

Praja Palana is missing in the Congress government. Was public opinion taken before deciding to change the Telangana State Emblem or the State Anthem? There is no difference between the BRS and the Congress. Both are resorting to diversion tactics instead of addressing the real issues of grain procurement, fertilizer supply, seed purchase and phone tapping.

- Bandi Sanjay, BJP MP



Repeated polls not good for country, says **Rajnath**

NO PROPOSAL
 MADE TO MALDIVES FOR FTA: INDIA



Vishwak Sen: I refuse to be pigeonholed as a Telangana **ACTOR**



DON'T MISS...

Food safety, hygiene ratings...

After recent violations of food safety norms by food and beverages establishments in the city which were highlighted by the Food Safety Department's raids, the National Restaurant Association of India's (NRAI) Hyderabad Chapter, the restaurant body in the country, has taken immediate steps to address the issue. The task force met with State Food Safety Commissioner RV Karnan on Thursday to discuss collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the GHMC to improve...

-PAGE: 3

When speeding luxury cars...

The death of a 19-year-old in a Punjab town after being hit by a BMW is the latest in a series of accidents caused by speeding uber luxury automobiles, the lengthening list speaking of the horrors of rash driving and recalling the many times the thrill of speed spelt destruction. There have been four such incidents in the country just this month. On Tuesday night in Punjab's Zirakpur town, three youngsters were tossed into the air after the car rammed their motorcycle, killing one on the spot...

-PAGE: 5

'E-commerce, BFSI, hospitality...

E-commerce, BFSI (banking, financial services, and insurance), and hospitality sectors witnessed an increased demands for talents in the first four months of 2024, indicating a recovery in overall job market, a report said on Thursday. Driven by economic recovery, the demand for workforce in BFSI increased the maximum by 21 per cent during the first four months of this calendar year. The e-commerce sector saw an increase of 17 per cent, services and hospitality industries reported a growth of 13 per cent...

-PAGE: 8

Wearing India jersey is different...

It would be 527 days since his life-threatening accident when Rishabh Pant dons the India jersey on June 5 at the Nassau County ground for the opening T20 World Cup match against Ireland and he can't wait for it. On March 23 this year, Pant wore the blue of Delhi Capitals while making an emotional comeback after the horrific car crash in 2022 but he is more eager to wear a different shade of blue -- the 'India Blue' to be specific. "Getting back on the field with an Indian jersey on is a different feeling altogether..."

-SPORTS



2 versions of 'Jaya Jayaha TG' approved as State Song

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced that the government had approved 'Jaya Jayaha Telangana' as the Telangana state song.

The government is making arrangements to hold the decennial Formation Day fete on a grand scale on the eve of completing 10 years after the formation of Telangana state on June 2, 2014. The state song will be released during the celebrations.

The CM said the government had approved the song which depicts the struggle for Telangana after it was accepted by all stakeholders so that future generations will remember the sacrifices of Telangana martyrs.

Noted Telangana poet and writer Ande Sri declared that the song written 20 years ago has been accepted without any changes. Oscar Award winner MM Keeravani

composed music for the state song. The state song has two versions. The duration of the first version of the song will be 2.30 minutes and the second version, that is, the full song is 13.30 minutes.

The CM announced that a short version of the song with a duration of 2.30 minutes and three stanzas of the full song will be used during government programmes. The two songs will be considered as state Songs.

The group headed by Keeravani sang the song and entertained participants at the meeting.

The CM said that his government has launched many initiatives to rebuild Telangana. The acronym of the state has been changed from TS to TG. Along with vehicle registration numbers, all government institutions are already using TG in place of TS, he said.

2

Design not yet finalised: CM

Revanth clarifies on State Emblem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Although several meetings are taking place in connection with changing the Telangana State Emblem, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Thursday said that no design has been finalised.

The Chief Minister said that they received nearly 500 samples from artists across the state and discussions are still going on regarding these samples.

Similarly, no final decision has been made regarding the statue of Telangana Thalli and artists are working on various models.

He said that any decision on the new emblem and statue of Telangana Thalli would be discussed and decided in the Assembly, ensuring that it is acceptable to all and enhances the image prestige of Telangana and inspires future generations.

Continued on Page 2



KTR must end his TG sentiment dramas: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee Senior Vice President G. Niranjan said that for the last 76 years, the Congress had stood by the people of Telangana and has firmly defended it cause and the sentiments of its people.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Niranjan said that people will not believe if the BRS sheds crocodile tears as if TG is their private property.

He said the people ousted BRS as it had hurt the sentiments of the Telangana people by changing its name from TRS to BRS. He said the Telangana activists inside the Congress would not tolerate any attempt to damage the cause of Telangana.



BRS ON TG EMBLEM

'Will oppose removal of Charminar & Kakatiya Kala Thoranam'



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi Working President KTR condemned the Congress's attempts to remove the Charminar and the Kakatiya Kala Thoranam from the

It amounts to ignoring people's emotions: KTR

Telangana state emblem.

KTR and other senior BRS leaders visited Charminar on Thursday and addressed the media demanding that the Congress government should not remove Charminar from the official emblem. He described the attempt as a foolish act which ignores the emotions of the people of Telangana.

He also criticised these attempts as a diversion tactic to deflect public attention away from the agricultural and administrative crises and

the Congress government's corruption. KTR labelled Revanth Reddy's attempts to erase KCR and his initiatives from Telangana's history as foolish, emphasising that no one can erase the history of Telangana. He accused the Congress government of acting out of political vengeance, ignoring the positive developments of the last 10 years. KTR questioned the sudden urgency to remove these symbols leaving aside electoral promises that should be the government's priority.

Continued on Page 2



Share of Rs 500 notes jumps to 86.5% as Rs 2k notes withdrawn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The share of Rs 500 denomination currency notes in overall currency has jumped to 86.5 per cent at the end of March 2024, as against 77.1 per cent in the year-ago period, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Thursday.

The central bank annual report attributed the surge primarily to the withdrawal of the Rs 2,000 denomination notes announced in May 2023. Share of this denomination has reduced to 0.2 per cent from 10.8 per cent in the year-ago period. Volume-wise, the Rs 500 denomination was the highest at 5.16 lakh notes while Rs 10 denomination came a distant second at 2.49 lakh as of March 31, 2024, as per data shared in an annual report.

The value and volume of bank notes in circulation increased 3.9 per cent and 7.8 per cent, respectively, in FY24 as compared with an increase of 7.8 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively, during the previous fiscal year, it said.

2

21 killed, 47 injured as bus falls into gorge in Jammu



'File PD cases against those hoarding seeds'



P2

Min for strong action against sellers of spurious seeds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture and Marketing Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao directed collectors and the police to take strong action against spurious seed sellers.

The Minister held a review meeting at the Secretariat on Thursday on cotton, availability of Pachirotta, and seed distribution with officials. He directed officials to ensure that there are no loopholes in the distribution of seeds.

Tummala made it clear that collectors should be held responsible if there are any loopholes in supplying seeds as the government is provid-



'Deliver cotton seed packets by June 5'

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao directed seed companies to deliver cotton seed packets to all districts by June 5 as per plan. Similarly, in some districts, especially in Adilabad district, it has come to the government's notice that farmers are demanding the same type

ing adequate fertilizers and seeds. He said that collectors should take the responsibility of providing seeds and fertilizers to farmers.

2

of seeds belonging to one particular company. Apart from that, according to university research, the yield of all hybrid seeds is the same. He said that companies should inform all farmers about this. Tummala conducted a review meeting on Friday with seed companies.

Continued on Page 2

Monsoon sets in early over Kerala, northeast

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Southwest monsoon made an early onset over Kerala and northeastern region on Thursday, setting the stage for the four-month rainy season crucial for India's agriculture-based economy.

Weather scientists said cyclone Remal, which ripped through West Bengal and Bangladesh on Sunday, had pulled the monsoonal flow to the Bay of Bengal, which could be one of the reasons for early onset over the northeast.

On May 15, the weather office had announced the onset of monsoon over Kerala by May 31.

Continued on Page 2

Campaigning for final phase of Lok Sabha polls ends

PNS ■ VARANASI

The high-pitched campaigning for the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections in 57 seats in seven states and the Union territory of Chandigarh on June 1 ended Thursday evening.

Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term from Varanasi.

Voting is already over in 486 seats in 28 states and Union territories. The turnout in the first six phases was 66.14 per cent, 66.71, 65.68, 69.16, 62.2 and 63.36 per cent respectively. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4.

The campaigning saw BJP leaders



led by Modi accusing the Congress and the INDIA alliance of being corrupt, anti-Hindu and engaging in loot, anti-employment and dynastic politics.

The Opposition parties have been claiming that the BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will change and scrap the Constitution if they win the

elections. At a rally in Odisha, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also claimed that BJP leaders were trying to project Modi as the "eleventh avatar" of Lord Vishnu but the people of the country will not accept.

2

Modi begins 45 hour-long 'dhyar'



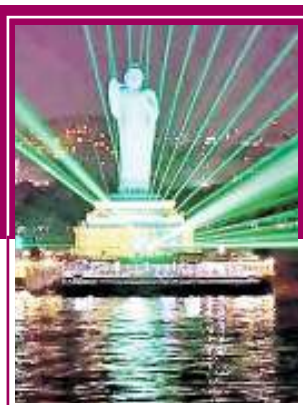
Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his 45-hour-long meditation at the famed Vivekananda Rock Memorial here on Thursday evening, following completion of his two-months long high-pitch poll campaign across the country. After arriving from nearby Thiruvananthapuram by a helicopter, Modi worshipped at the Bhagavathi

Amman temple and reached the rock memorial by a ferry service and started meditation that is scheduled to go on till June 1. Glad in a dhoti and a white shawl, Modi prayed at the temple and circumambulated the 'garbhagriha'. Priests performed a special 'arthi' and he was given temple 'prasad' that included a shawl and a framed photograph of the presiding deity of the temple.

2

TG gearing up for decennial celebrations

- Sonia Gandhi, Revanth to address gathering
- Cultural extravaganza at Tank Bund on June 2 evening
- Big fireworks display on Hussain Sagar



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the decennial State Formation Day celebrations will be held on a grand scale for a whole day on June 2.

The CM will pay floral tributes to Telangana martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Telangana state at the Martyrs Memorial at Gun Park at 9.30 am on June 2.

The Chief Minister will unfurl the national flag at the Parade Grounds at 10 am and receive a guard of honour from the police. The CM will also unveil the state song on the occasion.

Later, Sonia Gandhi and the CM will address the gathering. This will be followed by the presentation of awards to outstanding police officers and police contingents. The programme at the Parade Grounds will end after a photo session of the CM and award winners.

2

Revanth invites KCR for TG fete

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy sent a letter of invitation to former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy in connection with the Telangana Formation Day celebrations on June 2. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy penned a personal invitation letter and directed Protocol Advisor Harkar Venugopal and Director Aravind Singh to deliver the special invitation to KCR requesting him to attend the official government organised Telangana Formation Day celebrations being held at 10 am on June 2 at the Secunderabad Parade Grounds.

'File PD cases against those hoarding seeds'

Adequate seeds available this year, says CS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari directed Collectors to file cases under the PD Act against traders who hoard seeds to create an artificial shortage.

The CS held a teleconference on Thursday with Collectors regarding the supply of seeds for the monsoon crop in the state and organising State Formation Day celebrations on June 2. Agriculture Secretary Raghunandan Rao also participated in this teleconference.

The CS said that all varieties of seeds and fertilizers are available in higher quantities than last year. She appealed to farmers not to worry about the distribution of seeds and that there are enough hybrid seeds



of cotton, soya and maize. Apart from these, Jeeluga seeds are also available, the CS said.

Collectors were ordered to set up special teams with officials from the Agriculture, Revenue and Police Departments to check the godowns and shops of seed traders. Special teams should be appointed for monitoring at godowns and seed sales centres, she said.

As seed sales are likely to continue till June-end,

Collectors should review seed distribution every day and conduct random inspections to check stock registers and the distribution system.

She asked Collectors to meet farmers and instil confidence in them about the availability of seeds. They were told to take measures to prevent farmers from other states from entering the state and buying seeds here. The CS said that information about the availability of seeds should be communicated to farmers from time to time.

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari clarified that Collectors should unfurl the national flag on Telangana State Formation Day on June 2 after paying tributes to TG martyrs.

Will submit report on phone-tapping, other scams to Shah: NVSS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP will soon meet Home Minister Amit Shah and submit a detailed report on the phone tapping case during BRS rule as serious facts are coming to light every day, said Telangana BJP Vice-President NVSS Prabhakar Rao here on Thursday.

Quoting reports of the phone tapping case, the BJP leader said that during BRS rule the phones of judges, politicians, realtors and Tollywood actors were tapped for political gains.

KCR also tapped the phone of his senior minister T. Harish Rao and also used official investigation agencies and the police to control dissent with-

in the BRS, Prabhakar said.

Reiterating the BJP demand for a CBI inquiry into the Kaleshwaram scam and phone tapping case, Prabhakar demanded a CBI probe into the Civil Supplies

Department scam of the Revanth Reddy government too.

He demanded a CBI or an inquiry by a sitting judge into the scams that occurred during BRS rule and after the Congress took charge in the state.

Referring to the Civil Supplies Department scam of the Revanth Reddy government, he said that every week a new scam is coming to light after the Congress came to power.



INDIA bloc using Army as 'weapon of politics': Modi

PNS ■ HOSHIARPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sharpened his attack against the INDIA bloc, accusing it of making the Army a "weapon of politics" and said there cannot be a "bigger sin than this".

Modi further hit out at the opposition, alleging that the Congress and "INDI alliance" never left any effort in weakening the Indian armed forces.

Modi was addressing his last poll rally of the Lok Sabha polls here.

His attack came in the backdrop of the Congress and INDIA bloc members targeting the Narendra Modi government over the Agnipath scheme.

Notably, the Congress has said it will scrap the Agnipath scheme if the INDIA bloc comes to power.

Modi said it was his target to make the Indian defence forces



as the most modern and capable force, self-reliant in the real sense.

But this initiative blocks the ways for the "INDI alliance" to make black money. Therefore, they are taking out anger against "Modi", he said.

"It is clear that we need to keep all things in mind to see with whom we fight... and we have to prepare our army accordingly," he said.

The prime minister said armies are not made only for

the Republic Day parade. The Army is made for a fight, to defeat an enemy and to save our motherland, he said.

But the opposition made the Army as a weapon of politics, Modi alleged, and added that there cannot be a bigger sin than this.

"I am telling the INDI alliance that I am silent. Do not make any mistake in understanding Modi. The day Modi opens his mouth, I will bring out all your sins out -- 'saat peedhi ke paap' (sins of seven generations)," he said.

Modi said Punjab is a land of brave and valour but the INDIA bloc insulted the brave at each step.

"They are those people who had insulted our late Army chief Bipin Rawat, calling him 'gali ka gunda'. It was not only the insult of General Rawat but also of each soldier of the country," said the prime minister.

