders due to prolonged marine heatwaves. Beyond the aesthetic loss, the ecosystem repercussions are immense. The warnings from scientists about coral bleaching and its cascading effects on marine life sound alarms for the delicate balance of nature.

More allegations against Kejriwal



Apropos the news article, "LG recommends NIA probe against Kejriwal," published on May 7, this is my response. The recent recommendation for an NIA probe against Arvind Kejriwal by Delhi's Lieutenant Governor raises serious concerns. The accusation of receiving funding from extremist groups is alarming and demands a thorough investigation. However, the

timing, just before the Supreme Court's bail consideration and the political backdrop surrounding it raise questions of motive and agenda. The intertwined narratives of terrorism, politics and justice in this case create a complex scenario. On one hand, there's the gravity of allegations involving a banned terrorist organisation; on the other, there are claims of political conspiracy and manipulation.

As a reader, navigating through these intricate details leaves one perplexed and sceptical. The need for transparency and impartiality in the investigation is paramount to uphold the integrity of the democratic process and ensure justice prevails. However, amidst the political fervour surrounding elections, separating truth from propaganda becomes increasingly challenging.

Vihaan Singh | Ahmedabad

Moreover, the socioeconomic impact on coastal communities underscores the urgent need for action. The Government's attention to Lakshadweep's marine ecosystems is crucial, especially considering the region's ecological and economic significance. The initiatives by CMFRI to study and develop resilience-based strategies offer hope amidst the crisis. However, collective efforts are imperative to mitigate the escalating threats and safeguard these invaluable treasures for future generations. The news serves as a reminder of our responsibility to preserve and protect our natural heritage in the face of environmental challenges.

Aaradhya Sharma | Mumbai

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Madam — Apropos the news article, "CHHAYA: A contraceptive beyond family planning," published on May 6, this is my response. The recent approval of Centchroman, a non-hormonal contraceptive pill, signifies a significant stride in bolstering women's reproductive health rights. Branded as "Chhaya" in public health facilities and "SAHELI" in the mar-

ket, this pill offers a hormone-free alternative, expanding choices for family planning. Its versatility is commendable, catering to women regardless of age, marital status, or childbirth history. Notably, its compatibility with breastfeeding ensures maternal health without compromising lactation.

Centchroman's introduction aligns with India's commitment to reproductive rights and gender equality. By providing a safe and accessible contraceptive, the Government empowers women to make informed decisions, underscoring family planning as a human right crucial for social and economic development. However, dissemination of information remains pivotal. Comprehensive education on contraception can dispel misconceptions, enabling women to navigate their reproductive health confidently. In essence, Centchroman heralds a new era of inclusivity and empowerment, promising a future where women have agency over their bodies and futures.

Kabir Malhotra | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

PROFOUND INFLUENCE OF HABITS

Habits sculpt our lives by fostering discipline and perseverance



SAKSHI SETHI

In the words of FM Alexander, 'People don't decide their futures. They decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.' From the moment we wake up to the moment we retire to bed, habits silently guide individual behaviours, often without even realising it. They can either propel us towards success or lead us down a path of mediocrity or failure. Habits have a profound impact on an individual's personal development and well-being. They are the fabric of daily existence, weaving through routines and decisions and ultimately, shaping the course of an individual's life. By establishing a consistent routine, an individual creates a framework within which they can operate efficiently and effectively.

The individual becomes disciplined and learns self-control and perseverance... the qualities that are essential for achieving long-term goals and overcoming obstacles. Habits play a crucial role in the social sphere, shaping relationships and interactions with others. They are the invisible architects of every individual's life, decisions and ultimately, destiny. Shared habits, such as participating in team sports or volunteering in the community, foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging. Whether consciously or unconsciously, it is the habits that dictate what an individual eats, how the free time is to be spent and even which people to surround with. By understanding and intentionally cultivating positive habits, one can steer oneself towards choices that align with their goals and values. Undoubtedly, habits are the silent architects of one's actions, often operating beneath the conscious awareness yet exerting a profound influence on thoughts.



By establishing a consistent routine, one can create a framework within which they can operate efficiently and effectively. Habits indeed hold far more significance in everyone's life than one can often realise. From the moment an individual wakes up until they retire to bed, habits silently guide behaviours, often influencing outcomes far more than one can acknowledge. One of the most powerful aspects of habits is their ability to create momentum. Once a habit is established, it becomes easier to maintain and even expand upon. This momentum propels the individual to move forward, making it easier to achieve their goals and aspirations. By starting with small, achievable habits and gradually building upon them, one can harness this momentum to make positive changes in their life.

There is no denying the fact that good habits lie behind many of the positive changes while conversely, negative habits, such as procrastination, excessive screen time and unhealthy habits, hinder progress and undermine an individual's potential. Human connection is fundamental to happiness and fulfillment and this shows how habits play a crucial role in shaping one's daily experiences, behaviours and outcomes across various domains of life. It is the habits that contribute to a sense of belonging, support networks and emotional fulfillment. They encompass a wide range of actions, from simple everyday tasks to complex behaviours and thus play a significant role in shaping lives. They are not mere trivialities but powerful forces that permeate every aspect of our lives. By intentionally cultivating positive habits and breaking free from detrimental ones, one can create a life that is aligned with our values, goals and aspirations. Whether they are positive or negative, habits are and will always be an integral part of one's life. They form a crucial part of the everyday conceptual scheme used to explain normal human activity. Remember, an individual only becomes what they think they can. One cannot change the habits one does daily. The secret of an individual's success is found in their daily routine as rightly said there are no overnight transformations.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Rationalise regulations for e-commerce



UTTAM GUPTA

When the Government expects foreign companies to do almost everything that a retailer does, how can it deny these firms the right to sell?

Way back in 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) an organisation of retail traders in the national capital had lodged a complaint with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

The CCI is an authority established under the Competition Act, of 2002. The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates mergers, amalgamations acquisitions etc to ensure that there is no adverse effect on competition. Amazon and Flipkart are global giants operating e-commerce marketplaces in India through their subsidiaries, the ASS and the FIPL.

DVM argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers. It also alleged that they had given preferential treatment to certain sellers by giving them higher search rankings and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's Big Billion Days and Amazon's Prime Day.

On January 13, 2020, the CCI initiated an investigation under Section 26(1) of the Competition Act, 2002. Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the Director General (DG) - Investigation. ASS and FIPL approached the Karnataka High Court (KHC) with a plea to quash the CCI order. The KHC refused to quash it. The duo challenged the order in the Supreme Court (SC). In August 2021, the SC too dismissed their applications and ordered that "the CCI - DG will complete the probe.

Now, the CCI-DG has come up with its findings.

The investigation has charged Amazon and Flipkart with violation of antitrust laws. Leveraging their substantial financial resources, they have indulged in 'predatory pricing' and forged exclusive partnerships with selective sellers. Predatory pricing is the illegal business practice of setting prices extremely low albeit by offering heavy discounts to consumers in an attempt to eliminate the competition and establish a monopoly. This has resulted in the shutdown of thousands of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It has specifically targeted Amazon for certain practices, especially with Cloutail India Pvt Ltd (a firm set up by a JV namely Prione Business Services (PBS) established by Amazon, in collaboration with an Indian entity owned by Narayan Murthy of Infosys) a "preferred" seller on Amazon's marketplace and other in-house sellers. Similarly, Flipkart has been investigated for its links to platform sellers, which contravenes new e-commerce regulations.

What has led to the violations? This can't be attributed solely to the use of financial muscle by these companies as alluded to by the CCI - DG. This has a lot to do with the rules introduced in early 2016, through which the Government allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the so-called e-commerce marketplace model.



THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO WORKING ON A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON FDI IN E-COMMERCE. IF IT GOES AHEAD WITH SUCH A POLICY, IT WILL BE TANTAMOUNT TO A RETROSPECTIVE CHANGE OF POLICY AND SEND A WRONG SIGNAL TO FOREIGN INVESTORS

The marketplace is a platform where vendors sell their products directly to consumers even as its owner (read: Amazon/Flipkart) merely acts as a facilitator by providing services such as booking orders, raising invoices, arranging delivery, accepting rejections etc. She can't hold inventory or undertake direct selling. The policy intent was abundantly clear. The foreign investor in the marketplace wasn't supposed to invest in the inventory model.

However, the intent wasn't reflected in the Press Note (PN) issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. While drafting the fine print, a clever bureaucrat blurred the demarcation between the marketplace where 100 per cent FDI was allowed and the inventory model where it wasn't. The PN (2016) prescribed two conditions. First, the foreign entity owning marketplace cannot permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on the marketplace from one vendor or its group companies. Two, it cannot directly or indirectly influence the sale price.

In the absence of specifying who that vendor should be, it made way for a company linked to the owner of the marketplace to get in. The latter could set up four companies (call them subsidiaries or JVs) and control 25 per cent of each of the total sales on the platform. Contrary to the policy intent, which prohibited foreign investors from direct selling, the fine print did just the opposite. Having allowed its entities to control almost all of the sales made on the marketplace, it

would be naïve to expect that an anti-competition situation won't emerge. With such rules in place, it was a foregone conclusion that Amazon et al would have exclusive partnerships with selective sellers who - acting in concert with the former - would indulge in predatory pricing and give heavy discounts leading to the annihilation of thousands of SMEs. Following a complaint from the SMEs, on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its joint venture (JV) with an Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter."