'BRS trying to defame govt on seeds issue'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Lashing out at the BRS for criticising the Congress government regarding seed distribution problems, Kisan Congress Vice-President M. Kodanda Reddy said that the BRS is trying to show the chappal line before seed distribution centres in BRS TV channels to defame the government.

The BRS is making farmers feel tense with their fabricated acts, Kodanda said.

Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday



along with Telangana Kisan Congress President Anvesh Reddy, Kodanda said the Congress government had prepared an action plan a month before the Kharif season for

cotton seeds and pachirotta. The government held discussions with officials and has stored 1.20 lakh kilos of cotton seeds for 55 lakh acres and distribution to many districts have also been completed.

The government also took steps to make available the seeds of all companies. However, BRS leaders are speaking cheaply against the government. There is a danger that farmers may believe that seed shortage is real, he said.

The Agriculture Department Commissioner sent letters to

all collectors to ensure that there is no problem regarding seeds. However, the BRS is playing politics on every issue including the Telangana emblem and state anthem. BRS leaders, who made money in the last nine years, are now creating problems artificially, he said.

Anvesh said that former Ministers T. Harish Rao and KT Rama Rao are saying that there is a seed shortage in the state. But the fact is that there is no seed shortage in the state, he added.

Will waive farm loans, scrap Agniveer scheme: Rahul

PNS ■ BALASORE

Alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned "jawns" into "mazdoor" through the Agniveer scheme, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the BJP insulted the people of Odisha after one of its leaders recently claimed that Lord Jagannath is a devotee of Modi.

Addressing an election rally at Simulia in Bhadrak Lok Sabha seat, he vowed to save the Constitution and democracy and announced that the INDIA bloc government would legalise MSP on foodgrains, waive farm loans and scrap the Agniveer scheme.

"We are going to scrap the Agniveer scheme. The PM has turned jawans into 'mazdoors'. We will turn jawans to soldiers again," Gandhi told reporters on the sidelines of the public



meeting here. He said all jawans will get pension, canteen facilities and the dignity of 'shaheed' in case of their death.

Alleging that the BJD works in partnership with the BJP, Gandhi said he has been fighting against the saffron party for which the Centre has filed 24 defamation and criminal cases against him.

"The ED questioned me for 50 hours, BJP snatched my Lok Sabha membership and even took away my official residence. If Naveen Babu is actually fighting against the BJP, why there is no such case," Gandhi asked.

He also alleged that both the BJP and the BJD work for "arabpatis" and not for the poor people.

Mad scramble for water as Delhi faces severe shortage



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The water crisis has become too real to ignore in Delhi as people across areas were seen scrambling with empty buckets to water tankers, some even jumping the queue to get to the top of them to fill their vessel.

While the Delhi government has announced a slew of emergency measures, including a ban on usage of potable water for car washing and its use at construction sites, people in Sanjay Camp in Chanakyaपुर were seen lining up on footpaths to fill water from tankers.

Govt whip slams BRS for criticising state anthem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 'Jayajayaha Telangana' song made the Telangana movement fly high, Government Whip Adi Srinivas said. However, the BRS government did not bother to make the song the state anthem, he said. But the Congress government decided to make the song the state anthem, he said and added that it is shocking on the part of BRS leaders to say that music director Oscar winner MM Keeravani is an Andhraite.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Adi Srinivas asked BRS leaders whether they remember KCR's statement, "If a thorn sticks on the legs of AP people he will pull it out with his teeth."

"Where were they when the BRS government made Manchu Laxmi, Rakulpreeth Singh and Samantha who do not belong to Telangana brand ambassadors? Don't they know that KCR appointed AP architect Anand Sai to supervise the reconstruction of Yadadri Temple?" he said. Adi Srinivas said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is honouring the families of Telangana martyrs.

Retain Charminar in TG Emblem: AIMIM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Charminar must be retained in the Telangana State Emblem, the AIMIM said in a statement.

"It is a symbol of Telangana's long history of composite culture. We hope that it will be retained. However, we should also ensure that Charminar's surrounding areas progress," the AIMIM said in a statement released on Thursday.

"Development works connected to Hyderabad's heritage have slowed down. They should be completed at the earliest. These projects are the Charminar pedestrian project, road widening works, night bazaar, parking lot at the Charminar bus stand, renovation of Sardar Mahal and Chowk Market and road widening near the Gulzar Hauz," the AIMIM statement said.



Citizens not interested in changing TG logo

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Citizens of Telangana are not interested in changing Telangana logo. They are opposed to this change and many term it as unnecessary.

A citizen M Nalini said, "This government is reminding me of medieval era. Previously when kings used to succeed, they used to wipe off previous king's hallmarks like coins, currency and carvings. I feel Revanth Reddy is also doing the same. What is the need to change the logo now?" A Ratnakar Sadasylu said, "The purported new logo of Telangana completely does away with the Kakatiya Kala Thoranam and Charminar, symbols of the state's rich history and heritage. This when most of State logos have their heritage proudly displayed. Tamil Nadu State emblem proudly

displays the Srivilliputhur Andal temple gopuram. Karnataka State emblem uses the coat of arms of erstwhile princely State of Mysuru. Kerala State emblem shows the State emblem of Travancore kingdom (conch). Why has the Telangana govt removed the Kakatiya Thoranam and Charminar?"

A Syed Abdhau Khashaf said, "The removal of Charminar from Govt of Telangana logo is disappointing. Charminar is our pride and symbolises the unity and dignity of our State. We strongly believe that you don't have any issues with the Hyderabad sentiment." A K Srujan said, "I'm not for/against any political party. But TS to TG change in transport, changing State logo...What's happening? It appears very childish! State has other important concerns which need attention."

TG gearing up for decennial...

Continued from page 1

On the same day evening, State Formation Day celebrations will start on a colourful note at the Tank Bund. Handloom and special product stalls and food courts with Telangana cuisines will also be open at the venue.

The Chief Minister will arrive at Tank Bund at 6.30 pm and visit the stalls. He will inaugurate a cultural carnival which will showcase Telangana culture and art forms. Around 700 artists will take part in the cultural events. A special programme of dance lasting 70 minutes is also being organised at the Tank Bund.

After the stage show, a flag walk carrying national flags will be held on Tank Bund. About 5,000 people will take part in this walk. During this flag walk, 'Jaya Jayaha Telangana' full version (13.30 minutes) will be played.

Campaigning for final... Share of Rs 500 notes...

Continued from page 1

On Thursday, former prime minister Manmohan Singh accused Modi of lowering the dignity of public discourse and the gravity of the office of the prime minister by giving "hateful speeches" during the poll campaign. In an appeal to voters of Punjab, Singh asserted that only the Congress can

ensure growth-oriented progressive future where democracy and Constitution will be safeguarded. He also hit out at the BJP government for imposing the "ill-conceived" Agnipath scheme on the armed forces. On Thursday evening, Modi headed to Kanyakumari where he will meditate till June 1 at the site associated with Swami Vivekananda.

Continued from page 1

The growth in the number of bank notes in circulation in value terms is among the lowest in recent years.

On the Rs 2,000 note withdrawal, it said about 89 per cent of notes under the denomination introduced following demonetization in 2016 had been around for

over four years and were due for replacement, and were not commonly used for transactions, it said.

The withdrawal also seems to have had an impact on the counterfeit notes detection, the annual report said, adding that the number of fake Rs 2,000 pieces detected jumped to over 26,000 from 9,806 in the year-ago period.

'Deliver cotton seed...

Continued from page 1

He said the government will examine seed distribution and purchase details district-wise and company-wise every single day.

He said that all districts have sufficient cotton and paddy seeds and that farmers must buy seeds only from government-approved shops. He also asked farmers to carefully preserve all purchase bills of seeds.

Min for strong...

Continued from page 1

He directed collectors to conduct spot inspections along with officials and to open counters wherever there are more farmers to ensure that there is no problem.

Farmers staged a rasta roko at the Kisan Chowk in Adilabad town on Thursday demanding that the government should supply adequate cotton seed. They said that seed sellers are giving only two packets to every farmer which is not adequate.

Farmers are demanding that the government should respond on seed availability as the situation is the same in other districts across the state.

'Will oppose...

Continued from page 1

"Hyderabad is the spirit of Telangana, and Charminar is the symbol of Hyderabad. Globally, Hyderabad is recognised by the symbol of Charminar," KTR said.

He strongly condemned the decision to remove Charminar and the Kakatiya Kala Thoranam from the TG Emblem. Despite opposition from the people of Telangana and activists, the government is acting with political malaise, he said.

KTR warned that if the Congress government does not revoke its decision, the BRS will launch protests across

'Cong, BRS trying to deflect...

Continued from page 1

Both parties are trying to divert public attention from paddy procurement, fertilizer distribution, seed distribution, phone tapping and other issues by engaging in criticism against each other regarding the state's emblem.

"KTR has been saying that Hyderabad means Charminar. That applies only to KTR. Hyderabad means Bhagyalaxmi Temple to us and it is well known. Who prevented KTR from having darshan at the Bhagyalaxmi Temple?" he said.

Design not... 2 versions of...

Continued from page 1

The government will take a final decision on the Telangana State Emblem and the Telangana Talli statue only after discussions in the Assembly without giving any scope for misconceptions and false propaganda.

The government is preparing an action plan to uphold Telangana's image and inspire future generations through the finalisation of the TG Emblem and the statue of the TG Talli.

Continued from page 1

The Chief Minister said the state song was approved as per a decision taken at the Cabinet meeting. State Legislative Council Chairman Gutta Sukhender Reddy, Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad, Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Damodara Rajanarsimha, Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, Tummala Nageswara Rao, Jupalli Krishna Rao, Sitakka, Konda Surekha

and former Minister Jana Reddy attended the meeting convened by the CM at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Professor Kodandaram, Andesri, Keeravani, CPI MLA K. Sambasivarao, CPM State Secretary T. Veerabhadram, MPs, MLAs and former MPs who were present in Parliament when the Telangana Bill was passed and representatives of the parties who played an active role in the Telangana movement also attended the meeting.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Ashtami: May 30 11:44 AM to May 31 09:38 AM
Navami: May 31 09:38 AM to Jun 01 07:24 AM
Nakshatram: Shatabhisha: May 30 07:31 AM to May 31 06:14 AM
Purva Bhadrpad: May 31 06:14 AM to Jun 01 04:48 AM
Uttara Bhadrpad: Jun 01 04:48 AM to Jun 02 03:16 AM
Rahukalam: 10:36 AM to 12:13 PM
Yamagandam: 3:28 PM to 5:05 PM
Varjyam: 01:47 PM to 03:17 PM
Gulika: 7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Amritakalam: 09:16 PM to 10:47 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 AM to 12:39 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 39°
Humidity: 38%
Sunrise: 5:41 AM
Sunset: 6:47 PM
Updated: May 30, 2024 5:00 PM

AUDIT PROGRAMME TO BE IMPLEMENTED

Food safety, hygiene ratings for city restaurants mooted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After recent violations of food safety norms by food and beverage establishments in the city which were highlighted by the Food Safety Department's raids, the National Restaurant Association of India's (NRAI) Hyderabad Chapter, the restaurant body in the country, has taken immediate steps to address the issue.

The task force met with State Food Safety Commissioner RV Karnan on Thursday to discuss collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the GHMC to improve food and hygiene standards. Karnan suggested adding hygiene ratings to restaurants and displaying them for customer awareness. Both parties agreed to host a larger event in the coming months to further promote required protocols.

The special NRAI Food Safety Task Force was formed chaired by NRAI Hyderabad



Chapter Head Sampath Tummala comprising 15 members on May 27.

According to the NRAI Food Safety Task Force, it aims to organise multiple FSSAI awareness workshops and training classes for restaurant members across the city, where the first training was held on Thursday.

The taskforce also plans a big Food Safety Week in association with FSSAI, the government and the GHMC in the next few weeks to imple-

ment a hygiene audit programme with third-party auditors to ensure quality and safe food.

The task force aims to share a compliance checklist from the Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011, and the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, with all working members and to develop a hygiene rating system for restaurants. It also plans multiple medical camps to provide food handler certificates to restaurant staff.

Sampath Tummala said, "As a responsible body, we have constituted this special task force to enhance awareness and knowledge about all required food safety protocols among all F&B operators. To restore customer confidence, we have decided to organise multiple training sessions. These day-long, zone-wise workshops will focus on following FSSAI standards, hygiene checks and personal grooming of food-handling staff."

Multiple violations in Old City restaurants

The Telangana Food Safety Commission conducted inspections at various establishments in the Old city and found multiple violations. The Task Force conducted inspections at the Hotel Shadab and seized improperly labelled Eagle brand cutting coconuts, dried rose petals, cardamom and jeera. They also found semi-prepared and raw food stored without proper labelling. The FSSAI licence was not displayed on the premises of the restaurant. The officials found the kitchen exposed to the environment with open dustbins and flaking plaster. The medical fitness certificates for food handlers were also not found. The Task Force later conducted inspections at the Arabian Restaurant where they found that the FSSAI licence not

displayed in the premises. The officials also found out the food handlers without haircaps, gloves and aprons, along with the kitchen being exposed to the environment, with open dustbins, stagnant water and unhygienic conditions. There were no medical fitness certificates or pest control records. The Task Force conducted inspections at Nimrah Cafe and Bakery and found that FSSAI licence was not displayed prominently. The officials also found the food handlers without proper attire along with baking area open to the environment. Unlabelled food in refrigerators had no medical fitness certificates and there were no pest control records. The Task Force also found baking equipment and surroundings to be untidy.

New GO demanded for regulating Inter fees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kareem Ansari, a Hyderabad activist, demanded the Telangana government to implement a new GO for regulating Intermediate fees, especially by corporate colleges. He also filed a Right to Information (RTI) on exorbitant collection of fees by corporate colleges.

As per the Right to Information (RTI), the proceeding of the fee structure issued by the Commissioner of Intermediate Education during the academic year 2012-13/2013-14 is as per the GO released in 2013. The recognition fee of Rs 200 should be paid to the Intermediate Board. The board will take appropriate action on specific complaints. Recognition fee and exam fee will be paid to TSBBIE and tuition fee is paid to the col-

lege. The fee structure will be the same to all private junior colleges.

Speaking to the Pioneer Correspondent, the activist said, "The GO is dated back to 2013 issued under the united Andhra Pradesh, but it has never been amended nor a new GO has been implemented since the formation of Telangana. Due to lack of seriousness on the part of the government, especially inaction from the Intermediate Board, many corporate colleges have been collecting exorbitant fees from students. I request the government to implement a new GO and take serious action on corporate colleges for collecting such hefty fees from students. The government must create a realistic fee structure as per the subjects or categories," he added.

Junior colleges begin from June 1

As per the academic calendar announced by the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBBIE), all junior colleges will begin the academic year 2024-25 on June 1. According to TSBBIE, the classes for both first and second-year Intermediate students will commence on Saturday with a total of 227 working days and 75 holidays. As per the calendar, the first phase of admissions will conclude on June 30. As for affiliation, so far the TSBBIE granted affiliation to 2,353 junior colleges, including 421 government junior colleges and 601 private unaided junior colleges in the State. Parents and students have been advised to take admissions in the colleges that have received affiliation from the Board. A list of affiliated colleges has been made available on the website <https://tsbie.cgg.gov.in/>.



NIFT HYD'S GRADUATION SHOW 2024

Students demonstrate mastery of design, craftsmanship

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Hyderabad, showcased the exceptional talent of its graduating students at the Graduation Show 2024 on Thursday at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), Novotel. The event was a celebration of creativity, innovation and accomplishment in the field of fashion.

The presence of Kolaventy Sunita added prestige and honour to the occasion, symbolising the recognition and support extended by the governmental authorities towards the institute and its students. Gareth Wynn Owen's attendance as the guest of honour underscored the international significance of NIFT Hyderabad's achievements and its global outlook.

The event commenced with insightful industry project discussion between students



from Fashion Technology and Fashion Management Studies. Following the discussions, the Graduation Showcase kicked off at 7:00 pm, featuring captivating collections from students representing various departments, including Fashion and Lifestyle Accessories, Fashion Design, Fashion Communication, Knitwear Design and Textile Design. A total of 218 students participated in the showcase, demonstrating their mastery of design, craftsmanship and

creative expression. Prof. Dr Malini Divakala, Director of NIFT, Hyderabad, said, "The Graduation Show 2024 is a testament to the creativity, dedication and hard work of our students. We are confident that they will continue to shine and make significant contribution to the fashion industry."

The Graduation Show 2024 was attended by faculty, staff, members of the media, industry professionals and fashion enthusiasts.

Grievances of UoH students to be redressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As per the University Grants Commission (redressal of students' grievances) Regulations, 2023, Prof D Ravinder, former Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University, was appointed as Ombudsman for redressal of grievances of students of the University of Hyderabad on Thursday with immediate effect for a period of three years or till attainment of 70 years.



Members of 721 women's bodies sewing students' uniforms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary of State Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department, along with District Collector S Venkat Rao and Additional Collector CH Priyanka launched the Women's Swashakti Sewing Centre in Atmakur mandal on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Sandeep said that the government is committed for the economic empowerment of women's groups and will be providing better training to them. He said that women's associations have been entrusted with the responsibility of sewing 70 lakh pairs of clothes in the State with the aim of providing uniforms to every student studying in government schools.

He said that the Mahila Swashakti Sewing Kendras in Suryapet district are preparing quality clothes in 45 days. Each woman is provided seven pairs per day in the sewing



centres under the auspices of the associations. Women's committees have already been taken up in Amma Adarsha Schools and soon the women's policy will be formulated.

He said that under the direction of the District Collector, sewing machines will be provided in the mandal and henceforth women's groups will be given a helping hand in every work. In cities like Hyderabad, women are given better training and ready-made clothes are provided.

Moreover, the District Collector said that according to the government's target, uni-

forms for 43,245 students in 783 government schools in 23 mandals in the district have been prepared by the members of 721 women's associations in 62 areas. Out of 43,245 students, 31,940 students' uniforms have been prepared and the rest of the clothes will be provided within the stipulated time. Every year, better training will be provided to the women's groups to increase their sources of income and quality clothing will be provided without any compromise.

DRDO Madhusudan Raju, CEO Appa Rao, DEO Ashok, APD Suresh Kumar and staff participated.

Plastic ban in Tiger Reserve from July 1

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In exercise of powers conferred U/S 28 & 33 (C) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, Elusing Meru, PrI. Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden is hereby ordered that, there shall be total ban of plastic (single use plastic, multi layer plastic and PET bottles of 1 liter and below) in Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR) with effect from July 1, 2024.

Alternate drinking water facilities shall be provided for the visitors at convenient locations inside the ATR. Visitors carrying food items in plastic wraps shall be advised to dispose of the wraps in garbage bins and not litter the Tiger Reserve area.



Businessman killed in road mishap, toddler son injured

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a heart-wrenching incident, a two-year-old toddler was crying next to his deceased father who was killed in a road accident at Inamguda on Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway on Thursday.

The deceased, Kanaka Prasad, (37), a native of Andhra Pradesh and a resident of Abdullapurmet, was going on his bike along with his two-year-old son to buy a packet of milk when a DCM van rammed into them. The local people informed the police. The child who sustained injuries in the accident was helped by locals.

Unable to comprehend what

was happening, the child was crying inconsolably while the body of his father lay on the road. Prasad's wife rushed to the scene on learning about the mishap.

Abdullapurmet police reached the spot of the incident. According to Inspector B Anji Reddy, Prasad, a native of Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh, had migrated to Hyderabad with his wife, mother and two children for livelihood. During the road accident, he died on spot after sustaining severe injuries while his son escaped with minor injuries. The boy was later shifted to hospital.

Abdullapurmet police shifted the body for autopsy and took up further investigation.

Woman thrashed for dowry; hubby, in-laws booked

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Yellareddyguda on May 29, three persons were booked for beating a woman for additional dowry.

The victim (28) was married to Akhil Hussain (42), a car driver and a resident of Yellareddyguda. At the time of marriage, the parents of the woman gave four tolas of gold, Rs 2 lakh cash and other gifts to the couple.

"The woman in her complaint said her husband and in-laws were torturing her for additional money. A case was registered and investigation is on," said the Madhuranagar SHO.

LOCAL HEAD OFFICE UNIT

SBI staff union celebrates golden jubilee fete in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Bank of India Staff Union, local head office unit, celebrated the golden jubilee at LHO building, Koti, Hyderabad on Thursday.

The combined unit of LHO, main branch and other offices present in the compound was inaugurated in 1969. Eminent trade union leader of the banking industry late P Lakshmi Narasiah was the first local secretary from 1969 to 1974. In 1974, a separate local unit of SBISUHC for LHO was formed and RK Mohiuddin led the team as local secretary.

In connection with the golden jubilee celebrations, former local secretaries of the LHO unit were felicitated. Ch



Sridhar presided over the function and R Sriram, general secretary, SBISUHC and senior vice-president, AISB-ISF, addressed the gathering. R Sriram explained about the role of trade union in banks which strives hard not only for the welfare of the members but also for the

growth and prosperity of the bank.

A large number of members of the union attended the function and made it a grand success. C Shiva Prasad, local secretary and the LHO unit committee conducted the function in a befitting manner.

Hyd CP holds review ahead of Lok Sabha poll results

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy on Thursday reviewed the preparations ahead of Lok Sabha election results on June 4.

District Election Officer Ronald Rose explained the various arrangements to be made at the counting centres. Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers were instructed on who could

be allowed inside the counting halls, setting up of media centres and facilities to be provided to the counting agents.

The Commissioner stressed on the security arrangements to be made at the counting centres. Instructions were given to DCPs and sub-nodal ACPs regarding three-tire security. He further specified that guidelines by the Election Commission of India will be strictly implemented at the counting centres.



'45% of businesses with strong legacies perform well'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian family businesses score 78 per cent on legacy importance, matching the global average, as per the report 'Unlocking legacy: The path to superior growth in family businesses' released by The Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise at the Indian School of Business (ISB), a long-standing member affiliate of the STEP Project Global Consortium during the recent STEP Global conference in Maffei Coast, Italy. The report is a collaboration between KPMG Private Enterprise and the STEP Project Global Consortium and is based on the

insights from 2,683 family business leaders across 80 countries and territories, including India.

About 45 per cent of family businesses with strong legacies report high business performance compared to their competitors while 53 per cent of surveyed family businesses with strong legacies demonstrate high sustainability performance across community, environmental, employee, and supplier aspects.

According to the report, Indian family businesses score 78 per cent on legacy importance, matching the global average. This highlights the deep-rooted value of Indian family business-



es in maintaining their cultural identity. When it comes to trans-generational entrepreneurship, Indian businesses score 76 per cent, slightly below the European and Asia-Pacific averages of 77 per cent, indicating a need for increased focus on fostering

entrepreneurial initiatives across generations. On environmental sustainability, Indian family businesses align with the global average of 78 per cent, suggesting a solid foundation. Businesses with strong legacies demonstrate superior per-

formance and a firm dedication to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles. Additionally, many families in business are successfully addressing the 'legacy paradox', managing the delicate balance between serving as a source of identity and inspiration while avoiding becoming too entrenched in tradition, which can hinder adaptability and progress. Dr Nupur Pavan Bang, Academic Director, Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise at ISB, said, "This report underscores the importance of legacy as a strategic asset that provides a competitive advantage for family businesses."

IIT Hyd partners with IDEMIA group for post quantum cryptography

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad has collaborated with IDEMIA Secure Transactions (IST), a division of IDEMIA Group, on Post Quantum Cryptography on Thursday. The objective of the partnership will be to strengthen privacy frameworks against quantum threats, with a specific focus on designing post-quantum schemes based on lattices and to create post-quantum cryptography solutions that ultimately ensure the long-term

security of products. As part of this partnership project, IST will sponsor PhD scholars over a four-year period.

IST's active involvement in advancing post-quantum cryptography efforts in India includes collaborations with key industry and government bodies. The company actively contributes to standardisation bodies and organisations, including Telecommunications Standards Development Society (TSDSI), Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC) and Centre for Development of

Teleatics (CDOT), showcasing its commitment to advancing cryptographic research in the region.

IDEMIA Secure Transactions' unparalleled expertise and commitment to innovation align seamlessly with our vision. Together, we look forward to pioneering ground-breaking solutions that will shape the future of cryptographic systems and safeguard transactions worldwide," said Dr Mudrika Khandalwal, Dean, Alumni and Corporate Relations, IIT Hyderabad.

AMID TALK OF ARTIFICIAL SCARCITY

Restive farmers take to streets for cotton seeds

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Tension built up as cotton farmers took to the streets to protest against the seed traders for not providing adequate quantities of cotton seed. The farmers resorted to blockade disrupting traffic. They staged a road blockade in the town. They alleged that the traders have been diverting seeds and thus creating an artificial scarcity of cotton seeds. Cotton farmers have been former long queues in front of the seed shop, braving the scorching sun, to buy seeds. They alleged that they had caught a vehicle red-handed while diverting the seeds supposed to be sold in the district. They said that they had handed over the vehicle to the police. However, the police have not so far confirmed it. They staged a sit-in on a road



Farmers agitating for cotton seeds in Adilabad on Thursday

near the chowk, disrupting traffic. The police, who arrived on the scene, persuaded the farmers to lift the blockade. Meanwhile, some traders displayed boards of no stock of seeds in Adilabad town, shocking farmers. The outlets, which were swarmed by farmers till Wednesday, went out of stock,

surprising many. The district Agriculture officials said they have been trying to secure more quantities of seeds. They said that they held talks with seed manufacturers. Meanwhile, Former Minister Joga Ramanna on Thursday demanded that the government release a white paper on

seeds available in the district. Addressing a media conference along with Anil Jadhav, MLA and Johnson Naik, BRS leader at Telangana Bhavan, he said the farmers were made to stand up in serpentine queues waiting for their turn just to buy one or two packets of cotton seeds.

Applications invited for posts of steno, typist

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The Principal District Judge of Nalgonda district has invited applications from eligible retired judicial employees and other candidates for appointment to the posts of senior assistant, stenographer grade-3, typist, driver and office subordinate on contract basis for two years for speedy disposal of cases in the Fast Track Sessions Court. Candidates can send their completed applications by 5 pm on June 7 to the Principal District and Sessions Judge, Nalgonda, in a sealed cover or by courier.

The Principal District Judge said that one post of senior assistant-1, one post of stenographer Grade-3, two posts of typists, one post of driver and three posts of office subordinate are vacant. The candidates are advised to send the applications through sealed covers only and direct applications will not be accepted.

Need to augment water supply through Mission Bhagiratha stressed

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Additional District Collector Ch Priyanka said that a plan should be prepared in advance for the supply of drinking water.

She held a meeting with Mission Bhagiratha officials, Public Health and Municipal officials at his chamber in the Collectorate on Thursday. The district administration sanctioned Rs 25.8 crore to augment water supply in Kodad town. Mission Bhagiratha officials and Municipal officials should ensure that there is no drinking water scarcity. The Additional Collector directed the Mission



Additional District Collector Ch Priyanka holding a review meeting with officials on Thursday

Bhagiratha officials to coordinate with the Public Health Officers and Municipal staff to supply drinking water in the urban area and submit a report. Zilla Parisahd CEO VV Appa Rao, Kodad Municipal

Commissioner Rama Devi, Mission Bhagiratha SC Venkateswarlu, D. Srinivas, Public Health Officer K. S. Ravikumar and others were present. Officers and staff were present at the function.

3 held for swindling investors to the tune of Rs 200 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Crime Station Police on Thursday arrested three persons for defrauding investors of Rs 200 crore.

The accused were identified as Meka Nethaji, his wife Nimmagadda Vanibala, general manager of Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank and their son Meka Sriharsha. The accused are directors of Sri Priyanka Enterprises and Graphic Systems Pvt Ltd and Sri Priyanka Graphtec Pvt Ltd.

Based on a complaint by C Bala Chandra Kumar, a resident of Balanagar and others, the accused were booked under Sections 406, 420 r/w 120-B IPC & Sec.5 of Telangana Protection of Depositors of Financial Establishment Act by the CCS police. They duped 532 people by convincing them to invest in their companies with a false promise of 24% monthly returns. During the investigation, it was found that in 1985, Meka Nethaji



initially established Sri Priyanka Finance and Chits to conduct daily finance and chit fund operations at Tilak Road, Abids.

He took deposits from relatives and acquaintances in order to run the businesses. Subsequently, he entered into the trading and distribution of printing materials. He then established Graphic Systems Pvt. Ltd. for trading in printing press material and Sri Priyanka Graphtec Pvt. Ltd. for producing steel castings at Jeedimetla Phase-II.

Nethaji's wife, Nimmagadda worked as the general manager of TSCAB. She directed her employees to invest in the business. She persuaded her colleagues to deposit their savings and retirement benefits into Sri Priyanka Enterprises with the promise of earning substantial profits. As their colleague, they trusted her, and approximately 140 of her colleagues deposited around Rs 200 crore of their hard-earned money and retirement benefits into Sri Priyanka Enterprises.

Elaborate steps for Pedda Hanuman Festival

PNS ■ KONDAGATTU

A three-day Pedda Hanuman Jayanti celebrations commenced at Kondagattu Hanuman temple here on Thursday. Elaborate arrangements have been made for the celebrations in view of thousands of devotees visiting the temple. Hanuman Jayanti Shobha Yatra would be taken out from Y junction here to the temple as part of the celebrations. As part of the tradition, the main priest of the Bhadrachalam temple presented silk clothes and talambralu' to the deity here. The temple has made arrangements for the devotees ending their Hanuman Deeksha.