Foreign investors can circumvent the first rider by having less than 50 per cent shareholding in the seller firm and arguing that they have no control (majority) over the latter. The marketplace owner can also sell his 'own' product - albeit through its wholesale arm - on the platform. All that the wholesale arm needs to ensure is to restrict supplies to the seller within the 25 per cent threshold.

The clarification/modification in the conditions through December 26, 2018, hasn't helped much in improving the situation.

A few sellers, some of them still maintaining connection with the marketplace owner continue to dominate the e-commerce platform. For instance, only three dozen firms out of the 400,000 sellers on the ASS platform account for 67 per cent of sales on it. Meanwhile, in 2020, the Department of Consumer Affairs

(DCA), in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, issued the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, under Section 101 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The rules bar affiliated entities from selling on e-commerce platforms, restrict 'flash sales,' and disallow sellers from using the name or brand associated with the marketplace e-commerce entities for the promotion of goods. In 2021, DCA made amendments to restrict business-to-business, or B2B, sales in e-commerce and a provision to prevent an 'abuse of dominant position' by e-commerce firms. The Government is also working on a comprehensive policy on FDI in e-commerce that will give primacy to the above rules. If it goes ahead with such a policy, it will be tantamount to a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal to foreign investors. The present mess owes it to the very idea of the marketplace which is flawed. When the Government expects foreign companies to do almost everything that a retailer does viz. booking orders, raising the invoices, arranging the delivery, accepting rejections and so on, how can the former deny the latter right to sell? The way forward is to shun this idea; instead, allow 100 per cent FDI in retail. The bureaucrats had already done it but in a 'subtle' way. The Government should make it obvious and straightforward. Moreover, 100 per cent FDI should be permitted to all retailers, online or offline, big or small for a level playing field.

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

Empowering rural women through the 'Umeed' scheme

Despite its success in empowering many women, this scheme's benefits are still not fully accessible to all in the region

In remote villages of Jammu and Kashmir, a silent revolution is underway as these regions are witnessing women coming out of their houses to explore the avenues of self-employment through the 'Umeed Scheme' - Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM). This transformative initiative aims to reach out to 66% of the rural population across the erstwhile 125 blocks, linking them to sustainable livelihood opportunities and nurturing them till they come out of poverty and enjoy a decent quality of life.



MANIMA AKHTAR

2024-30 informed that JKRLM has successfully federated 725,000 women and formed 87,000 self-help groups (SHGs) across the Union Territory of J&K. These SHGs are working in various areas such as livelihood, financial inclusion, gender and social inclusion and other related fields. However, certain rural pockets remain unaware of this significant scheme, lacking

comprehensive knowledge to capitalise on its benefits. One such area is Baila village in Mandi Tehsil of the border district Poonch, which is located approximately 230 kilometres from Jammu city. Although the scheme has been operational in the nearby Mandi tehsil since 2016, its reach in Baila village remains limited. When asked about the 'Umeed Scheme', the response from the women of this remote village was a unanimous lack of awareness. When they were informed about the benefits of the scheme, they expressed eagerness to understand its workings, underscoring its importance for including women in the workforce and towards their economic freedom.

In this context, Matina Akhtar, an 18-year-old resident of Baila, shared her perspective: "Despite living just two kilometres away from Mandi, we remain unaware of this scheme. There is this wide gap between secluded corners of our country and the development schemes. This gap leaves us, women from remote areas, bereft of its advantages. We only learn about it when the scheme is on the verge of closure. Our remoteness is the reason why we haven't received any information about this scheme. How are we supposed to engage with it if we're in the dark?" "When I needed funds for my grocery store, I was short on cash. So, I resorted to



selling some wood from my house to procure materials. Had I known about this scheme earlier, I wouldn't have sold those timbers," lamented 37-year-old Farida Akhtar from the same village. When asked "If they have awareness about any

scheme?" resident Zareena Akhtar, aged 23, responded that within their community, the only scheme recognised is the Anganwadi Scheme (ICDS), highlighting a significant gap in knowledge and accessibility to Governmental initiatives beyond this singular program. There is also a lot of fear among the people of the village as well - both women and men. They have the fear of failure - what if they will not succeed in their endeavour? Salma Akhtar, 19, from Baila, confirms the notion. She expressed fears about potential repercussions and uncertainties associated with loan acquisition under the scheme. There is a need to dispel the

apprehensions lingering in the hearts of these women and endeavour to convey to them that this scheme is not a threat, but rather a boon. They need to be assured that this initiative can usher positive transformations into their lives. They must be made aware that this scheme is tailored specifically for women and designed to work towards their financial freedom. According to Naima Akhtar, the Cluster Head of the Umeed Scheme in Mandi Tehsil, the Government has allocated decent funding under this scheme for women to benefit from it. "I urge other women who may be unaware of this scheme to join us. Numerous individuals, both men and women,

in the Mandi Loren area have secured rewarding opportunities through this Scheme. They are sustaining their households without needing to engage in manual labor. Regrettably, the women of Baila remain oblivious to this exceptional program. Meanwhile, women from other regions are harnessing its benefits, propelling themselves up the ladder of progress. They are not only achieving financial independence but also cultivating self-reliance. This brings hope for a transformative change in the lives of the women of Baila." (The author is grassroots writer from Poonch, J&K; views are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

16th Finance Commission invites views from public on ToR

The 16th Finance Commission on Wednesday invited views from the general public and organisations on its terms of reference like tax devolution formula and measures to augment the consolidated fund of states. The 16th Finance Commission, under the Chairmanship of Arvind Panagariya, was constituted on December 31, 2023. Former expenditure secretary Ajay Narayan Jha, retired bureaucrat Annie George Mathew and economist Manoj Panda are full-time members of the commission, while SBI Group Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh is a part-time member. The panel would submit its report to the President by October 31, 2025. The report would be for five years, commencing April 1, 2026. The Sixteenth Finance Commission (XVIFC) invites suggestions/views from the general public, interested organisations and individuals on the terms of reference for the XVIFC as specified below, as well as the general approach that the XVIFC may adopt. Views are also invited on any other issue relevant to the work of the XVIFC, an official statement said.



TVS Motor Company net profit rises 15 pc to Rs 387 cr in March quarter

TVS Motor Company on Wednesday said its consolidated net profit increased 15 per cent to Rs 387 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024, riding on robust sales. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 336 crore in the January-March period of the previous fiscal. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 10,042 crore in the period under review compared with Rs 8,031 crore in the fourth quarter of FY23. In the fourth quarter, the company said its overall two-wheeler and three-wheeler sales, including exports, grew by 22 per cent to 10.63 lakh units compared to 8.68 lakh units in the same period of the 2022-23 fiscal. For the year ended on March 31, 2024, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,686 crore as against Rs 1,329 crore a year ago. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 39,145 crore in FY24 over Rs 31,974 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. The company said it recorded its highest-ever revenue and profit in FY24.



Zomato starts crowd-supported weather infrastructure network

Food aggregator Zomato has launched a crowd-supported weather infrastructure network consisting of 650 on-ground stations to provide real-time information on key parameters such as temperature and rainfall, its co-founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said on Wednesday. The network, weatherunion.com, provides localised, real-time information on key weather parameters such as temperature, humidity, wind speed and rainfall, among others, Goyal said. In a post on micro-blogging platform X, Goyal said that weatherunion.com, which is presently available in 45 large cities, shall be expanded to other Indian cities "very soon". "At Zomato, it was crucial for us to have access to precise and real-time weather information to make the right business decisions to serve our customers better. Hence, we took it upon ourselves to develop a solution capable of empowering us on this front," Goyal stated. He also informed that a lot of Zomato employees have hosted weather stations at their homes.



Gold falls Rs 150; silver slumps Rs 300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices fell by Rs 150 to Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a decline in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had ended at Rs 72,450 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also slumped Rs 300 to Rs 84,700 per kg. It had finished at Rs 85,000 per kg in the previous close. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams, down by Rs 150 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,310 per ounce, down by USD 9 from the previous close. Gold prices declined on Wednesday amid a rise in the US dollar, Gandhi said.

RBI Guv discusses ways to scale up UPI ecosystem

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday discussed with banks and other stakeholders ways to scale up the UPI ecosystem, expand products and foster innovative payment solutions. UPI (Unified Payments Interface) is an instant real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to facilitate inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. Das held a meeting on Wednesday with major stakeholders in the UPI ecosystem - banks, NPCI, third-party application providers and technology service providers - to discuss potential strategies for further expanding the reach of UPI, RBI said in a statement. "There were wide-ranging discussions on various aspects to widen and deepen the



adoption and usage of UPI. The stakeholders shared their valuable inputs and suggestions," it said. The discussions broadly covered strategies for scaling up UPI infrastructure and expanding product portfolio, and challenges being encountered by the ecosystem and innovative solutions for addressing the same. The deliberations focused on innovative ideas to integrate potential users into the digital payments ecosystem. The various suggestions received will be examined and suitable action will be initiated in due course by the Reserve Bank, the central bank said. The meeting was also attended by RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar and other senior officials of the central bank.

RBI lifts ban on boarding of customers on Bob World app

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday allowed Bank of Baroda to onboard new customers through the 'Bob World' application, more than six months after it imposed restriction following material supervisory concerns. The RBI had imposed restriction on state-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on October 10, 2023 from onboarding new customers on its mobile app 'Bob World'. "We wish to inform that the RBI, vide its letter dated May 8, 2024, conveyed to the bank its decision to lift the above mentioned restrictions on Bob World with immediate effect, as such the bank is free to onboard customers through Bob World application in accordance with the applicable guidelines and extant laws or regulations," the lender said in a regulatory filing.

'Possibility of GDP growth touching 8 pc in FY24 high'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said there was a high possibility of GDP growth touching 8 per cent in FY24 on the back of robust growth registered during the three quarters of the financial year ended March 2024. India's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 8.4 per cent in the third quarter ended December 2023. In the second quarter, the GDP growth was 7.6 per cent while 7.8 per cent in the first quarter. "The IMF has projected a growth rate of 7.8 per cent for FY24. But if you look at the trajectory of growth in the first three quarters, obviously, the possibility that the growth rate touches 8 per cent is quite high," he said at an event organised by NCAER here. This is higher than RBI's estimate of 7.5 per cent growth for the Indian economy in 2023-24. For the ongoing financial year, he said, the



International Monetary Fund has an estimate of 6.8 per cent but the Reserve Bank of India expects a 7 per cent GDP growth for FY25. "If that materialises, of course, it will be the fourth consecutive year after COVID starting from FY22 that the economy will have grown at 7 per cent or more. The RBI forecasts of 7 per cent for FY25 turns out to be either correct or even underestimate, then it would be the fourth consecutive year of 7 or higher growth rate," he said. However, he said, a lot would depend on how the monsoon shapes up. Although the expectations are that there will be an above-normal monsoon, spatial and temporal distribution will matter. On the growth beyond FY25, he said, there is a possibility of India growing between 6.5-7 per cent because the key difference this decade compared to the last is the one of balance sheet strength in the financial sector and the non-financial sector in the corporate sector as well. The investment made in supply-side augmentation of both physical and digital infrastructure has placed the economy to pursue non-inflationary growth, he said, adding that this also helps absorb the challenge of overheating.

Tata Power plans 66 pc higher capex at Rs 20,000 cr

To spend 50 pc on renewable energy projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power has planned a 66 per cent higher capital expenditure of Rs 20,000 crore in this fiscal compared to a year ago, which will mainly focus on projects supporting energy transition and India's net-zero emission target by 2070. During the year ended March 2024, the capex (capital expenditure) was around Rs 12,000 crore, the company's CEO Praveer Sinha said during a post earnings conference call. "This year we are targeting to spend around Rs 20,000 crore," he said in reply to a question on company's planned capex. Sharing the breakup of the investment plan, Sinha said about 50 per cent will be on renewables (projects). The remaining will be mix of transmission, distribution and conventional projects. The company will fund the capex through internal accruals and some debt, Sinha said.

Tata Power on Wednesday posted an 11 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 1,046 crore in the March 2024 quarter compared to the year-ago period, mainly on the back of higher revenues. The consolidated profit stood at Rs 939 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2023, a BSE filing showed. In the renewable energy segment, Tata Power's 4.3 GW Cell & Module manufacturing facility in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu has commenced production and commercially produced around 130 MW of modules. During FY24, the company won two projects worth Rs 2,300 crore under Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process - the Interstate Transmission System (ISTS) - Bikaner III Neemrana II Transmission Ltd and the Intrastate Transmission Scheme in Uttar Pradesh through SPV Jalpura Khurja Power Transmission Ltd.

Stock markets edge down on selling in banking & IT shares, weak global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex slipped by 45 points in highly volatile trade on Wednesday due to selling in private bank and IT shares amid weak Asian markets and continuous foreign fund outflows. Declining for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 45.46 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 73,466.39. During the day, it declined by 437.93 points or 0.59 per cent to 73,073.92. The NSE Nifty remained unchanged at 22,302.50. From the Sensex basket, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and ICICI Bank were the major laggards. On the other hand, Tata Motors, Power Grid, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro and Maruti were among the gainers. "The Indian market echoed subdued investor sentiments akin to those of its Asian peers, and on worries about declining voter turnout. Despite domestic Q4 earnings



largely meeting estimates, the earnings landscape appears to be moderating," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. A sector-specific action was visible in FMCG and auto stocks, aided by an expectation of a revival in rural demand in H1FY25, Nair added. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.78 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.50 per cent. Among the indices, IT declined by 0.57 per cent, bankex by 0.38 per cent and

with election season on, no one wants to place longish bets," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. With support hovering around the 22,150 mark in the Nifty and global markets maintaining stability, there's a possibility of some consolidation, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Seoul ended with gains. European markets were trading with gains. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,668.84 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.65 per cent to USD 81.79 a barrel. The BSE benchmark went lower by 383.69 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 73,511.85 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty declined 140.20 points or 0.62 per cent to 22,302.50

Aadhar Housing Finance IPO receives 43 pc subscription

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Initial Public Offer (IPO) of Aadhar Housing Finance, which is backed by private equity major Blackstone, received 43 per cent subscription on the first day of bidding on Wednesday. The Rs 3,000 crore IPO got bids for 3,04,53,979 shares against 7,00,89,373 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The quota for non-institutional investors received 60 per cent subscription while Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) category got subscribed 41 per cent. The portion for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) fetched 33 per cent subscription. The IPO of Aadhar Housing Finance is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,000 crore and an OFS (Offer for Sale) of Rs 2,000 crore by promoter BCP Topco VII Pte Ltd, an affiliate of Blackstone Group Inc. Currently, BCP Topco holds

a 98.72 per cent stake in Aadhar Housing Finance. The IPO is in a price range of Rs 300-315 a share. Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd on Tuesday said it has mobilised Rs 898 crore from anchor investors. The company plans to utilise Rs 750 crore of the fresh issue proceeds to meet future capital requirements towards onward lending, while a portion will be used for general corporate purposes. Aadhar Housing Finance offers a range of mortgage-related loan products, including loans for residential property purchase and construction; home improvement and extension loans; and loans for commercial property construction and acquisition. The housing finance company is focused on the low-income housing segment, serving economically weaker and low-to-middle-income customers, who require small-ticket mortgage loans.



Framework of state mining index to be finalised soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is likely to soon finalise a framework for a state mining index which would serve as a tool for stakeholders and ensure ease of doing mining business, an official said on Wednesday. A state mining index would boost cooperative federalism as well as competition among states, Mines secretary V L Kantha Rao said at a day-long workshop on State Mining Index here. Principal secretaries, directors and other officials from 26 states participated in the workshop to discuss and finalise the indicators and sub-indicators

of performance which form part of the index framework and methodology. Post consultations and feedback from states, a framework of the state mining index will be finalised and released in July 2024 for actual ranking to take place in April next year, Kantha Rao said. The index would serve as a tool for stakeholders of the mining sector to understand different aspects related to the ease of doing mining business within a state, he added. The secretary also made a plea to states to help in data collection efforts by properly submitting the statistical returns in time



Reliance acquires step-down subsidiary for Rs 314 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd on Wednesday said it has acquired a step-down subsidiary engaged in the manufacture of petrochemicals and hydrogen, for Rs 314.48 crore. In a stock exchange filing, the firm said Reliance Chemicals and Materials Ltd (RCML) is a step-down wholly owned subsidiary of the Company through Reliance Projects & Property Management Services Ltd (RPPMSL). "It is proposed to make RCML a direct wholly owned subsidiary and hence, the company has today, at around 3:15 p.m., acquired a 100 per cent equity stake of RCML from RPPMSL for an aggregate consideration of Rs 314.48 crore," it said.

Air India Express to curtail flights amid cabin crew shortage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India Express will curtail flights for the next few days to cope with non-availability of crew members, its CEO Aloke Singh said on Wednesday as the airline has been forced to cancel more than 90 flights due to cabin crew members reporting sick. In a message to the airline's staff, Singh said since last evening, more than 100 cabin crew members have reported sick prior to their rostered flight duty, "at the last minute,

severely disrupting our operations". More than 90 flights have been disrupted due to the situation, he added. "The disruptions have cascaded across the network, forcing us to curtail the schedules over the next few days. We had to do this to cope with the non-availability of crew and to recover schedules," Singh said. Tata Group-owned Air India Express operates around 360 flights daily in the ongoing summer schedule that started in late March.