Two held for moving 270 gms of MDMA worth Rs 20 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Based on tip off, the Excise Enforcement department on Thursday apprehended two traders for transporting 270 gms of MDMA worth Rs 20 lakh from Maharashtra to Hyderabad under Shamsabad Excise Division. The accused were identified as Tripti Prabhakar of Chandrapura in Maharashtra and Anubhav Saxena of Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. Tripti Prabhakar started drug trafficking with his friend Anubhava Saxena from Gwalior as his income

was not enough while working in a private job. From Chandrapur, he used to supply the drugs. Both shared the profits from drug trafficking.

The accused persons came to Hyderabad thinking that there is a lot of drug use in the surrounding areas of Hyderabad and informed their associates in Maharashtra about the details of the market over the phone and brought those guides to Hyderabad by courier and made money by handing them over to their customers.

T-Recruit sets new mark in startup acquisition

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The India's startup incubator, T-Hub announced the success of T-Recruit 2024 on Thursday. According to the T-Recruit 2024 report, this dynamic drive brought together startups and top tech talent, serving as a platform where job seekers could find the best opportunities and recruiters could access top talent, creating a startup ecosystem in Hyderabad and

all across the country. T-Recruit 2024 addressed the critical need for talent possession in India's rapidly growing startup landscape. Startups and corporates participated in the event, resulted in numerous successful matches and job placements which drove innovation and growth within the startup community. With 792 registered companies and 769 recruiters, including participants like Tao Digital,

USA, Monitra Healthcare Private Limited, Ariqt International and DataBeat Consulting Pvt Ltd, the event attracted a huge number of participants. Over 6,000 job-seekers contested for opportunities presented by leading startups across diverse sectors, showcasing the talent pool within the Indian tech landscape. T-Recruit 2024 facilitated over 180 successful matches between startups and candi-

dates, with 85 offers extended to promising talent, signaling a significant step forward in driving innovation and growth within the startup community. The drive's inclusivity was underscored by its diverse pool of recruiters and candidates, representing a wide array of sectors including AI/ML, DeepTech, HRTech, Defence, HealthTech, PharmaTech, Sustainability, SaaS and IoT.



Police with two persons arrested on charge of selling drugs at Rajendranagar in Rangareddy district on Thursday

Narcotics worth Rs 25 lakh seized, two arrested

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Despite ongoing efforts by law enforcement to curb the drug menace in Telangana, recent seizures indicate that the issue persists. In a significant development, Excise officials seized a substantial quantity of drugs at Rajendranagar underscoring the continued presence of narcotics in the region. The operation, conducted on Thursday, resulted in the confiscation of 270 grams of MDMA drugs at Sun City.

According to reports, a woman and a youth were arrested during the operation. The Excise officials said that the duo was caught while they were selling drugs to an event

manager. The accused individuals, hailing from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, were apprehended on the spot.

Authorities estimate the street value of the seized drugs to be approximately Rs 25 lakhs, highlighting the lucrative nature of the illicit drug trade.

Officials initiated legal proceedings under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, signaling a concerted effort to combat drug-related activities in the area. They issued a stern warning to those involved in drug trafficking or consumption, emphasising that stringent action will be taken against offenders.

WORLD NO - TOBACCO DAY

Doctors caution against vaping, smoking

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The World No Tobacco day is observed on May 31. Ahead of the occasion doctors have cautioned against both vaping and smoking. "Vaping has become a habit among youth and women alike. Proponents of vaping argue that it is a safer alternative to traditional flavourings and other chemicals.

Studies have shown that vaping can cause inflammation and irritation in the lungs, organ damage and addiction. Long-term effects are not fully understood, but there is evidence of potential harm from substances that are used for vaping such as diacetyl, heavy metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) delivered to the lung. Today, many people who are resenting to vaping, are defending their choice as to be the safest choice of warding off nicotine without any scientific clues and spoiling their health slowly," said Dr Srikrishna Raghavendra Boddu Consultant Physician Kamini Hospitals.

"Smoking is a well-established health hazard. Tobacco smoke contains over 6,000 chemicals, which are toxic and also carcinogenic. Smoking itself has been well known as a potential risk factor that can lead to heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and various types of cancers. It affects almost all the organs in the body and is classified as the leading cause of preventable death, the doctor further said.

A study published in "Respiratory Research" suggests that while e-cigarettes might be less harmful than conventional cigarettes, they still pose a great danger and their long-term effects are scarcely investigated. Another study funded by the National Institute of Health found that long-term use of e-cigarettes can significantly impair blood vessel function, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"Both vaping and smoking carry long-term disadvantages that can impact health.

Doubts raised over 'accidental death' of mother, two children

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The hand of husband is suspected in the death of his wife and two children in a car accident that took place on Tuesday night near Harya Thanda in RaghunadhaPalem Mandal.

On Tuesday night, a woman and her two daughters were killed in the car accident that took place near Harya Thanda. The deceased were identified as Kumari and her two daughters Krushika and Tanishka. However, her husband Praveen survived the accident with minor injuries. The locals got him admitted to hospital.

Meanwhile, Kumari's parents and her relatives alleged there was suspicion on Praveen in the death of the mother and her two daughters and depicting it as a road accident.

Boda Praveen, his wife Kumari and daughters Krushika and Tanishka set out for Harya Thanda from Baboji Thanda. The car met with an accident after a short period of commencing the journey. The car lost control and hit a roadside tree while trying to avoid a dog. The locals immediately swung into action and rescued the passen-

gers from the car. While the two girls died on the spot, Kumari who was having a weak pulse was rushed to government hospital in Khammam but doctors declared her as dead on arrival. Kumari's father Hari Singh lodged a complaint with the police against Praveen. Meanwhile, relatives of Kumari reached the hospital and protested in front of the hospital and raised doubts over the death of Kumari and her two daughters.

Kumar was employed as physio therapist in Hyderabad. He was married to Kumari in 2017. Hari Singh said that at the time of marriage, Praveen was given a dowry of Rs 24 lakh. He alleged that Praveen used to harass Kumari as she gave birth to two girls. He alleged that Praveen is having an illicit affair with a woman from Kerala. Recently, he went on a trip to Kerala along with the woman returned to Hyderabad only 20 days ago. For the past 10 months, Praveen and Kumari have been having disputes.

It is to be seen how the police would react the complaint lodged by the woman's relatives.

Parents fume over steep fee hike in private colleges in RR district

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Corporate and private junior colleges have indiscriminately increased annual fees steeply, leaving parents grappling with unprecedented financial burdens. Reports indicate an alarming hike of 40 to 50 per cent in fees compared to the previous year, exacerbating the financial burden on families already reeling under economic uncertainties.

With the completion of 10 th examinations, there is a rush for intermediate admissions. However, instead of relief, families are asked to shell out lot of money. The college manage-

The steep hike in annual fee sparked protests. Parents have called for government intervention to rein in the escalating fees. The dire situation impacts an estimated 4 lakh students annually, with over 2 lakh enrolled in private colleges.

ments have justified the fee hike because of escalating "operational costs."

The steep hike in annual fee sparked protests. Parents have called for government intervention to rein in the escalating fees.

The dire situation impacts an estimated 4 lakh students annu-

ally, with over 2 lakh enrolled in private colleges. The fee escalation, reportedly an annual occurrence exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has stretched family budgets to breaking points. Allegations of fee exploitation come amid stagnant affiliation fees, under-

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Jagan confident of YSRCP's victory

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Five years ago, on May 30, 2019, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy marked a new era in public governance, ending the previous administration under Chandrababu Naidu. In the general election preceding his term, the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) secured a significant victory, winning 151 Legislative Assembly seats and 22 Lok Sabha seats. On that same day, YS Jagan took the oath of office at the Indra Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada.



To commemorate five years in office, CM Jagan Mohan Reddy tweeted about the milestone. He attributed the YSRCP's rise to power to divine grace and the people's historic verdict. He empha-

sized that his government has worked for the welfare of every family, regardless of caste, religion, region, or political affiliation. He expressed confidence that the YSRCP, with the continued support

and blessings of the people, would be re-elected and further advance the State's comprehensive development.

Reflecting on the past five years, YS Jagan's administration has been noted for its focus on welfare and development, even amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister's leadership is described as a significant chapter in the state's history. The YSRCP remains optimistic about its support in the current elections, with political analysts predicting an even greater victory than in previous elections.

CM TO RETURN FROM EUROPE TOUR TODAY

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is set to return from his European tour with his family on Friday morning. After a hectic four-month-long election campaign, CM Jagan, along with his family, left for a foreign tour on the night of May 17. The primary purpose of the trip was to visit his daughters who are studying in London. Senior party leaders and Cabinet colleagues will wel-

come the Chief Minister at Gannavaram Airport. During his break from the rigorous election campaign and numerous public meetings, CM Jagan visited several destinations in Europe. After starting in London, the family also toured France and Switzerland. The YSRCP chief will return just days before the Assembly and Parliamentary election results are declared on June 4.

INDIA CORNER

BJP workers booked for singing 'political bhajans' in temple

The police on Thursday registered an FIR against BJP office bearers for singing "political bhajans" on premises of Maa Shoolini temple in Himachal's Solan district. The FIR was registered against BJP state vice president Rashmi Dhar Sood, Deputy Mayor of Solan Municipal Corporation Meera Anand and others. The complainant Poonam Bansal alleged that the BJP women activists came to the temple and started 'Bhajan and Kirtan' in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the famous Shoolini temple on Wednesday evening. FIR was lodged under sections 188 (causing danger by disobedience), 505(3) (spreading rumours), 34 (criminal act done by several persons with common intention) and sections of the Religious Institution (Prevention and Misuse) Act 1988, police said. Condemning the incident, Solan district Congress president, Shiv Kumar said that the BJP was converting the temples into a den of politics.



Meghalaya govt seeks UGC recognition for state university

The Meghalaya government has written to the Centre to officially accord recognition to the state-run Williamson Sangma University by the University Grants Commission, officials said. Education Commissioner and Secretary Syed Md A Razi said that the state government has written to the University Grants Commission (UGC) for 2F notification, which will put the university on the list of universities recognised by the UGC. "We are hopeful we will receive the 2F notification very soon," Razi said. The state government is hopeful that once the UGC recognises the university, all colleges affiliated with North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) can be shifted to it, he said, explaining that private colleges will have to exercise their choice regarding the matter. He also said that the government is hopeful the Williamson Sangma University, a state university, will become functional by next year.



Jharkhand court sentences five persons to life for double murder

A local court on Thursday sentenced five persons to life imprisonment in connection with a three-and-a-half-year-old double murder case in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district. The court of additional sessions judge-II sentenced Roya Rai Purty, alias Doli, Budhram Tiriya, alias Lal Tiriya, Bamun Tiriya, alias Motu, Raghunath Tiriya, and Jaipal Tiriya under Section 302 (murder)/34 IPC for the murders of Bishnu Purida and his wife Phurgun on January 3, 2021, in Totetopa village under Noamundi police station, due to a land dispute. Additionally, the court imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on each of them. Police had arrested the accused and placed them in judicial custody after registering a case. Police filed a chargesheet in court. In a separate incident, the principal district and sessions judge sentenced two men to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment under Section 15 (B) of the NDPS Act for drug peddling.



Repeated polls not good for country, says Rajnath

PNS ■ KUSHINAGAR (UP)

Union minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said frequent elections are not good for the country and efforts will be made to install the "one nation, one election" system in the next five years.



Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believe that the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls should be held simultaneously across the country.

"In five years, we will try our best to make provisions for one nation, one election," the defence minister said, addressing a rally in support of Vijay Kumar Dubey, the BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidate from Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh. Singh heaped praise on Modi for his leadership and taking the country to new heights.

"When India speaks today, the world listens," he said,

adding that even politicians in Pakistan are praising India, but those in the Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) do not understand this.

"They (SP and Congress) are opposing Modi," he said.

Hitting out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Singh said his great grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, grandmother Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv Gandhi were prime ministers.

"Rahul Gandhi says he has seen the system very closely. He says the system that was

there was anti-backward, anti-poor. He is talking about the governments of his great grandfather, grandmother and father, and saying the system during their times was anti-backward and anti-poor.

"Rahul Gandhi himself is saying all these things, which means he is accepting that his government was against Dalits, the poor and backward classes. Tell me, have you seen such a leader anywhere? He is a strange leader," the senior BJP leader said.

Referring to former Union

minister R P N Singh, who quit the Congress and joined the BJP, Rajnath Singh said, "Any sensible man will kick the Congress."

R P N Singh was seated next to the defence minister on the dais.

Rajnath Singh claimed that the BJP does not indulge in "Hindu-Muslim politics".

"We consider everyone a citizen of India. Be it Hindu, Muslim, Christian... We never discriminate and neither does our prime minister. Our party's ideology is also not like this," he said.

The BJP leader pointed out that India has become the fifth-largest economy in the world and credited Modi for it.

"By 2027, India will become the third-largest economy. I have no doubt that India will become a developed country by 2047, but if our government continues like this, India will become the largest economy in the world by 2070," he said.

IPS officer undergoes medical test as per EC order

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Senior IPS officer Ashish Kumar Singh on Thursday underwent a medical examination at the AIIMS here, as per directions of the Election Commission.

The poll panel had ordered a detailed examination of Singh, IG (CM Security) by a "special medical board" constituted by the director of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar.

The medical report of Singh, who has been on medical leave since May 4, should reach the commission latest by May 31, it had said in an order. The 2010-batch IPS officer reached the AIIMS-Bhubaneswar around 8.30 am and left the medical facility at 1 pm, sources said.

In view of conducting free and fair elections in the state, the EC had on April 2 removed Singh from the post of IG-Central Range Police and ordered him to refrain from taking part in poll-related activities. Subsequently, the Odisha government appointed him as IG (CM Security).

India supporting 65 community development projects in Maldives

Both sides review progress

PNS ■ MALE

India is supporting 65 community development projects worth USD 23 million in the Maldives and steady progress has been achieved in implementing them, the Indian mission said here on Thursday.

Of the 47 High Impact Community Development Projects in Maldives under grant aid by the Government of India approved till November 2023, as many as eight are already completed.

Notwithstanding the diplomatic row in recent times, India is supporting 65 community development projects worth MVR 360 million (USD 23 million) in the archipelagic nation, the High Commission of India said.

"While the grant is being provided by the Indian government, the projects are selected in order of priority as set by the Maldivian government. Implementation of these projects are also undertaken by



institutions appointed by the Maldives government," news portal Edition.mv said.

"Happy to note steady progress of Greater Male Connectivity Project, being implemented with Indian grant and concessional credit @USD 500 million. GMCP is a transformational infrastructure project which will stimulate economic growth and improve ease of living in Maldives." The Indian High Commission posted on its official X handle on Wednesday.

The post on X came after Maldives' Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and the High Commission of India in Maldives held a two-day meeting to review the ongoing projects when it was discussed that even as eight projects are completed, the rest of the High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) remain at different levels of progress.

These include a wide variety of projects spread throughout the atolls. Some initiatives included are the establishment of fish processing plants, drug detoxification centres, cultural centres, youth centres and sports complexes, Edition.mv reported.