India overtook Japan to become world's 3rd largest solar power

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rapid solar energy deployment in India pushed the country past Japan to become the world's third-largest solar power generator in 2023, according to a new report. The report by global energy think tank Ember said India ranked ninth in solar energy deployment in 2015. Solar produced a record 5.5 per cent of global electricity in 2023. In line with the global trend, India generated 5.8 per cent of its electricity from solar last year, as reported in Ember's "Global Electricity Review". Ember's Asia Programme director Aditya Lolla said, "Increasing clean electricity is not just for reducing carbon emissions in the power sector. It is also needed to meet the rising electricity demand in an increasingly-electrified economy and to decouple econom-



ic growth from emissions, which is crucial for tackling climate change." Solar maintained its status as the world's fastest-growing electricity source for the 19th consecutive year, adding more than twice as much new electricity worldwide as coal in 2023. India saw the world's fourth-largest increase in solar generation in 2023 (+18 terawatt hour or TWh), behind China (+156 TWh), the

United States (+33 TWh) and Brazil (+22 TWh). Together, the top four solar growth countries accounted for 75 per cent of growth in 2023. Ember said the global solar generation in 2023 was more than six times larger than in 2015. Solar's contribution to electricity generation in India increased from 0.5 per cent in 2015 to 5.8 per cent in 2023. According to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) "Net Zero Emissions" scenario, solar would increase to 22 per cent of global electricity generation by 2030. With electricity generation accounting for nearly half of India's annual carbon dioxide emissions (1.18 gigatonnes in 2023), accelerating the transition to cleaner generation sources is imperative for the country to meet both its developmental and climate goals.

Embracing the Bengali spirit and preserving its heritage in Hyd

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

The Uttaran Bangiya Samiti has been instrumental in nurturing the rich imprint of Bengali culture in Hyderabad. Established in February 2018, the organisation emerged from the collective desire of Bengalis living in the city to preserve and celebrate their cultural heritage, similar to the celebrations in Kolkata.

Initially conceived to address the absence of Durga Puja celebrations near Manikonda in 2017, the Uttaran Bangiya Samiti swiftly became a beacon of Bengali cultural resurgence in the region. Led by a group of passionate friends, the organisation's primary objective was to organise Durga Puja, the cornerstone of Bengali festivals known for fostering community bonding. However, their vision extended beyond Durga Puja to embrace celebrations of Pohela Baisakh (Bengali New Year), Saraswati Puja, and various other cultural events, all aimed at fostering a sense of unity among Bengalis here.

Saikat Karmakar, the joint secretary, aptly describes the organisation as 'a platform for collective support'. Beyond cultural festivities, he shares, "The samiti actively

engages in philanthropic endeavours such as providing assistance during medical emergencies and organising blood donation drives, thus strengthening community bonds and extending a helping hand to those in need. Additionally, it assists individuals in finding suitable accommodation, reputable schools, and desirable living spaces in Hyderabad, further enhancing the sense of belonging within the Bengali community."

The organisation's journey has been marked by significant growth and inclusivity. From its humble beginnings with 15 families, it has now burgeoned to include 150 families, with non-Bengali members also joining in to celebrate Bengali culture. The reach of their events has expanded beyond familial confines to encompass the broader

Hyderabad community, fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

The annual calendar of events reflects the organisation's commitment to cultural preservation and community engagement. From the celebration of Pohela Baisakh in April to the grandeur of Durga Puja in October, attended by over 50,000 people over the five days of celebrations, each event is meticulously organised to uphold Bengali traditions while welcoming all. Samiti's annual picnic in December serves as a joyous occasion for families to bond over games and activities, further strengthening the fabric of the community.

Central to their mission is the engagement of the younger generation in Bengali culture. Through events like Bengali dance performances and discussions on eminent personalities like Rabindranath

Initially, began to address the absence of Durga Puja celebrations; today, Uttaran Bangiya Samiti has become a beacon of Bengali cultural resurgence in Hyderabad. This week, for our weekly segment of Community Wise, The Pioneer connects with the joint secretary of the Samiti, discussing much in detail about the same.



talent pool of Bengali artists within Hyderabad, celebrating their artistry and contributions to our cultural tapestry."

Hyderabad has always welcomed people by embracing their diverse culture and language, and that's how the samiti too found their home here. Despite the evident language and cultural distinctions between Telugu and Bengali traditions, Karmakar shares, "We are fortunate to receive tremendous backing from the local community here in Hyderabad. While they may not always directly engage in every event, the unwavering support from local councillors and members of parliament ensures that our gatherings are nothing short of grandiose."

He further shares that their support extends beyond mere words, as locals generously contribute both financially and by actively participating in events such as Durga Puja celebrations. During occasions like Poila Baisakh, although primarily a Bengali affair, they also witness the heartwarming sight of Telugu individuals joining in the festivities, demonstrating a beautiful display of cross-cultural solidarity.

"This inclusivity is further echoed by the steadfast support of the local administration, whose involvement is instrumental in orchestrating seamless events. Thanks to this collaborative spirit, we have never encountered significant hurdles in organising our cultural festivities."

Anyone interested, can be a part of this samiti by reaching out to them, offering opportunities to join their events for a nominal fee. Additionally, they also welcome volunteers who wish to contribute.



Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Subhas Chandra Bose, the samiti endeavours to instill a sense of pride and appreciation for their cultural heritage among the youth. He says, "Efforts are made to encourage reading Bengali literature, learning traditional dances, and participating in cultural dramas, ensuring the continuity of Bengali traditions for generations to come."

In this cultural gathering, they actively champion the presence and contributions of Bengali artists and performers. Given the beautiful community of Bengali artists in Hyderabad, the platform boasts a rich array of talent. These artists not only excel at musical instruments but also engage in various other forms of creative work. He says, "What sets us apart is our commitment to nurturing and promoting local Bengali talent residing right here in Hyderabad. We take pride in the fact that we've never felt the need to call artists from Kolkata for our events, as our city is brimming with remarkable Bengali artists who enrich our cultural landscape. Consequently, we prioritise collaborating with and showcasing the immense



'I ensure my name is not associated with anything that has false claims'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Onima Kashyap is extensively known for her massive presence in Coca-Cola commercials at some stage in India, as well as for her participation in several TV advertisements. Noteworthy initiatives in her portfolio consist of collaborations with actor Iqbal Khan for a

series such as *Chacha Vidhayak Hain Hamare*, and in films, she is best known for her performance in *Maniyanarayil Ashokan*. The actress adds, "My character Tanvi from *Chacha Vidhayak Hain Hamare*, has changed a lot over the last few seasons, and each season brings a new element to the story and character, which helps keep the character interesting."

Hence, in a special interview with us, on a common note, she shares, "Well, I am a creative character, and I discover innovative pride in the work I do. Having worked on several mediums, I have skilled in exclusive codecs and a work culture. But I would say that each platform I worked on, helped me study new things. There was once a special kind of zeal whilst working on each project. I without problems adapt to extraordinary situations, so it will become convenient for me to swap to one-of-a-kind mediums."

As an actress, she is well-known for her performances in web

work with such talented people? She strongly believes that if the content is good, sooner or later, your things will settle down, so she thinks good content will attract a large audience among the masses! She adds, "My personal values are aligned with all the brands I have worked with. While signing any endorsement, I look at several parameters to maintain my personal values and the trust of the audience. I ensure that my name is not associated with anything that has false or exaggerated claims."

OTT platforms are changing the landscape of the entertainment world due to the extraordinary content they are releasing. Web shows give real experience to the artists, and they provide engaging and interesting stories that grab the attention of the audience. OTT has understood the audience's preferences and is now a big game, which is what the actress feels.

Furthermore, "Before entering the world of entertainment, I worked as a fashion designer for popular names like Reena Dhaka, Namarat Joshipura, and Rahul Mishra. I am also a professional painter, and sell my paintings under the name-Onima Creations."

Well, who wouldn't want to

Onima Kashyap, a popular face in the advertisements world, and also known for her performance in *Chacha Vidhayak Hain Hamare*, gets candid with *The Pioneer* as she speaks of being a creative character, working with Amitabh Bachchan, being aligned with her personal values, and more.



Mental health conditions manifesting to chronic pain

Mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders and depression, can manifest in various bodily symptoms (also called somatic symptoms). It is not uncommon for these symptoms to be mistaken as purely physical pains and ailments.

- SOME COMMON SOMATIC SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE:**
- Chest heaviness and palpitations (rapid heart-beat)
 - Increased muscle tension leading to non-specific pains in the body, muscle stiffness, or even soreness
 - Unexplained or sudden headaches, known as tension headaches
 - Gastrointestinal distress such as indigestion, stomach aches, nausea, diarrhea, bloating, or even irritable bowel syndrome
 - Heightened pain sensitivity due to lowered pain threshold, amplifying pain perception from existing conditions or causing various physical pain without a clear cause
 - Sleep disturbances such as disrupted sleep patterns, insomnia, and poor sleep quality further exacerbate physical symptoms and contribute to overall discomfort and fatigue
 - Shortness of breath
 - Profuse sweating, especially in the palms, underarms, or forehead
 - Shaking or trembling in hands, legs, or other body parts
 - Constant fatigue or exhaustion
 - Dizziness or lightheadedness

These bodily symptoms can vary in intensity and duration depending on the individual and the specific circumstances triggering their anxiety. Most often, these somatic symptoms persist, and the individuals experiencing these symptoms may continue seeking medical expertise for the physical symptoms rather than getting the mental health issues addressed. When no specific physical or underlying medical conditions can be attributed to the somatic symptoms, it is essential to consider the possibility of an underlying mental health issue like anxiety or depression.

If left unidentified or untreated, these somatic symptoms can significantly impact an individual's quality of life. Collaborative care involving mental health professionals, such as psychiatrists or therapists, alongside pain management specialists can help address both the physical and psychological aspects of chronic pain exacerbated by underlying anxiety disorders. This holistic approach may involve therapy, medication, relaxation techniques, and lifestyle adjustments to effectively manage both the physical and emotional aspects of chronic pain and mental health.

(The author, Dr. Pallavi Joshi, is a Consultant - Psychiatrist, at Manipal Hospital.)

what's brewing?

Sonakshi Sinha dismisses rumours about Heeramandi rivalry

In Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi*, Sonakshi Sinha portrays the dual roles of Fareedan and Rehana, a mother-daughter duo. With Bhansali on her wish list of filmmakers to collaborate with, Sonakshi has received high praise for her role in the series.

In an interview, Sonakshi put an end to rumours that the *Heeramandi* stars were in rivalry on production. When questioned about her response to rumours of competition between female actors, she replied, "You know, women don't do that, right? And whoever probably started this rumour is a very disgruntled man. *Heeramandi* was an amazing experience for all of us. I mean, it has been one of the best working experiences of my life. Try and get a six-hero film together, and I challenge you!"

Adding that Bhansali gave every actor their due and importance on screen, she said, "And see, how easy it was for a filmmaker like Sanjay Leela Bhansali to get six heroines and present them in the way that he's presented them to give them each their own importance in such a vast story. I think he's done it beautifully, and we all really enjoyed working with each other. We were there for each other. We supported each other because it's

not an easy set to be on. I think the reason, we worked so beautifully with each other was because we all kind of surrendered to him and his vision. We all came together to execute one man's vision, and it was very harmonious." In addition to Sonakshi Sinha, the main cast of the show includes Richa Chadha, Manisha Koirala, Sanjeeda Sheikh, Aditi Rao Hydari, and Sharmin Segal.



J Manik Rao Garu, MD of Bhavani Apparels, along with B Mahesh - GMWA President, and Navin Polepalli, Managing Director of Celebrity Store marked their presence at the opening ceremony of Celebrity flagship store in Next Galleria Mall in Mussarambagh.

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary

Taylor's beau Travis makes an acting debut with a \$34mn contract!

Travis Kelce, Taylor Swift's boyfriend, is having a great season after signing a multi-million dollar contract with the Kansas City Chiefs. He recently landed a part in the horror series *Grotesquerie*. Via his social media website, the NFL player recently verified the news. Ryan Murphy, the well-known American writer, director, and producer of *American Horror Story*, will make it.

Earlier this year, Murphy used his social media accounts to hint at the next series. Ryan Murphy Productions and FX will be in charge of it. For those who are unaware, Kelce had a dating reality program called *Catching Kelce* in 2016, which led to his association with the entertainment industry for a few years. In March of last year, he performed in several sketches on the well-known American program *Saturday Night Live*. Alongside Fred Armisen, Tim Heidecker, and John C. Reilly, Kelce also made an appearance in an episode of the television show *Moonbase 8*.

The NFL player and *Clean House* star Niecy Nash-Betts have been put together, according to a report. For her role in it, she even received a Daytime Emmy Award. In a video posted to his Instagram page, Travis Kelce verified the news. "Guys, guess who I am working with in *Grotesquerie*," Nash-Betts asks in the video. Kelce is then panted. Going forward, the NFL player said, "Stepping into new territory with Niecy."



FUN

ARCHIE



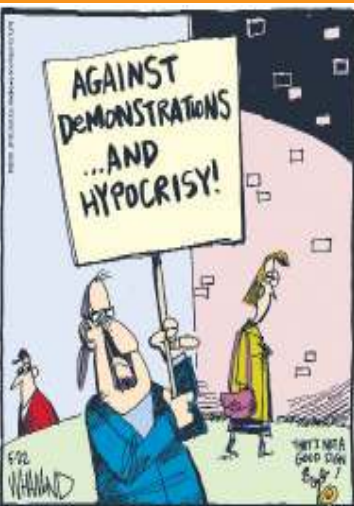
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



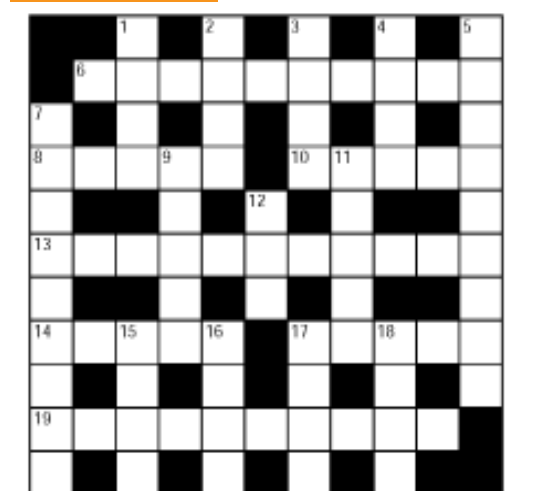
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SPEED BUMP



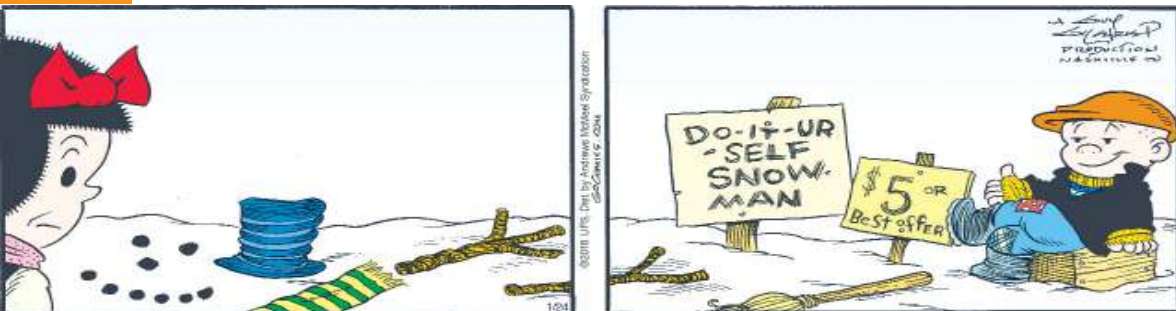
CROSSWORD



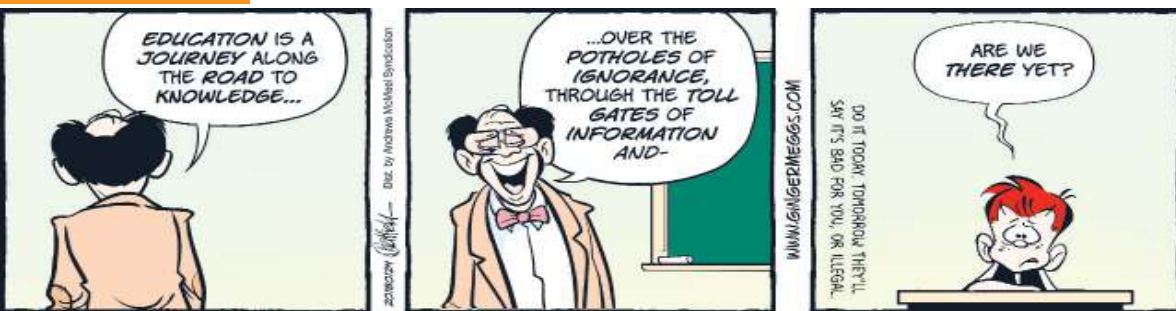
- ACROSS**
- 6 A machine in a kitchen
 - 8 Frequently
 - 10 A room just under the roof
 - 13 A country famous for making watches
 - 14 Imagine things while you are asleep
 - 17 Normal
 - 19 A large African animal with a horn on its nose
- DOWN**
- 7 Thinks over
 - 9 More than is needed
 - 11 Speaks
 - 12 Not many
 - 15 A door out of a building
 - 16 This orbits the Earth
 - 17 Second-hand
 - 18 On



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

I am on the edge of accepting a few Tamil films : Satyadev

K. RAMYA SREE

Amidst much anticipation, the upcoming film *Krishnamma* is set to grace the silver screen on May 10, boasting a stellar cast led by the versatile hero Satyadev. Directed by V.V. Gopalakrishna and produced by Krishna Kommalapati under the banner of Arunachala Creations, with director Koratala Siva presenting the film, *Krishnamma* promises to captivate audiences with its intriguing narrative and gripping performances.

The pre-release event, held in Hyderabad on Wednesday, witnessed the presence of industry stalwarts including pan-India director S.S. Rajamouli, star directors Koratala Siva, Anil Ravipudi, and Gopichand Malineni, who graced the occasion as chief guests and unveiled the trailer of the film.

As the film nears its release, actor Satyadev interacted with the media on Wednesday and gave some deets



about the film. Reflecting on his journey with the film, he shared, "For the film, the entire cast and crew were on board. I was the last person to come on board."