RAJKOT FIRE ACCIDENT

Gujarat BJP leader claims he paid bribe to get fire NOC

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member from Gujarat, Ram Mokariya, has claimed that he had paid a bribe of Rs 70,000 to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Rajkot Municipal Corporation's fire department.



His statement came days after 27 persons were charred to death after a massive fire gutted TRP Game Zone, a Rajkot-based recreation centre, which was allegedly being operated without any fire NOC.

Speaking to the media on Thursday Mokariya shared his "personal experience to high-level widespread corruption" in Rajkot.

The BJP leader from Rajkot

also clarified that he gave the bribe to deputy fire officer BJ Theba nearly five years ago when he was just a businessman and not elected to Rajya Sabha.

Mokariya is the founder-chairman of a well-known courier company and was elected to the upper house of Parliament from Gujarat in 2021.

"I gave Rs 70,000 nearly five

years ago to Theba to get a fire NOC for a project. I have learnt he is now being questioned by police for his alleged role in the game zone fire. I just wanted to highlight that corruption is widespread and I have made representations about it in the past too," Mokariya told reporters.

According to the BJP leader, the fire officer had returned the bribe money to him after he became a Rajya Sabha member.

"Everyone knows that corruption is everywhere. I have been exposing corrupt officials for a long time. In the past, I had openly said that Rajkot's town planning officer had been indulging in corruption for the last 10 years," Mokariya said.

Court issues notice to ED on Kejriwal's regular bail plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday issued notice to the ED on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea seeking regular bail in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja, who initially directed the central probe agency to file its response to Kejriwal's plea by Saturday, later fixed the matter for June 7 after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) sought more time to respond.

The judge, however, directed the ED to file its response by Saturday on Kejriwal's



another plea seeking interim bail for a week on medical grounds.

Kejriwal is currently out on interim bail, granted by the

EXCISE CASE

Supreme Court, in the case till June 1.

The Supreme Court registry on Wednesday refused urgent listing of Kejriwal's

plea seeking extension of his interim bail by seven days for undergoing certain medical tests, saying since he was given liberty to move the trial court for regular bail, the plea was not maintainable.

The AAP leader had sought extension of his interim bail by seven days to undergo a host of medical tests, including a PET-CT scan, in view of "sudden and unexplained weight loss coupled with high ketone levels", which are indicative of kidney, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer.

The chief minister, in his fresh plea filed before the apex court on May 26, said he

wanted to surrender before the Tihar jail authorities on June 9 instead of June 2, the scheduled date for his return to prison.

The top court had on May 10 granted 21-day interim bail to the chief minister to enable him to campaign during the Lok Sabha polls.

It had directed him to surrender on June 2, a day after the last phase of the seven-phase poll gets over.

The matter relates to the alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

21 killed, 47 injured as bus falls into gorge in Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

Twenty-one people were killed and 47 injured after a bus carrying pilgrims skidded off the road and rolled down into a gorge in Jammu district on Thursday, officials said.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha has expressed anguish at the loss of lives in the accident.

The accident took place at the Tungji-Morh in the Chowki Chora belt of the district, the officials said, adding that the bus rolled around 150 feet down into the gorge.

A police spokesperson said at about 12:35 pm, the bus bearing registration number UP81CT-4058 fell into the gorge, killing 21 passengers and injuring 47.

The bus was carrying devotees from Haryana's Kurukshetra and was headed towards Shiv Khori in the Pouni area of Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district. It had started its journey from Uttar Pradesh.

The bodies have been shifted to the Akhnoor sub-district hospital, the police spokesperson said, adding that of the injured, seven have been admitted in the Akhnoor hospital and 40 in the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital in Jammu.

The rescue operation is going on, the official added.



The injured were initially shifted to the Akhnoor hospital for treatment. Subsequently, 36 of them, including six in a critical condition, were shifted to the GMC hospital in Jammu in ambulances, the officials said.

"More than 36 passengers have been brought to the GMC hospital. Six of them are in a critical condition. Timely treatment is being given to the patients," principal of the hospital Dr Ashutosh Gupta said.

The injured passengers said the accident took place when the driver was negotiating a blind curve and a speeding car was coming from the opposite direction.

"A car was coming from the opposite direction. The driver tried to negotiate a blind curve but failed, resulting in the vehicle rolling down into the gorge," Amar Chand, one of the injured people undergoing treatment at the Akhnoor hospital, said.

Those who sustained injuries in the incident said they had come for a pilgrimage to Shiv Khori. Senior Superintendent of Police, Traffic, Faisal Qureshi, the transport commissioner, along with other officials, visited the spot and supervised the operation. The SSP said it seems there was no overloading of passengers in the bus.

The SSP and the deputy commissioner of Jammu visited the GMC hospital to inquire about the injured.

Juvenile's blood samples replaced with those of woman: Pune cops

PNS ■ PUNE

The blood samples of the 17-year-old involved in a crash of Porsche car that claimed two lives in the city were replaced with those of a woman in a bid to show that he was not drunk at the time of the accident, police told a court on Thursday.

The sessions court granted the police's plea and extended till June 5 the custody of two doctors and an employee of the Sassoon General Hospital here arrested in this connection.

While the police told the

PORSCHE CRASH



court that they wanted to identify the woman whose blood was used as a replacement, a government source said that she was none other than the juvenile's mother.

Dr Ajay Taware, then head of the department of forensic medicine at Sassoon hospital, medical officer Dr Shrihari Halnor and employee Atul Ghatkamble, arrested after the alleged swapping of samples came to light, were produced before the court as their initial custody ended.

Seeking their further custody, police said that Dr Halnor did not throw away the juvenile's blood samples -- as was believed earlier -- but handed it over to someone, and they wanted to recover them.

Court in Bengaluru rejects Prajwal's anticipatory bail plea in rape case

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A Special Court here on Wednesday rejected the anticipatory bail plea of suspended JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna, who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, in a rape case.

The special court for Elected Representative dismissed the bail application moved by his advocate Arun.

According to official sources, Prajwal has booked a return flight ticket to Bengaluru from Munich on May 30, and is expected to land in the city in the small hours of May 31.

Prajwal, grandson of JD(S) supreme H D Deve Gowda, is accused in an alleged rape and

sexual harassment case involving a 47-year-old woman.

He reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan Lok Sabha segment went to polls, and is still at large. On May 18, the Special Court for Elected Representatives had issued an arrest warrant against Prajwal Revanna, following an application moved by the SIT.

However, later the SIT arrested his father and JD(S) MLA H D Revanna, who is allegedly involved in kidnapping the woman. All eyes are on Kempegowda International Airport where Prajwal is expected to arrive on May 31, and the SIT is likely to arrest him the moment he lands.

When speeding luxury cars wrecked death...

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The death of a 19-year-old in a Punjab town after being hit by a BMW is the latest in a series of accidents caused by speeding uber luxury automobiles, the lengthening list speaking of the horrors of rash driving and recalling the many times the thrill of speed spelt destruction.

There have been four such incidents in the country just this month. On Tuesday night in Punjab's Zirakpur town, three youngsters were tossed

into the air after the car rammed their motorcycle, killing one on the spot and leaving the others seriously injured. The car's driver, a resident of Mohali, was arrested and then released on bail.

Eleven days ago, two IT professionals on a motorcycle in Pune were mowed down by an overspeeding Porsche allegedly being driven by a drunk 17-year-old boy. Anish Awadhya and Ashwini Koshta were killed.

Speeding cars have too often been involved in accidents that



turned fatal for those involved, including the occupants of the vehicles.

Two days before the May 19

accident in Pune, a speeding BMW rammed into an e-rickshaw in Noida, leaving two dead, including a nurse, and three injured at 6 am on May 16. The Uttar Pradesh city saw another fatal accident on May 26 morning as an Audi car hit a 64-year-old man, killing him on the spot, before speeding away.

The victim, Janak Dev Shah, a resident of Gijhor village in Sector-53, was crossing the road to buy milk.

Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar district, compris-

ing Noida and Greater Noida, witnessed 1,176 road crashes last year that resulted in the deaths of 470 people and injuries to 858.

The district had recorded 437 such deaths and injuries to 856 people in 2022, according to official data.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in its report Road Accidents in India 2022 stated that 4.61 lakh road accidents were reported across the country in 2022, killing 1.68 lakh people and injuring 4.43 lakh.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Appeals no more

The last phase of Lok Sabha polls gets over on June 1 after weeks-long campaign and slogans

The biggest electoral contest in the world will conclude with the seventh phase of voting on June 1. It has been a dynamic election season; the battleground vibrant with slogans, promises and appeals. The major coalitions, the NDA and INDIA, have each deployed strategic messaging to galvanise voter support. When it comes to sloganeering, the BJP-led NDA has been a hands-down winner, coming up with not one but several catchy phrases to woo the electorate. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' (Together with all, Development for all, Trust of all) has been a cornerstone of its campaign. 'Naya Bharat' (New India), aimed at portraying the vision for a progressive and self-reliant nation, was another NDA slogan. Along the same lines was 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) which reflected the NDA's focus on boosting local industries and reducing dependency on foreign goods. But more interesting were its jumlas (catchy phrases) that were floated intermittently to give the NDA 'top recall value': 'Abki baar 400 paar' (this time, we will cross 400) and 'Modi ki guarantee'. The major takeaways from the NDA's election pitch were of course its 'Sankalp Patra', heavily focused on economic progress, showcasing initiatives like Make in India, Digital India and the push towards a \$5 trillion economy. The NDA alliance also highlighted its efforts in strengthening national security. The message is clear — a strong leadership to safeguard the nation.



Not to be outdone, the INDIA bloc also used several slogans to reach voters' hearts. Prominence was given to slogans critical of the Modi Government's unpopular policies and its actions to subvert democracy by sending Opposition leaders to jail. 'Jai jawan, Jai kisan, Jai samvidhan' (Hail the soldier, the farmer, the Constitution) drew heavily on this sentiment. 'Bharat Jodo' (Unite India), a call for unity across the nation's diverse fabric to counter divisive politics, was inspired by Rahul Gandhi's pan-India foot march. Yet another slogan from the INDIA stable was 'Nyay' (Justice), a promise to address disparities and ensure equitable growth. The INDIA alliance has positioned itself as the protector of social justice, focusing on uplifting marginalised communities, ensuring minority rights and addressing caste-based and religious discrimination. The INDIA bloc has promised to tackle issues like farmer suicides, inadequate MSP (Minimum Support Price) and the need for comprehensive agrarian reforms. Of course, 'Save democracy' has been its main theme. The NDA's pitch was more country-centric security, \$5 trillion economy and so forth but INDIA's pitch was more about people, their sufferings and plight due to economic hardships. INDIA's focus on social justice and inclusivity is designed to attract voters who feel marginalised. Their promises to address agrarian distress and safeguard democratic values are aimed at rural voters, farmers and the educated urban electorate. Who really touched people's hearts, we shall get to know on June 4.

PICTALK



Children playing in water to beat the heat during a hot summer day, in Ranchi

Unveiling the enigma of an unusual election



SHIVAJI SARKAR

In this election, accusations of tampering with constitutional values take centre stage, punctuated by issues such as the annulment of OBC certificates by the Calcutta HC

It is one of the strangest elections. Nobody speaks out. Visibly there is no wave. Election commission warnings to defaulting speakers are in nuances. More than the prices and unemployment, saving the Constitution has become the prime concern. This is an onslaught on their rights, asserting the Dalits, OBCs, Scheduled tribes and other marginalised classes. An issue raised by the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi seems to reverberate. Swelling crowds at Phulpur and Lalganj in the suburbs and Allahabad city at Congress and Samajwadi Party speak a lot.

Another key aspect is the campaigning gusto with the nominations by Rahul Gandhi at Rae Bareilly and family friend Kishori Lal Sharma at Amethi. It is being called Rae Bareilly syndrome. It has infused life to Indian alliance workers — AAP, Samajwadi Party and Congress almost everywhere. It has enthused the opposition parties, who now want to clinch the battle.

This is in sharp contrast to BJP leaders' meetings, which are marked by empty chairs as also apologetic clarifications that they are not for changing the statute. But the '400 paar' slogan of the BJP is being equated with a design to change the sacred Constitution of BR Ambedkar. The opposition, INDIA, seemingly has become a trailblazer and the ruling NDA is busy clarifying its charges.

Rally after rally of the NDA is countering the accusations of toying with the statute and trying to alter its basic principles. Selling of public sector assets to preferred private groups comes next. The rulers are saying that major PSUs like ISRO and HAL remain intact. They are, however, quiet on Indian Oil and Railways.

There are emerging issues like the sudden nullification of OBC certificates issued till 2010 by the Calcutta High Court. It is a double-edged sword that targets the Trinamool Congress Government in West Bengal and the Central Government alike. Prices make the highest noise, followed by religion and Agniveer part-time soldiers supposedly compromising with the country's security.



The opposition is being heard with rapt attention. They have raised hopes. The ruling party guarantees are being scoffed at but Ram temple and minority bashing still matter in a large section of the UP and neighbouring areas of the cow belt. The resurgence of youth at the opposition parties reminds many of the days of post-emergency rallies and apologetic clarifications by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. She was also called the Janata Party, a khichri or motley crowd.

Five kg of free ration is no longer an issue. People have taken it for granted that they would have free ration anyway whosoever is in power. But jobs have become a major issue. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's assurance of one lakh rupee a year for apprenticeship per unemployed is being lapped up so as Rs 1 lakh for every woman. "This money is for the family", Gandhi stresses.

The top BJP leaders' assertion that 'abhi to yah trailor hai' may be counter-productive considering the Supreme Court Stated Newslick journalist Prabir Purakayastha's detention was illegal and released him. Gradually most news systems seem to be changing its delivery, a bid to share space with the surging opposition.

Job reservation, though scoffed at by the BJP, has got a new lease of life with the Bihar caste



THERE ARE EMERGING ISSUES, LIKE THE SUDDEN NULLIFICATION OF OBC CERTIFICATES ISSUED UNTIL 2010 BY THE CALCUTTA HIGH COURT. IT IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD THAT TARGETS THE TMC GOVERNMENT IN WEST BENGAL AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ALIKE

census and the slogan "jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedar". Yes, reservation is to stay and Indians have to grapple with it. The BJP has been painted not in a bright colour on this score by the opposition. Despite the Calcutta High Court cancellation of all OBC certificates and a tough stance against TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, it will not be easy to nullify the reservation in an aspirational jobless country.

Another peculiar aspect is the regional variations of the poll. Congress or its alliance partners are the principal opposition in UP, MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Himachal, Maharashtra, Punjab and has even come out with some determination in Gujarat. Most southern States have secured tie-ups with the Congress.