Exploring the lesser-known facets of Vijayawada, Satyadev emphasised, "Generally, when one thinks of Vijayawada, most people talk about its rowdies, factions, etc., but exactly opposite to it is shown in *Krishnamma*. We wanted to show there is more to Vijayawada."

Describing the essence of the film, he revealed, "The film is more about life. It is about three boys whose lives get shattered and how society plays a role in that."

"There is action in this film, but they are all justified action sequences and not there just for the sake of it," the actor shared, addressing the action sequences in the film.

Delving into his portrayal of the character Bhadra, Satyadev remarked, "I worked on the accent, and the body language. Bhadra is a mass character, which was very well written by our director. I have done soft roles

so far, and playing this mass character was a challenge, and I learned it in the process. The story has incidents taken from real incidents. It's a fictional story based on real-life incidents."

On a lighter note, the actor confessed that he became popular in the Indian cinema market after starring in *The Godfather* and *Ram Setu*. "Doing a film like *Ram Setu* is one level, and choosing films that match the tempo of *Ram Setu* in the following outings is difficult. I am getting good offers from Tamil Nadu; I am on the edge of accepting a few films." Expressing his excitement about the film's narrative, he revealed, "Gopal wrote many interesting scenes in the film, and even I was surprised and excited to learn about a few scenes in the movie."

Offering a glimpse into the film's structure, Satyadev enthused, "The second half of the film is nail-biting. The first half is all about setting the mood, but the second half is very intriguing. It is one of the best second halves, and it has the soul of the film."

On the acting front, the actor has two other films in line for release, whose announcements Satyadev said will be made after the release of *Krishnamma*.



Aadi Sai Kumar, Anup Rubens do music sittings in Goa

Lovely young hero Aadi Sai Kumar and talented director Veeerabhadram Chowdary collaborated for the second time on a new movie titled *Krishna From Brindavanam*. Produced jointly by Thumu Narasimha and Jami Srinivasa Rao under the Lakshmi Prasanna Productions banner, it is a village drama laced with family, love, comedy, and feel-good emotions. The movie was launched recently. Meanwhile, the makers began musical sittings of the movie in Goa, in the presence of the core team. Anup Rubens, who previously provided many super hit albums to Aadi, such as

Prema Kavali, *Lovely, Sukumarudu*, and *Pyaar Mein Padipoyane*, is on a mission to deliver another chartbuster album. The makers have also announced plans to commence the regular shoot of the movie in June. Digangana Suryavanshi, who earlier worked with Aadi in *Crazy Fellow*, is the leading lady in the new movie. Shyam takes care of the cinematography of the movie, whereas the editing will be done by Chota K. Prasad. Ramu Mannar provides the dialogue, while Dragon Prakash and Shankar will oversee fights in the movie.

Sci-fi thriller *Darshini* to hit theatres on May 17

Sci-fi thriller *Darshini*, starring Vikas and Shanti in the lead roles, is set to grace the silver screen on May 17, 2024. Directed by Dr. Pradeep Allu and produced by V4 Cini Creations, the film recently received a clean U/A certificate from the Censor Board, ensuring its appeal to family audiences.

In a media interaction, producer Dr. L. V. Suryam expressed gratitude for the positive response from the Censor Board and extended thanks to producer Damodar Prasad for his support. He commended director Dr. Pradeep Allu for his dedication to the project, emphasising his talent and commitment.

Sharing insights into the storyline, Suryam revealed that *Darshini* revolves around three friends who stumble upon a device capable of showing the future, leading to unforeseen consequences. He assured audiences of an engaging cinematic experience blending comedy, emotion, and love in equal measure.

Director Dr. Pradeep Allu echoed Suryam's sentiments, acknowledging the support of Damodar Prasad and emphasising the collaborative effort behind the film's success. He expressed confidence in the movie's appeal to audiences and announced its release in both Telugu states on May 17.



Actor Satyadev, whose upcoming film *Krishnamma* is nearing its release and is all set to hit the cinemas on May 10, speaks to the Hyderabad media, sharing some interesting insights from the film.

Brahmanandam signs a film with his son

Brahmanandam, the beloved comedy icon known as the "Hasya Brahma", is teaming up with his son, Raja Goutham, for an upcoming film that promises to be a delightful family affair. In this heartwarming tale, the real-life father-son duo will portray the endearing



roles of grandfather and grandson, respectively, in a film helmed by debut director RVS Nikhil and produced by Rahul Yadav Nakka under the banner of Swadharm Entertainments, with Savithry and Sri Umesh Yadav presenting it.

Renowned for their track record of delivering fresh and engaging content, Swadharm Entertainments has scored consecutive hits with films like *Malli Rava*, *Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya*, and *Masooda*. Their latest venture, *VIBE*, was recently announced as their fifth production, while *Brahma Anandam* was unveiled through a charming pre-look poster accompanied by a humorous video.

The pre-look poster exudes a blend of urban and rural vibes, setting the stage for a vibrant narrative. The accompanying video showcases a delightful banter between Brahmanandam and Vennela Kishore, with the latter revealing

Goutham's involvement in the project and urging the legendary comedian to join the cast as the grandfather. This sneak peek into the film's characters has sparked excitement among audiences, hinting at a rib-tickling entertainer in the making.

Brahma Anandam promises a delightful juxtaposition of personalities, with Brahma, a self-centered yet witty grandson, and Anand Ram Murthy, a compassionate grandfather, embarking on a transformative journey together. As they navigate through life's ups and downs, the stage is set for a roller-coaster ride filled with laughter, joy, and unexpected twists.

Joining the stellar cast are Priya Vadlamani and Aishwarya Holakkal as the female leads, alongside the versatile Vennela Kishore in a pivotal role. The film's technical crew boasts top-notch talent, with Sandilya Pisapati composing the music, Mitesh Parvathaneni handling cinematography duties, and Prasanna taking charge of editing. With production set to commence shortly, *Brahma Anandam* is slated for release on December 6th, promising audiences a heartwarming and laughter-filled cinematic experience that celebrates the timeless bond between generations.



Chandra Bose honoured with the Swara Sahitya Kalanidhi title

In Dallas, USA, Dr. Meenakshi Anipindi successfully conducted the annual celebrations of the Swara Music Academy. The grand event, held at the Grand Center Auditorium, saw the presence of prominent figures from Dallas, along with several Tollywood celebrities who graced the occasion as guests of honour. Among them were

Totakura, Chairman of the World Literature Forum; Gopal Ponangi, member of the Indo-American Council in Dallas; eminent businessman Kishore Kancharla; Sharad Singireddy; and Prakash Rao.

Renowned cine lyricist Chandra Bose, music director RP Patnayak, and director VN Aditya were among the dignitaries who attended the event, lending their support to the burgeoning talents showcased. Dr. Meenakshi Anipindi, along with her group of disciples, presented a captivating performance of traditional musical compositions across seven segments, spanning over 30 timeless melodies. The cultural extravaganza, which continued uninterrupted for 10 hours, left the audience enthralled and enraptured.

Chandra Bose was honoured with the title "Swara Sahitya Kalanidhi", and RP Patnayak was bestowed with the title "Swara Nadanidhi" in recognition of their invaluable contributions to the field of music.



Bhaje Vaayu Vegam releasing on May 31

It is known that megastar Chiranjeevi recently released the teaser of the movie *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam*, starring Kartikeya Gummakonda, produced under the prestigious banner UV Concepts by UV Creations. Continuing the momentum, the makers have announced that the first song of the film, *Set Ayyindhe*, will be released today at 9:09 AM. The promo for this song was released on Tuesday.

Saraswati Putra Ramajogaiah Sastry provided the lyrics for this mass-beat song composed by Radhan. This 21-second promo, featuring the lines *Set Ayyindhe life, Set Ayyindhe* made an impression.

Meanwhile, the makers of the film came up with the release date of the movie.

They announced on Wednesday that *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* will be released in theaters on May 31.

They wrote, "The pitch is ready for the Final Showdown. #BhajeVaayuVegam hitting theatres Worldwide on May 31st. Get ready for a CRAZY RIDE."

While Iswarya Menon will play the female lead in the film, Rahul Tyson of *Happy Days* fame is playing a pivotal role in this movie directed by Prashant Reddy Chandrapu.



Celebrating the charismatic journey of Vijay Deverakonda

In the kaleidoscope of Telugu cinema, only a few stars shine as brightly and boldly as Vijay Deverakonda. Today, as he marks another year of his life, it's not just a celebration of his birthday but a commemoration of his remarkable journey from an aspiring actor to a pan-Indian sensation.

Rewind to the early days of Vijay's career, and you'll find a struggling artist grappling for recognition. Yet, with unwavering determination and unyielding passion, he carved his path, defying the odds and redefining success. From the modest beginnings of *Yevade Subrahmanyam* to the grandeur of *Arjun Reddy*, Vijay's ascent has been nothing short of spectacular.

It was *Pelli Choopulu* that catapulted him into the limelight, earning him accolades and adulation in equal measure. The National Award-winning film not only showcased his

acting prowess but also heralded the arrival of a new-age hero who resonated with audiences across languages.

But it was *Arjun Reddy* that truly etched his name in cinematic history. With his raw, unapologetic portrayal of Dr. Arjun, Vijay shattered conventions and set new benchmarks for storytelling. The film became a phenomenon, with Vijay's magnetic charisma transcending borders and winning hearts far and wide.

Subsequent hits like *Taxiwala* and *Geetha Govindam* further solidified his star status, with the latter crossing the coveted hundred crore mark. Yet, amidst the glitz and glamour, Vijay remained grounded, never forgetting his roots or his responsibility towards society.

In times of crisis, he emerged as a beacon of hope, channelling his resources and influence towards noble causes. From establishing relief

funds for the middle class during the pandemic to orchestrating acts of kindness for his fans, Vijay exemplifies the essence of a true hero, both on and off-screen.

As he embarks on new cinematic adventures with projects like *VD 12* and *SVC59*, Vijay Deverakonda continues to push boundaries and challenge norms, leaving an indelible mark on the canvas of Indian cinema.

So, here's to the man who dared to dream, who dared to defy, and who continues to inspire generations with his infectious zeal and relentless pursuit of excellence. Happy birthday, Vijay Deverakonda. May your journey ahead be as vibrant and victorious as the path you've tread so far.

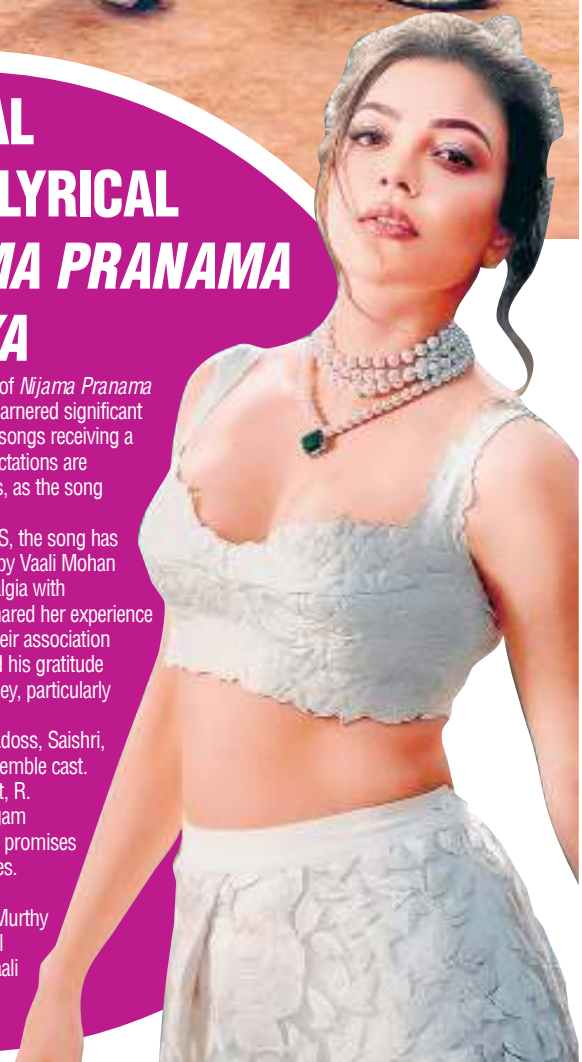
KAJAL LAUNCHES LYRICAL VIDEO OF NIJAMA PRANAMA FROM SATYA

Actress Kajal Aggarwal recently unveiled the lyrical video of *Nijama Pranama* from the upcoming film *Satya*. The movie has already garnered significant attention, with its teaser, trailer, and previously released songs receiving a positive response from audiences. With *Nijama Pranama*, expectations are particularly high, especially among those who grew up in the 90s, as the song promises to strike a chord with its nostalgic appeal.

Written by Rambabu Gosala and composed by Sundaramurthy KS, the song has been lauded for its emotional depth and resonant lyrics. Directed by Vaali Mohan Das, *Satya* is shaping up to be a cinematic treat that blends nostalgia with contemporary storytelling. At the launch event, Kajal Aggarwal shared her experience of collaborating with producer Siva Mallala, reminiscing about their association since her debut film *Lakshmi Kalyanam*. Siva Mallala expressed his gratitude towards Kajal for her unwavering support throughout his journey, particularly for backing his maiden production venture, *Satya*.

Starring Hamareesh, Pradhana Sandeep, Audugalam Murugadoss, Saishri, and Akshaya in pivotal roles, the film boasts a talented ensemble cast. With Sundaramurthy K.S. helming the music department, R. Satyanarayana overseeing editing, and I. Marudanyagam capturing the visuals as the cinematographer, *Satya* promises a cinematic experience that transcends boundaries.

Adding to the film's creative team are lyricist Vijaykumar Songs, PRO VR Madhu and Murthy Mallala, and producer Pawan Tata, all under the adept direction of Vaali Mohandas.





RESURGENT RCB TAKE ON ERRATIC PBKS IN BATTLE OF SURVIVAL

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

Resurgent Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look for their fourth consecutive victory when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings as the two sides fight for survival in the Indian Premier League, here on Thursday. After a horrendous start to the season, RCB have managed to claw their way back into the tournament. They have the winning momentum on their side, having won their last three games comprehensively. The wins have not only boosted their sagging morale but also taken them to the seventh spot in the points table. With eight points from 11 games, RCB can still make the playoffs if they win all their remaining three fixtures although the chances are slim. Punjab Kings too stare at a similar situation. They occupy the eighth spot, having collected eight points from 11 games. However, between the two -- only one team can reach the



all-important 14 points mark. Having beaten PBKS earlier in the season and heading to this clash with three wins on the trot, RCB will feel more confident than the hosts. Virat Kohli remains consistent at the top, while skipper Faf du Plessis broke his string of poor

scores with a belligerent knock in the last game. Will Jacks also impressed with a match-winning century against GT, and Cameron Green showcased his all-round skills with crucial contributions in runs and wickets against Sunrisers

Hyderabad. Their bowling department has started clicking with Mohammed Siraj, who is in India's T20 World Cup squad, finally finding his rhythm. Yash Dayal and Vijaykumar Vyshak also did well against GT and RCB will expect them

to continue in the same vein. PBKS, on the other hand, will be low on confidence having suffered an inexplicable batting collapse against Chennai Super Kings. The Kings showcased their very best and worst against CSK. Their bowlers were all over the CSK batters but the batting unit choked. It was an example of how Punjab's season has been this year -- unpredictable. They have showcased their potential with away wins over Kolkata Knight Riders, when they recorded the highest successful run chase in T20 cricket, and CSK. However, they have faced difficulties getting the job done at home. They won just one out of five games in Mullanpur, their main home ground. A change in venue to the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium also didn't go their way in the previous game here. The team would hope to end its home run on a high but for that to happen, the PBKS unit has to fire in unison.

RR captain Samson fined 30 per cent match fees for breaching IPL Code of Conduct

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajasthan Royals captain Sanju Samson has been fined 30 per cent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his side's 20-run loss to Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here. The offence committed by Samson, who made 86 during RR's unsuccessful run chase of 222 on Tuesday, was not specified but it could be for arguing with the umpires when he was given out after Shai Hope took a catch just near the boundary ropes in the 16th over. The question was whether Hope's feet touched the boundary ropes while taking the catch. The third umpire ruled Samson out but the RR skipper was not happy. He initially started walking towards the pavilion, only to return to the middle and have some words with the on-field umpires. "Samson committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the



Match Referee's decision is final and binding," the IPL said in a statement. A Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 of the IPL's Code of Conduct includes "excessive, obvious disappointment with an Umpire's decision; an obvious delay in resuming play or leaving the wicket;

requesting a referral to the TV Umpire and arguing or entering into a prolonged discussion with the Umpire about his/her decision." On April 10 also, Samson was fined Rs 12 lakh after RR maintained a slow over rate during their match against Gujarat Titans in Jaipur.

We should have seen game home: Rajasthan Royals head coach Sangakkara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Skipper Sanju Samson's departure left Rajasthan Royals in a tight spot but the team still should have won the IPL match against Delhi Capitals here, says their head coach Kumar Sangakkara. In a chase of 222, Samson got out after making 86 off 46 balls. His dismissal left the Royals with a task of getting 60 runs from 27 balls and eventually they fell short by 20 runs Tuesday night. A win would have ensured a play-offs spot for the Royals and exit for the Capitals but the result meant that the hosts stayed alive in the tournament. "Irrespective of that dismissal, we still should have probably seen that game home," Sangakkara said at the post-match press conference. "Losses happen. We had a great run at the start of the season. We bowled brilliantly in this game, especially Ashwin but once you make too many



casual mistakes, it becomes very hard. At the end of the day it's about execution." Samson was not a happy man when he left the field because there were doubts if Shai Hope, who caught him at the boundary ropes, had touched

the fence. The decision was referred to the TV umpire who ruled Samson out but the Royals skipper chose to argue with on-field umpire before walking back. Sangakkara said it is difficult sometimes even for the third umpire

to make a call. "It depends on replays and angles, and sometimes you think the foot's touched. But it is a difficult one for the third umpire to judge. The game was at a crucial stage, so that happens in cricket. "We have different perspectives on it. At the end of the day, you have to stand by that decision in terms of what the umpires did. If we have any other kind of opinion on it, we will share it with the umpire and sort it out." The coach was happy with Samson's batting approach. "Sanju Samson has a lot of clarity about the way he should bat. There are certain stages where he seems to lose his concentration a little bit and we worked on that in the off season. It is really important for him, not just as a captain but as a batter. He is exceptionally talented," he said, adding that he takes very good care of the group.