BJP is fighting a straight battle in all those States as also in Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and many other smaller States. The poll is being keenly contested and results are difficult to guess, particularly with the EC revising the total extra votes polled by over 1.7 crore. The jerky expressions of BJP leaders, stressing on mangal sutra to Muslims instead of the achievements of the party have put it on the back foot with each day partly leaders dishing

out new figures on the lower side. This gives jitters to the party cadre. It is another story that the cadre is mostly missing. They are not seen moving robustly in constituencies and managing the booths. It is being said that the cadre has been told by the organisation to stay put and not seek to vote for anyone.

The cadre apathy is said to be reflected in its performance. More so the voters are getting alerted by its slogan "abhi to yah trailor hai", spoken by top BJP leaders often, may not suit the BJP. Quite a few YouTube news channels and skits like "Dadi Poti ke Khaal" have viewership in lakhs. These are setting the basics for election narratives across the country in different languages.

How these are influencing the voters would be known as boxes open on June 4. BJP leaders' shrill deliveries and the brash expressions from public platforms are not taken kindly. Still predicting the elections is not easy. The Election Commission adding to 1.7 crore votes to the numbers cast after a few days may do wonders. The election this time with regional flavours of all kinds and quiet voters may even fox the exit poll stalwarts if it is free and fair. Nobody should wonder if the post-June 1 exit polls reflect a trend that could be different from the actual.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RESTORING PURI'S ANCIENT TEMPLE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "ASI moves to restore 1400-year-old Shiva temple in Puri," published on May 29, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, the story of the Swapaneswar Mahadev temple in Odisha's Puri district resonates deeply. The recent discovery and imminent restoration of this 1300-1400-year-old marvel is both exciting and a reminder of the rich historical tapestry of our nation.

The temple, showcasing the unique Kalingan architectural style, had been neglected for years, buried under vegetation and obscurity. The Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) efforts to designate it as a "monument of national importance" will ensure that it receives the attention and resources needed for preservation. This initiative, supported by various ministers and INTACH, reflects a commendable commitment to preserving our cultural heritage. The intricate stonework and historical significance of the temple are a testament to the craftsmanship of the post-Gupta era. Protecting such monuments is crucial, not just for their architectural beauty but for the cultural and historical legacy they represent.

Roshan Nayak | Puri

INDIA NEEDS MORE DEFENCE FUNDS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "India needs substantial defence investment", published on May 29, this is my response. Reading the daily headlines reveals a complex landscape for India's defence strategy. The BJP's manifesto, promising a "Surakshit Bharat", emphasises achievements like the revocation of Article 370 and reductions in terrorism, yet recent attacks in J&K challenge these claims. Historical incidents, from the 2001 Parliament attack to the Pulwama tragedy, illustrate the persistent threat of terrorism.

The BJP touts surgical strikes as deterrents, but critics point to ongoing violence and the situation in Manipur as evidence of unmet challenges. The omission of China

Ensure fire safety, prevent tragedies



Apropos news, "Delhi asks establishments to ensure firefighting equipment functional and there are no obstacles on staircases," published on May 29, this is my response. The loss of newly born lives in the heart-wrenching fire incident in a neonatal hos-

pital in East Delhi is a huge, irreparable loss for the bereaved families. The round of allegations and counter-allegations has started on the fire incidents.

The administration and Delhi Government should examine every technical and legal aspect to determine accountability. The explosion of an oxygen cylinder and fire due to a short circuit in a Delhi hospital is a serious case of negligence in safety parameters. The Central or State Government will have to make concrete arrangements to ensure that incidents of arson are not repeated anywhere. Fire safety-related infrastructure facilities should occasionally be audited and inspected without favour and waiver. Right now, the well-known phrase befits on Delhi Government that the decadent and unpopular Nero "fiddled while Rome burned."

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

and Pakistan from the manifesto is concerning, especially given the unresolved tensions in Ladakh. Moreover, defence spending remains insufficient. Despite rising GDP, the allocation has dropped to under 2 per cent, far below what's needed to match China's military capability. With global trends showing increased defence investments, India must re-evaluate its priorities to effectively address its twin threats and ensure robust national security.

Pratiksha Sharma | Ujjain

END CASTE HATRED IN INDIA

Madam — Apropos the article "Nurture dreams with open eyes and determination," published on May 29, this is my response. Sanjay Chandra rightly highlighted the importance of supporting others in their journey towards realising their aspirations. But to achieve fraternity among Indians, caste hatred is a major obstacle. The latest National Crime Records Bureau data show the crimes against Dalits increased from 50,744 in 2021 to 57,428 in 2022. The graph has been going up since 2013. There were 15,368 crimes against Scheduled

Caste persons in 2022 in Uttar Pradesh, while MP ranked first in crimes against Scheduled Tribes from 2020 to 2022. However, the ugly apathy towards Dalits by the upper-caste members of the same religion is not just confined to these two States but all over India. In some schools in Tamil Nadu, students wear colour-coded wristbands to show their caste identity! This is a threat to the ideals of equality and fraternity. Even a machine cannot work if there is a conflict among its parts, let alone a State or a society. In his famous poem *Apamanita* (Insulted), Tagore said, "Whom you push down will pull you down." We cannot turn a blind eye to hatred, abuse, torture and exploitation towards our Dalit brothers and sisters. Political will and stringent punishment must be in place to prevent atrocities against Dalits. Also, Dalits should get proportional representation in every sector to counter caste-based nepotism.

Sujit De | Kolkata

Believe in yourself, not in superstitions

Discovering happiness hinges on passion and diligence, not reliance on external predictors. Be your own lucky charm through hard work

On Sundays, I usually find myself glancing through the weekly forecasts in the newspapers. A favourable week ahead is enough to bring a smile to my lips. It is good fun for the moment. But it was not always so. A few decades ago, I was heading a major department in a Government production unit. Yet I was restless, not satisfied with the way my life was moving. Repeated visits to astrologers and their forecasts became the opium to soothe my frayed nerves. So much so that when I actually got another posting, I visited an astrologer for reassurance that the movement would be auspicious. As I moved into an entirely different role, I found that I loved the new job with the same zeal that I had displayed in my earlier workspaces. I realised a few years later that the key to my happiness was within me—a passion to immerse myself in the moment. I have not gone back to an astrologer since then. Years earlier, I was travel-



SANJAY CHANDRA

ling with my colleagues one night to catch a flight to Europe for a study tour. The driver braked the vehicle to an abrupt halt as a cat crossed the road. The driver was in a dilemma. It was not a good sign. He resolved the issue by reversing the car a few metres before continuing to ward off the ill effect. I was to remember the incident when I had to cut short my stay by a couple of days having caught stomach flu, probably consuming beer and other savouries during the Oktoberfest festivities in Germany. The feline in Delhi had no inkling of its role in my misfortune. I am often surprised at the measures taken by us, to

invoke the blessings, or even to ward off the evil, for an unknown future. Many of us have gone through the process of our mothers feeding us curd and sugar when leaving home for the examinations. The ritual did not help me with papers that I had not prepared well. I also remember my elders telling me not to call out a person leaving home to avoid ill luck, even if I had something important to communicate. This fear of the unknown is not limited to us only. Such superstitions abound even in the so called modern western world. We all have heard the myths of break a mirror and bad luck follows for 7 years, the curse of Friday the 13th, sneezes and blessings, fingers crossed, purse on the floor, money out of the door and countless others. Cricket has been a craze in our country ever since I can remember. IPL is a relatively recent phenomenon that has fueled the frenzy to unimaginable heights. Fans root for players, who are not even remotely connected with the State or city after

which the team is named. The tournament has also sprouted several home-grown charms to ensure victory. I am surprised to see people continuing to remain standing or sitting for the duration of the match, controlling the uncomfortable urge to empty bursting bladders, or staying at home even at the cost of cancelling urgent engagements, among many other quirky behaviours. A lucky charm would also work only if one acts, that too based on sound reasoning and an understanding of the risks involved. Even if one fails, it might not feel like the end of the world. Do it the other way round and it is a heady cocktail for disappointment. American actress and comedian Lucille Ball's words inspire me to set myself free and be my own lucky charm: "Luck to me is something else: Hard work and realising what is opportunity and what isn't." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN TURNING A BOLD NEW LEAF IN FOREIGN POLICY

India's geopolitical strategy is poised for transformation



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

In a week from now, a new central Government would be in place, picking up from where the last Government had left. If the BJP comes back to power for a third time, India's foreign policy push would be towards enhancing its stature globally. In a couple of interviews with various media, PM Modi has stressed a confident India now actually mediating on critical global affairs, than the earlier practise of being an observer. In most of the interviews, he mentions the role India played or continues to play, behind the scenes in the Ukraine situation, a sensitive topic. India has a historical relationship with Russia, which has never attempted to alter the relationship, however, Russia has of late started getting into a tighter embrace with China, cooperating on several critical projects including hydrocarbons and technology partnerships.

Meanwhile, India has grown closer to the US and has been rightly projected as a key ally for the Indo-Pacific region. PM Modi has also highlighted that his third term would ensure, that the Indian PM would be the senior most among democratically elected leaders, serving as he would post a decade of tectonic shifts in geo-political affairs. He hinted that a more confident India has to act more responsibly with its allies while expanding the network, especially with an aggressive China in the neighbourhood. It was no coincidence that external affairs minister S Jaishankar while delivering a key note on the Nikkei Future of Asia forum mentioned "The world is undergoing a flux - driven by geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-technological developments. In the last four decades, economic and political rebalancing accelerated by globalisation has been driving us towards multipolarity.



Today, the global order is visibly under stress, with Asia and the Indo-Pacific very much part of this transformation. But it is not just change we are seeing; there is also much greater risk-taking. It is visible in the conflict in Ukraine, in violence in the Middle East and the disregard for international law and agreements in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. This has economic facets, perhaps even more concerning. The supply chain challenge, over-concentrations stemming from globalisation and the use of economic coercion by States have put a premium on resilience and redundancy. Equally important is the technology challenge that has created a new level of inter-penetration and inter-dependence. Mr Jaishankar underscored India's future foreign policy roadmap with a firm focus on neighbours in the East, West and the Indian Ocean. He also highlighted the centrality of the Indo-Pacific in India's progress. Cross-border road infrastructure and integrated port facilities have found traction in India's external policy in the recent past.

The Iran-based Chabahar port, whose long-term maintenance contract India secured a few weeks back, providing access to crucial landlocked Central Asian countries and beyond is a recent example. External Affairs minister highlighted in his speech the pace at which road and rail networks are getting built in India, even when one of the largest democratic exercises in the world, India elections are underway. He said "The transformation of India is critical to strengthening multipolarity in Asia itself, a pre-requisite for a multipolar world. India's growing weight will ensure that the overall balance in the world order remains in favour of freedom, openness, transparency and a rules-based order. Equally, its greater sense of responsibility and more contributions are also making a difference. Indian naval ships are currently operating in the Red Sea to protect maritime shipping. India has been a First Responder for natural disasters across the Indian Ocean, sometimes even beyond." Without speculating for next week, it would be safe to assume a huge diplomatic outreach, awaits the new Government.

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

RBI dividend aids Government finances



UTTAM GUPTA

The RBI's dividend transfer provides a substantial fiscal cushion to the cash-strapped Government, but it must be prudent in fiscal management and resource allocation



In the amendment to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act through the Finance Bill 2018-19 (the amendment was based on the recommendations of Dr N K Singh's committee mandated to review the FRBM Act (2003)), the Modi - the Government had pledged to achieve fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts) of 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the FY 2020-21. Following the Corona pandemic it changed this fiscal glide path.

In her budget speech for FY 2021-22, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the Government's decision to achieve FD of 4.5 per cent by FY 2025-26. From 9.1 percent during 2020-21, the FD descended to 6.7 percent during 2021-22; 6.4 percent during 2022-23 and 5.8 percent during 2023-24. For 2024-25, in the interim budget presented by her on February 1, 2024, she has set the target at 5.1 per cent. If the Government can achieve this target, then 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 should be within easy reach. Against this backdrop, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come up with a bonanza for the Centre. The RBI Board has approved a record dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore to the Centre for its (read: RBI) FY 2023-24. This will be reflected in the accounts of the central Government for the FY 2024-25. This amount is 2.4 times the dividend transfer of about Rs 87,400 crore made by the RBI for its FY 2022-23 and available for use by the Centre during 2023-24.

Even when compared to the provision of about Rs 80,000 crore made by Sitharaman in the interim budget for 2024-25, the dividend amount available from the RBI i.e. Rs 210,000 crore for use by the central Government during the year will be over two-and-a-half times. This gives a cushion of Rs 130,000 crore (210,000-80,000). This translates to about 0.4 per cent of the GDP.

While this should give substantial leeway



UNLIKE A PUBLIC SECTOR BANK (PSB) OR ANY OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKING (PSU), THE RBI IS NOT A COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE AND HENCE, IS NOT EXPECTED TO PAY ANY DIVIDEND. INSTEAD, IT IS A 'FULL SERVICE' CENTRAL BANK

to the Government in managing its fiscal situation and ensuring easy compliance with the 5.1 per cent target, there is no room for complacency.

First, it shouldn't forget that the new glide path of 4.5 per cent for 2025-26 is way behind the original FD target of 3 per cent for 2020-21 as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act 2018. The Corona pandemic of 2020 was once in a lifetime event. Its impact was transitory and it won't be logical to use it as a basis for altering the medium-term fiscal trajectory. This is all the more when from 2021-22 onward, the economic situation was more or less back to normal.

The Government ought to be aiming at an FD target of 3 per cent by 2025-26 and going by this benchmark, it has still a long way to go. Second, we need to assess things from the RBI perspective. Unlike a public sector bank (PSB) or any other public sector undertaking (PSU), the RBI is not a commercial enterprise hence, is not expected to pay any dividend. Instead, it is a "full service" central bank.

Apart from managing the currency and payment systems and keeping inflation/prices in check, it is also mandated with managing the borrowings of the Union Government and State Governments; and supervising or regulating banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs). While carrying out these functions or operations, it generates a surplus. Typically, the RBI's income comes from the returns it earns on its foreign currency assets (FCA) — which could be in the form of bonds and treasury bills of other central banks or top-rated securities and deposits with other central banks. It also earns interest on its holdings of local rupee-denominated Government bonds or securities and while lending to banks for very

short tenures, such as overnight. Its expenditure is mainly on the printing of currency notes and staff, besides the commission it gives to banks for undertaking transactions on behalf of the Government across the country and to primary dealers, including banks, for underwriting some of these borrowings. The excess of income over expenditure is the "surplus".

After making provision for bad and doubtful debts, depreciation in assets, contributions to staff and superannuation fund, etc. and for all matters provided for under the RBI Act (1934), the balance of surplus is paid to the Union Government by Section 47 (Allocation of Surplus Profits) of the Act. Apart from this routine stuff, the financial crisis in the early 90s, when India's foreign exchange reserves had plummeted to a level barely enough to buy two weeks of imports, brought to the fore a dire need to prepare the RBI for dealing with 'unexpected' and 'unforeseen' events by enhancing its capacity to absorb financial shocks, ensure financial stability and provide confidence to the markets. So, it started transferring part of the surplus to a 'Contingency Fund'. This was in line with the recommendation of a committee to build contingency reserves (CR) of 12 per cent of its balance sheet.