The catch by Hope, who stumbled before regaining his balance, was hailed by Capitals' assistant coach Pravin Amre. "In IPL some moments are very crucial, and it was a deciding moment in the game," Amre said. "Sanju was batting so well. We have to give credit to the way Hope judged that catch. Umpires are there, and there is so much technology. "We also thought from the dugout that he has (touched the boundary) but it (happens) in the game, and the umpire's decision is the final decision. It wasn't an easy catch, it was really travelling. After the game also I spoke to him and he said the ball came very, very fast." Delhi Capitals moved up a place to fifth in the points table after Tuesday's win. They now have 12 points and can get a maximum of 16 while there are teams that have a chance of getting to 18 points and qualify for the play-offs.



Jaiswal has got very good chance of breaking my records: Brian Lara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Yashasvi Jaiswal's Test career is just nine games old but the great Brian Lara feels if there is anyone who can get close to his lofty feats, including the record 400 not out, it is the 22-year-old southpaw from India. Lara's high praise for Jaiswal doesn't come out of the blue. The left two-handers share a special bond, having spent a lot of time over the past year following their "4 am conversation" during the IPL when the West Indian was coaching Sunrisers Hyderabad and the young opener was in the Rajasthan Royals' camp. A lot has changed since IPL 2023 with Jaiswal now becoming an integral part of India's Test and T20 team. His exploits in the longest format stand out as he averages close to 70 with three hundreds including two double tons in the recent home series against England. What has impressed Lara is Jaiswal's ability to change gears as per the situation of the game.

"After the game (SRH vs Royals), I went to the hotel with a friend of mine from the Caribbean who knew Jos Buttler. It was midnight and Jaiswal found me. I promise you I left the hotel at 4 in the morning. "He just wanted to hear more and more and more. That is one of his amazing traits. His ability to want to learn as much as possible. Our conversations are about trying to make him a better cricketer. I am available for anyone that has my number. I am happy to talk cricket." Being a left-hander himself, it is natural for Lara to be biased towards that tribe. Another southpaw he has great admiration for is Abhishek Sharma with whom he spent time at SRH. "Again he is someone who I met while I was batting coach of SRH. I spent two years there. I am allowed to a bit biased when I see a left-hander, I just love a left-hander. Myself and Abhishek have developed a very good relationship, these youngsters are very humble. They want to learn. "What I like about these two, they want to get to great heights. I have great admiration for both." The legend from Trinidad reckons that usually records are threatened by batters who score quickly and Jaiswal has that ability along with the hunger to bat long. His 400 not out has not been surpassed in 20 years and Lara hopes he is still around to see the day when his record is broken.

"I think now, the pace that these guys are batting at. And you look at the guys over the years who have challenged that 300-mark and plus. It's Chris Gayle. It's Virender Sehwag. It's Sanath Jayasuriya. It's Inzamam-ul-Haq. It's Matthew Hayden. These are guys who destroy bowling attacks. "...You would not say that for a Rahul Dravid or Steve Smith in the present case. But a player who likes to score quickly, will have an opportunity. You know, Jaiswal, I mean, I was in Australia when David Warner came close and you know, he's an aggressive player.

"due to both having exceeded the minimum hosting requirements" in the technical evaluation. The United States and Mexico withdrew a joint bid last week. U.S. Soccer said the federations will instead focus on hosting the 2031 tournament. South Africa dropped its bid late last year, saying it would also turn to 2031. That hosting decision is due next year. Brazil hosted the men's World Cup in 1950 and 2014, and hosting another major FIFA event would make better use of stadiums built for that tournament. Germany hosted the Women's World Cup in 2011 and the men's World Cup in 2006. It also will host the European Championship in 10 cities starting June 14. The 2023 Women's World Cup was held in Australia and New Zealand and was the first hosted by two nations.

OTHER SPORTS

I have hit energy saving mode: Nikhat Zareen on preparations for Olympic debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Long-cherished Olympic debut just about three months away, two-time world champion boxer Nikhat Zareen has hit "energy-saving mode" ahead of her date with destiny. So, she is off social media, embracing solitude, devouring sweets on her cheat days, and binge-watching Netflix magnum opus 'Heeramandi'. Zareen, who is a medal favourite in the 50kg category, believes activities that might sound like leisure to many, are actually legitimate ways to ensure that she has a calm frame of mind ahead of the Games beginning in Paris on July 26. "Honestly, the feeling that I am going to be an Olympian hasn't sunk in yet. As days are passing, the nervousness is increasing. But I always train my brain to focus on a good performance," she told PTI in an interview from Patiala. The 27-year-old from Hyderabad is a former junior world champion. She won consecutive senior world titles in 2022 and 2023. Her 2022 season was nothing short of sensational as she remained undefeated and she would be hoping to hit similar peak in Paris. "Every competition brings with it a degree of nervousness. You have expectations from yourself and the people around you also have expectations. It all adds up to the overall weight you feel on your mind. "You cope with it by working hard, keeping your focus and having a calm mind, basically not allow yourself to be distracted. So, I am off social media, and I also try to keep my distance from people in general," she revealed. "Basically, I have hit energy saving mode, indulge my sweet



tooth on cheat days, do grocery shopping, listen to music, it helps me stay calm. Also, I watch movies or Netflix shows. I am watching 'Heeramandi' right now, it's quite interesting," she said. A believer in destiny, Zareen said she could have been an Olympian in Tokyo itself. She had lost a bitter selection trial to six-time world champion M C Mary Kom, who went on to qualify for the Games. "Everyone knows how badly I wanted to go to Tokyo. But it wasn't destined. The setback made me resolute. The day I qualified for Paris, I was so happy that it is difficult for me to describe. It was like one major dream coming true," she said. "But then it hit me that it's just half the job done." Olympic preparations are not always about merely training, as nutrition, and psychological readiness play a role too. The mental part of it becomes all the more significant in her sport, which is often described as lonely. "But you have to fight your battles, you can sometime share your thoughts with your support staff or team but end of the day, it's you who has to fight inside the ring, you are alone there," she said. "You have to condition your mind to believe that 'acche din

aayenge' (good days will come). That this is my journey and I have to endure," she explained. What helps is the fact that women's boxing is fetching material incentives now, something which wasn't the case when she started. "Once Mary didi won that Olympic medal in 2012 (a bronze), people took women's boxing seriously. I was among those who felt inspired. Boxing is not a sport that you can play for too long. Injury can happen anytime. "But the fact that you are being rewarded so much for international performances, it's making people push themselves to succeed. It's good for the future," she said. Talking of future, the sport's Olympic status continues to hang in balance due to the International Olympic Committee's refusal to recognise the International Boxing Association over governance issues and alleged corruption. Zareen said she is hopeful of a solution. "These things are not in our hands. Obviously it feels bad but I hope things will improve and IOC and IBA will find a solution. I believe boxing will stay in the Olympics," she asserted.

Andy Murray to return from ankle injury at Geneva Open this month

AP ■ GENEVA

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray is set to return from his ankle injury at the Geneva Open this month. Tournament organizers announced Wednesday they had given the 36-year-old Murray a wild-card entry for the clay-court event that starts May 18. Murray damaged ligaments in his left ankle during a match at the Miami Open last month.



He opted against surgery. The former No. 1 has only played sparingly since having hip surgery in 2018 and has said he will probably retire after this summer. He is a two-time Wimbledon and Olympic champion and is hoping to compete for Britain again at the Paris Games. The Geneva Open is a key warm-up event for the French Open, where Murray is a former finalist but has only played once since reaching the 2017 semifinals.

Brazil bid highest for hosting 2027 Women WC

AP ■ LAUSANNE

Brazil's bid for the 2027 Women's World Cup was ranked higher than the bid submitted by Germany, Netherlands and Belgium in an evaluation report released by FIFA on Tuesday. The FIFA Congress is set to vote for the 2027 host on May 17 at its meeting in Bangkok. It will be the first time the member federations of soccer's 211-nation governing body will hold an open vote to pick the tournament's hosts. Brazil has been favored to win the 2027 contest since FIFA brokered a deal with several of soccer's continental governing bodies in October to get preferred hosts of the men's World Cup in 2030 and 2034. South American soccer body CONMEBOL agreed to take just three games for 2030 - one each in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay for a 104-game tournament



mostly to be hosted in Spain, Portugal and Morocco - and skipped its turn to bid for 2034, which is going to Saudi Arabia. Sending a first Women's World Cup to South America then became a likely consequence. Based on the technical evaluation by the FIFA in-house panel, Brazil's bid was given an average score of 4.0 out of 5, while the joint European bid received a 3.7. The three-person evaluation team, led by FIFA's chief women's officer Sarai Bareman, determined both bids qualify for consideration