In 2013, a panel led by Y H Malegam, then a member of the RBI board, also reiterated the need for building CRs. Subsequently, in its annual report for 2015-16, the central bank alluded to a "draft economic capital/provisioning framework to assess its risk-buffer requirements in a structured and systematic manner." Meanwhile, in 2018, the RBI set up a Committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF) under Dr Bimal Jalan. The Committee recommended that the RBI should maintain a minimum

contingency risk buffer (CRB) of 5.5 - 6.5 per cent of its balance sheet as risk buffer. The ECF was to remain in force for five years. The RBI adopted the ECF on August 26, 2019. During accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, it determined the surplus transferred to the Union Government taking the CRB at the lower end of the range i.e. 5.5 percent of its balance sheet. For arriving at the transferrable surplus during 2022-23, the CRB was increased to 6 per cent. However, for calculating the amount for 2023-24, it has used the higher end of the band prescribed by the Committee i.e. 6.5 per cent. The surge in dividend transfers for 2023-24 over 2022-23 despite the increase in CRB is due to the substantial increase in the RBI's interest income from foreign securities as well as exchange gain from foreign exchange transactions (according to the State Bank of India (SBI), these two factors accounted for 60 - 70 per cent of the increase in income of the RBI from Rs 235,000 crore during 2022-23 to around Rs 375,000 - 400,000 crore during 2023-24). This in turn was due to a sharp hike in interest rates by the US Fed and central banks of other developed countries; the hikes were prompted by the dire need to bring down high inflation in those countries. But the situation may not be sustained as the US Fed prepares to move the interest rate 'south' from the latter half of 2024 and other central banks follow suit. Even if it doesn't happen so soon and RBI repeats its performance during 2025-26, it would do well to retain more surplus with itself in the CRB. As a matter of prudent policy, the Centre should avoid riding piggy-back on the RBI for managing its FD.

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

EU roots for a shift from free trade to fair trade on global stage

EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) sparks a global trade paradigm shift

Free Trade Agreements or Sustainable Trade Agreements? The EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) raises this crucial question of choices, challenging the norms of international commerce in vogue for the last few decades. Imagine a world where every product purchased carries a hidden story - a tale of the well-being of the farmers and their families, environments preserved and corporate integrity maintained. The European Union's proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (UCSD) is a landmark piece of legislation towards that direction. It compels European companies to identify and mitigate environmental and human rights risks throughout



SHATADRU CHATTOPADHYAY

their supply chains. It also underscores living wages and incomes as human rights, insists on responsible management of supplier relationships and emphasises the necessity of meaningful stakeholder engagement to enhance transparency and accountability in human rights and environmental practices. However, the EUCSDDD's impact could extend far beyond Europe's

borders. It has the potential to become a catalyst for a global race to the top, pushing democracies around the world to adopt stricter sustainability standards. India stands at a crossroads, poised to not just adapt to these standards but also lead the way in demonstrating how integral sustainable trade is to the ethos of modern democracies.

Democracy: The Bedrock of Sustainable Trade Democracy and sustainable trade are not merely compatible; they are inextricably linked. The interconnection between democracy and sustainable trade is rooted in the principles of equity, participation and long-term accountability. Democratic systems, by their nature, promote inclusive decision-making and public

accountability, which are essential for sustainable trade practices. For instance, democracies are more likely to implement and enforce regulations that ensure trade does not lead to environmental degradation or exploitation of workers, which are key aspects of sustainable trade (Hickel, 2020). Closer home, scholars like Amartya Sen have shown through his works that sustainability legislation ensures that economic decisions consider the environmental and social impact on future generations, a core tenet of responsible governance. Moreover, sustainable trade often requires international cooperation and agreements that are robust and equitable. Democracies are better positioned to engage in such agree-

ments because they are based on principles of transparency and public participation. This openness allows for more effective and fair negotiations that consider the diverse needs and impacts on all stakeholders involved, from local communities to international partners. Reputed international scholars like Hickel (2020) and Rockström and Klum (2015) suggest that this democratic approach supports a form of globalisation that is not only about free trade but also about fair trade, where the benefits and responsibilities of trade are widely and fairly distributed. This is crucial for achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it ensures that trade supports broader societal well-being and envi-

ronmental sustainability rather than contributing to inequality and ecological degradation. **Impact on Global Trade** Some critics fear the EUCSDDD could encourage trade toward countries with laxer regulations, creating a race to the bottom rather than the top. However, the European Union has emerged in the past five decades as a powerful force in shaping the global conversation around sustainable international trade. The EU's early environmental regulations, like clean air and water directives, weren't just about protecting its citizens. By making stricter environmental standards a prerequisite for access to its vast market, the EU created a ripple effect. Companies worldwide adapted to comply and other countries followed

suit, leading to a global shift towards cleaner practices and a higher bar for environmental responsibility. Other landmark legislation like the Conflict Minerals Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/821), which aims to eradicate conflict minerals from supply chains, demonstrates the bloc's commitment to ethical trade practices. This, in turn, has spurred international discussions and collaborations on human rights and responsible sourcing practices throughout global supply chains. **Navigating the EUCSDDD:** The India-EU bilateral trade in goods is valued at €115.3 billion in 2022 and services contribute an additional €39.9 billion; the EU stands as India's second-largest trading partner (EPRS, 2024). The UCSD pre-

sents a unique opportunity for India to solidify its position as a responsible player on the global trade stage. While initial concerns exist regarding potential cost increases for Indian businesses complying with the directive's standards, there's a significant upside. Aligning with the EUCSDDD can elevate India's image as a sustainable and ethical sourcing hub, attracting more European investment and boosting exports of responsibly produced goods. This, in turn, strengthens India's negotiating position in the ongoing Free Trade Agreement talks with the European Union. (Shatadru is the founding Managing Director of Solidaridad in Asia; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

EMS reports 36 pc jump in standalone net profit at Rs 46.34 crore

EMS Limited has reported a nearly 36 per cent jump in standalone net profit to Rs 46.34 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024, as against Rs 34.07 crore in the same period last year, on the back of a surge in operating income driven by higher awards of tenders. Ghaziabad-based EMS provides various services, ranging from EPC and O&M, in sewerage solutions, water supply systems, and waste water schemes for government authorities and local bodies. Its revenue from operations grew by 37.57 per cent at Rs 233.94 crore during the fourth quarter as compared with Rs 170.05 crore in the same period last year. EBITDA grew by about 42 per cent at Rs 65.43 crore during the quarter under review, as against Rs 46.06 crore in the same period last year. For the year ended March 31, 2024, EMS registered 45.32 per cent growth in standalone net profit at Rs 149.96 crore, as against Rs 103.19 crore in 2022-23.



Seino Holdings enters India market in a JV with Mahindra Logistics

Japanese logistics firm Seino Holdings Co on Thursday announced its entry into the domestic market in a joint venture with Mahindra Logistics and expects to create a Rs 1,000-crore business model over the next five years. The joint venture would offer comprehensive logistics solutions supported by digitisation, innovation, and a customer-centric approach, allowing the two partners to manage the end-to-end supply chain, Mahindra Logistics said in a statement. Under the terms of the agreement, the companies will form a JV owned by Mahindra Logistics and Seino Holdings, the company said, adding, the JV will focus on providing Japanese automotive and strategic non-auto customers with integrated logistics solutions covering auto outbound, warehousing and transportation, and a comprehensive technology suite. This partnership aims to offer integrated logistics solutions to leverage Seino's global relationships with Japanese automotive customers.



Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's recall drugs in US market: USFDA

Sun Pharma and Dr Reddy's Laboratories are recalling products in the American market due to manufacturing issues, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) has said. In its latest Enforcement Report, the US health regulator stated that a US-based unit of Sun Pharma is recalling 35,069 bottles of medication used to treat high pressure inside the eye due to glaucoma or other eye diseases. New Jersey-based Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Inc is recalling the affected lot of Xelpros (latanoprost ophthalmic emulsion) due to 'out of specification for particulate matter test'. The company initiated the voluntary Class III recall in the US on April 22 this year, the USFDA stated. In a separate filing, the USFDA stated that a US-based arm of Dr Reddy's Laboratories is recalling 1,176 bottles of an immunosuppressant medication. Dr Reddy's Laboratories Inc is recalling the affected lot of Sirolimus Tablets due to 'Failed Impurities/Degradation Specifications', the USFDA said.



India to grow 7% in FY25: RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian economy is projected to grow at 7 per cent -- the fastest among major economies across the world -- in the current fiscal year, underpinned by a sustained strengthening of macroeconomic fundamentals, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its latest annual report on Thursday.

While the central bank expected headline inflation to moderate further, it flagged risks to food inflation saying that it remains vulnerable to supply-side shocks.

The RBI's balance sheet size surged 11.08 per cent to Rs 70.48 lakh crore (about USD 845 billion) as of March 31, 2024. This was nearly 2.5 times that of Pakistan's entire GDP of close to USD 340 billion.

The Indian economy, it said, expanded at a robust pace in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024 financial year), with real GDP growth accelerating to 7.6 per cent from 7.0 per cent in the previous year -- the third consecutive year of 7 per cent or above growth pace. The economy showed



The GDP growth is robust on the back of solid investment demand which is supported by healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, the government's focus on capital expenditure and prudent monetary, regulatory and fiscal policies, it said, adding the Indian economy is navigating the drag from an adverse global macroeconomic and financial environment

resilience in FY24 (2023-24 fiscal) despite persistent headwinds.

The GDP growth is robust on the back of solid investment demand which is supported by healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, the govern-

ment's focus on capital expenditure and prudent monetary, regulatory and fiscal policies, it said, adding the Indian economy is navigating the drag from an adverse global macroeconomic and financial environment.

Also, MSPs for both kharif and rabi seasons 2023-24 ensured a minimum return of 50 per cent over cost of production for all crops, it said.

Indian economy, the report said, is well-placed to step up growth trajectory over the next decade in an environment of macroeconomic and financial stability.

"As headline inflation eases towards the target, it will spur consumption demand especially in rural areas," it said.

It further said the external sector's strength and buffers in the form of foreign exchange reserves will insulate domestic economic activity from global spillovers.

The report, however, added that geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, global financial market volatility, international commodity price movements and erratic weather developments pose downside risks to the growth outlook and upside risks to the inflation outlook.

"The real GDP growth for 2024-25 is projected at 7.0 per cent with risks evenly balanced," it said.

RBI's dividend transfer may ease deposit rates if govt spends it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Thursday said the Rs 2.11 lakh crore dividend transfer by the RBI is likely to ease liquidity pressure and bring down deposit rates in the banking system if the government spends the amount.

It said the mega dividend will give a fillip to the central government's fiscal position, which may lead to additional spending or fiscal consolidation or a combination of both. However, the structural challenges for banks in terms of deposit accretion will continue in the medium to long term.

"The agency expects the RBI's Rs 2.1 trillion dividend transfer to the government will improve the liquidity conditions and alleviate heightened pressure on the banking system deposit, leading to the easing of pressure on cost of liabilities for banks in the near term," Ind-Ra said in a statement.

No proposal made to Maldives for FTA: India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said it has not made any proposal to the Maldives for a bilateral free trade agreement (DTA) and that it was ready to consider if the island nation expresses interest for such a pact.

"No specific proposal for a bilateral FTA with the Maldives has been made by the Government of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"If the Government of Maldives expresses interest in having an FTA with India, we will give it due consideration," he said.

Jaiswal's comments came in response to a question at his weekly media briefing.

Last week, Maldivian Minister for Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed indicated that India has initiated efforts to have an FTA between the two countries.

"They (India) want there to



"No specific proposal for a bilateral FTA with the Maldives has been made by the Government of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said

be a Free Trade Agreement with Maldives, in addition to SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement)," Saeed told a press conference in Male.

The Maldives President has offered this opportunity to all countries, Saeed said, adding that the government aims to enter into such agreements with as many countries as possible to offer ease in trade activities.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under strain since November last year when President Mohamed

Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took the oath.

Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country.

The last of the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians earlier this month.

The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and the overall bilateral ties including in areas of defence and security witnessed an upward trajectory under the previous government in Male.

Capital needs to remain high for corporates: Moody's

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Ratings on Thursday said capital requirements will remain high for Indian corporates as they go in for capacity expansion and inorganic growth spending.

Moody's estimates that 16 of the 23 rated companies will require USD 70-100 billion of funding annually in the next two years for growth spending, refinancing requirements and shareholder payments.

While improving domestic liquidity and companies' internal cash flows can cover a large portion of their capital needs, offshore funding will remain an important funding channel, it said.

"Capacity expansion, inorganic growth spending, refinancing and working capital needs, along with shareholder

payments, will keep capital requirements high for non-financial corporates in India," Moody's Ratings said in a statement.

It said capital spending by non-financial corporates will remain high as they expand their capacities to cater to the strong consumption growth expected in the country, at a time when their capacity utilization is already high.

Expectations of strong consumption growth are driven by India's growing population, rising disposable incomes and favourable demographic trends, including a young population and rising urbanisation, Moody's said.

The government's ongoing infrastructure spending also results in a multiplier effect on demand across industrial sectors including steel, cement, automobiles and oil and gas.

Sensex, Nifty tumble nearly 1 pc; extend losses to 5th day

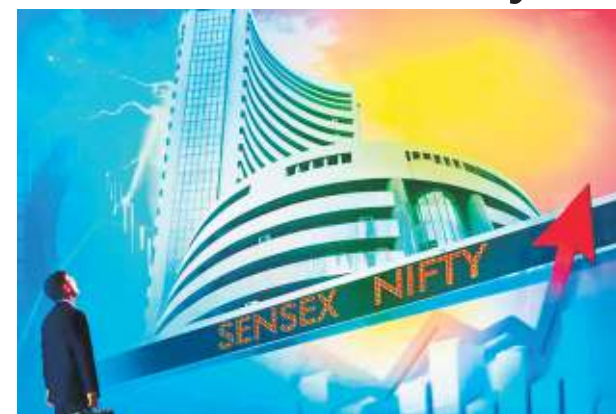
PNS ■ MUMBAI

Falling for the fifth day in a row, benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 1 per cent each on Thursday due to heavy sell-off in metal, consumer durables and select IT shares amid the monthly expiry of derivatives contracts.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged by 617.30 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,885.60. The barometer hit the day's low of 73,668.73 due to selling in blue-chips. In the five days of fall, the barometer tanked 1,532 points or 2 per cent. The index has been on a downtrend since May 23 when it closed at its lifetime high level.

The NSE Nifty dropped by 216.05 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 22,488.65. The index has lost 479 points in the five sessions to Thursday.

Analysts said investors remained cautious, ahead of the 2024 general election results, which are set to be announced next week. The electioneering halted on Thursday ahead of the last



phase of polls to be held on June 1. The results will be declared on June 4.

"The benchmark index is taking cues from the US market as treasury yields continue to climb following the stickiness of global inflation, delaying the central bank's interest rates cut policy," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Titan, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Nestle India, Tata Motors and JSW Steel were the

biggest laggards.

ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the gainers.

"The broader market continued the weak trend, led by profit booking, due to feeble closing of monthly expiry owing to lack of interest to hold short-term positions, as exit poll is slated in the weekend," Nair said.

Sensex and the NSE Nifty have experienced their fifth consecutive session of losses, resulting in investors losing

nearly Rs 10 lakh crore in market wealth.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 1.21 per cent, while smallcap index plunged 1.33 per cent.

Among the indices, metal dropped 2.67 per cent, consumer durables and Commodities went lower 2.05 per cent each, IT (1.97 per cent), healthcare (1.64 per cent), Teck (1.54 per cent), Auto (1.37 per cent), and Services (1.25 per cent).

Bankex was the only gainer. As many as 2,622 stocks declined while 1,190 advanced and 105 remained unchanged on the BSE.

According to market experts, weak global cues, rising US bond yields, and waning hopes of early interest rate cuts have also contributed to the recent rout in the stock markets.

Shares of Edelweiss Financial Services tumbled nearly 12 per cent after the Reserve Bank imposed business restrictions on Edelweiss Group's lending and asset reconstruction arms on concerns over evergreening of loans.

Investors bought Rs 27,000 cr of sovereign gold bonds: RBI report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Sovereign gold bonds have caught the fancy of investors who bought Rs 27,031 crore worth of the bonds last fiscal, an amount more than four times invested in 2022-23 on the prospects of higher returns and tax benefits.

The bonds bought by investors represented a whopping 44.34 tonne of gold during 2023-24. In 2022-23, Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) represent-

ing 12.26 tonne of gold were purchased for Rs 6,551 crore. "The aggregate sum raised during 2023-24 amounted to Rs 27,031 crore (44.34 tonne)," said the annual report of Reserve Bank, which issues the bonds on behalf of the central government.

During the fiscal ended March 2024, the bonds were issued through four tranches. Since the inception of SGB scheme in November 2015, a total of Rs 72,274 crore (146.96 tonne) has been raised through 67 tranches.

The price of 24 karat per 10

gram of gold has gone up from about Rs 62,300 to Rs 73,200 in one year.

SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold. They are substitutes for holding physical gold. These bonds are exempt from capital gains tax.

Besides, the bonds bear interest at the rate of 2.50 per cent (fixed rate) per annum on the amount of initial investment.

SGBs are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in multiples thereof.

Minimum investment should be one gram with a limit of 4 kg subscription for individuals, 4 kg for Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities notified by the government from time to time per fiscal year (April - March).

SGBs are sold through offices or branches of nationalised banks, Scheduled Private Banks, Scheduled Foreign Banks, designated Post Offices, Stock Holding Corporation of India Ltd. (SHCIL) and the authorised stock exchanges either directly or through their agents.

Rooftop solar installations fall 26 pc to 367 MW: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rooftop solar capacity installations in India registered a 26 per cent year-on-year decline to 367 megawatts during January-March period, mainly on account of rise in input cost, according to Mercom Capital.

The country had witnessed 485 megawatt (MW) of rooftop solar installations during the first quarter of 2023, the research firm said in a report on Friday.

India added 367 MW of rooftop solar in the March quarter.

Installations fell nearly 10 per cent quarter-over-quarter from 406 MW and dropped over 24 per cent year-on-year from 485 MW, the report titled 'Q1 India Rooftop Solar Market' said. India's cumulative rooftop solar capacity was 10.8 GW as of March 2024.

"The drop in installations was largely a result of application

processing delays faced by residential customers due to over-subscription under the PM SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA programme. The rise in module prices to comply with domestic content requirements (DCR) further contributed to reduced capacity additions under the SURYA Gujarat program," it said.

The industrial segment led quarterly capacity additions, comprising almost 57 per cent of installations. Commercial, residential, and government segments accounted for around 28 per cent, 14 per cent, and 1.1 per cent of capacity additions, respectively.

Mercom Capital Group CEO Raj Prabhu said, "Although rooftop solar is off to a slow start, 2024 could be a breakout year if the government's residential rooftop programme with attractive incentives.

Sebi launches settlement calculator

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday launched a beta version of the settlement calculator to simplify the process of arriving at the indicative settlement amount, and provide more transparency in the system.

This settlement calculator contains fields that the applicant can identify in terms of the violations.

It also enables the applicant to select appropriate options with respect to their past regulatory track record on the basis of actions of Sebi as well as the details of other ongoing proceedings as on date of filing the settlement application. Besides, a user-friendly guide video has been included in the settlement calculator for the ease of understanding the process of arriving at the indicative settlement amount.

FDI inflows decline 3.5 pc to \$44 billion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows in India declined 3.49 per cent to USD 44.42 billion in 2023-24 due to lower infusion in sectors such as services, computer hardware and software, telecom, auto and pharma, according to the government data.

FDI inflows stood at USD 46.03 billion during 2022-23. Inflows during January-March FY24, however, rose by 33.4 per cent to USD 12.38 billion as against USD 9.28 billion in the year-ago period.

The total FDI -- which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital -- declined marginally by one per cent to USD 70.95 billion during 2023-24 from USD 71.35 billion in 2022-23, data from Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) showed.

In 2021-22, the country

received the highest ever FDI inflows of USD 84.83 billion.

During the last fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Mauritius, Singapore, the US, the UK, UAE, Cayman Islands, Germany, and Cyprus.

However, inflows increased from the Netherlands and Japan.

Sectorally, inflows contracted in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunication, automobile, pharma and chemicals.

In contrast, construction (infrastructure) activities, development and power sectors registered healthy growth in inflows during the period under review.

FDI equity inflows into India declined 22 per cent in 2022-23. The data also showed that Maharashtra received the highest inflow of USD 15.1 billion during the last fiscal. It was USD 14.8 billion in 2022-23.

'E-commerce, BFSI, hospitality sectors driving job market'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

E-commerce, BFSI (banking, financial services, and insurance), and hospitality sectors witnessed an increased demands for talents in the first four months of 2024, indicating a recovery in overall job market, a report said on Thursday.

Driven by economic recovery, the demand for workforce in BFSI increased the maximum by 21 per cent during the first four months of this calendar year. The e-commerce sector saw an increase of 17 per cent, services and hospitality industries reported a growth of 13 per cent, according to a report by professional networking platform Apna.

The report is based on the data on Apna platform during 2023 and 2024.

It also found that the job market in the southern part of India saw a growth of 23 per



the forefront of the growth in the job landscape. This trend showcases the strength of southern India's job market and underscores the expanding opportunities fuelled by digitalisation.

"From bustling metropolitan areas to emerging tier II and tier III cities like Lucknow, Coimbatore, and Gwalior, our platform reflects a dynamic landscape, offering promising prospects for job seekers nationwide," apna.co CEO and founder Nirmitt Parikh said.

The platform has registered a 21 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of job applications from freshers and an 18 per cent rise from women job seekers during the reporting period.

The total number of applications received during the period reached approximately 1.7 crore, up 15 per cent from a year ago, the report added.

'I would love to travel with Taapsee Pannu'

TEJAL SINHA

There is so much beauty in London that you will want to stay longer than you expected. It is one of the world's most popular tourist and travel destinations. Every street and lane in London is carefully designed to reflect the city's long history.

ACTRESS DEEPTI SADHWANI, WHO IS NO LESS THAN AN AVID TRAVELLER, TAKES THE PIONEER THROUGH HER RECENT TRAVELS TO LONDON AND SHARES HER MEMORIES FROM THE TRIP.



But you know what? London isn't a new destination for Deepti Sadhwani because there was a time when she was working in London as an investment banker. "I'm very well aware of the culture, how things go around there, the places, the roads, and everything. I'm very comfortable with that place," begins the *Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* fame for our weekly segment of Travelogue.

Recalling her recent trip to the beautiful land where she was for a shoot, she recalls, "It was a bright sunny day, and we did around 3 looks. We were shooting for a celebrity hairstylist, Dar, along with Daniel, who was the photographer, so it was so much fun around shooting in London, also because at that time a lot of shoots were going on, so I met Aamir Khan, Shabana Azmi, Javed Akhtar, and Rohit Shetty, so it felt like being in almost India with almost all of them around."

Talking of London, something that she really enjoys is its heritage. The fact that it's so British and so English, be it the buildings, the monuments, or the or the culture, is something much mesmerising for her. One gets to witness the old culture and heritage there, with its scenic beauty.

Travelling without experiencing the authentic cuisine of the place makes the trip feel incomplete. And talking of London, she shares, "At every corner, you have an Indian restaurant; you get Lebanese, Chinese, Thai, and Continental. You name it, and you have it! The tourism there is so diverse that people from every part of the world live in London. I have a lot of friends there and have spent a lot of time there, and that's not like a new city for me, and I actually meet a lot of locals, and it's very common for me to interact with locals over there."

Deepti, in our chat, reveals herself as a water baby who enjoys nothing but water. And so, boat rides are something she loves the most, more than road rides. "Life on water and in the in the sea is very different from living on land. I like the observations, the dos and don'ts, how they live, and the spirits are really high," she shares as she goes on to recall a memorable boat ride

in London: "There was this saxophonist who was there with me on one of the boat rides. So the boat was a very English kind of boat, and I was on the Thames River. That day, the weather was not good, so there were no other boats. There was just this boat that was sailing that day, and it was drizzling. The saxophonist was playing these beautiful songs, and it was amazing being there at the Thames."

India, no doubt, holds a special place in her heart, especially for its diverse culture, language, and cuisine. "I love travelling in India as well, and not only across the globe. I feel first that you should complete your own country. How many of us would have visited all the places in India? We haven't. From Kerala to Kashmir, there's so much. From Assam to Bombay to Kolkata to the hills and valleys in Kashmir to Delhi to down south, there's so much in our country."

Sometimes choosing the right hotel feels like a staycation in itself, and our guest for the day couldn't agree much to us as she shares, "Yes, choosing the right hotel is very important for your stay. It makes or breaks your vacation or travel. I also have the habit of choosing a lot of Airbnbs during my travels in European countries because I feel that they are better kept than the hotels and are more spacious. There are good hosts around. Even in London, I had this 2BHK Airbnb right at the Beckingham gate. So I feel it's not necessary to be in a hotel, but choosing the right kind of hotel and knowing the facilities that are there. I am someone who loves to swim and workout. So I want the hotel that has these facilities."

We are sure many would agree with Deepti, as she shares that her home is her rejuvenation place and that she finds peace there. "I love to travel and explore. I have travelled to multiple countries. I have three passports, which I have completed by now, but the place that gives me that peace is my home. I have my dog with me and have a massage at home only. I would do so many things around, but I feel there's nothing better than your home."

For any avid travelling, experiencing something

unexpected can turn out to be a nightmare. Sometimes these experiences also teach you, especially about being modest and about the little space you occupy on this big Earth. However, for her, it was not actually like a nightmare, but she did experience something: "I was travelling from London to Amsterdam, and I was at the train station and was just going to get a trolley for my bags, and in that one minute of time, somebody took off my trolley bags that had my laptop and all my cosmetics in them. I tried to file a complaint, but it was my mistake that I didn't have an air tag on it. The bag just went away, and I never found it. These things definitely make you feel bad, and the next day I had to accept and not spoil the rest of my trip."

For her, travel is all about meeting yourself, especially when you travel solo. Deepti, who prefers making friends on the trip rather than pre-deciding who to go with, shares on a concluding note, "I would love to travel with Taapsee Pannu because I have seen her travel vlogs with her sister. They both like to travel a lot, and they explore a lot of places. I think she will be an amazing travel partner because she loves and enjoys travel."



Travelogue

Stay shielded with breathing easy

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Jai Dhar Gupta, motivated by his own fight with bronchial asthma caused by pollution, established Nirvana Being in 2014 to pioneer life-saving clean air solutions in India. His constant pursuit of Switzerland-quality air has propelled him to the forefront of clean-air technologies, transforming both outdoor and indoor environments across the country.

They have now pioneered anti-pollution masks in India! The World Health Organisation (WHO) does not have particular guidelines for indoor air quality, but the American Society for Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE) do. These organisations develop rules for ventilation and filtration in interior areas. Proper ventilation and filtration are essential for the health and well-being of interior environments.

Nirvana Being was created, not out of inspiration but out of need, and Jai explains, "I recognised the need of maintaining a clean air environment both indoors and outdoors in order to continue living there. This led to the formation."

In order to get more traction in the health and wellness industry and to improve human processes organically, they have developed this range of nutraceutical confectionery. Rather than encouraging consumers to drink unhealthy and high-sugar energy drinks, they concentrated on giving a natural energy boost. Even Indian Premier League cricket players take energy gum, but they discovered that lozenges—which dissolve more gradually in the mouth are more comfortable and

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, we bring to you our interaction with Jai Dhar Gupta, the founder of Nirvana Being that brings together science and sustainability with the aim of protecting others through the polluted air.

convenient. They offer the advantages of a cup of coffee without the risk of spilling, making them ideal for lengthy car rides when individuals might feel weary.

Concerns about women's safety in rapidly urbanising India and environmental degradation drove them into the non-lethal weapons area. Young people frequently experience low pay and subpar housing circumstances when they re-

locate to cities in pursuit of greater prospects, which causes anxiety and raises security concerns, particularly for women and children. The collaboration with MACE was ideal. Additionally, they have worked with the Delhi police to modernise their forces by supplying them with non-lethal Sten guns and take-down sprays, enhancing security in the city. "I am really passionate about wellness and clean energy. However, I believe that accepting the urgency of the situation is more important than trying to strike a compromise. The declining quality of the air we're experiencing just strengthens my resolve to change things through clean air projects," he says.

Because of intensive monitoring, regions have a high level of public knowledge regarding the detrimental effects of air pollution. However, this problem goes far beyond. Consider Mumbai, where a large number of individuals are ignorant of how serious their air quality issues are. It faces severe pollution despite being a seaside city because of things like constant building and a dense population. He adds, "I've come to the conclusion that traditional activism is insufficient to address emission concerns. For this reason, I've changed my emphasis to growing forests in order to create carbon sinks. In just five to six years, this bold project seeks to create mature forests with zero carbon footprints. Not only are we combating air pollution by planting thousands of trees every year in the buffer zones of tiger reserves and national parks, but we're also protecting biodiversity and habitats that are at risk from land change. This multimodal strategy enables us to address environmental degradation from various perspectives, resulting in a significant impact on air quality, biodiversity, and habitat preservation."

Elevate your culinary experience with the art of cheese pairing

Cheese – who doesn't love it? It's a food that's both simple and fancy, perfect with crackers, bread, fruits, wine, or as an ingredient in countless dishes. This National Cheese Day, we celebrate the rich history, intricate process, and delightful pairings that make cheese a beloved staple in our culinary repertoire.

Basics of cheese making

The magic of cheese lies in its simple yet transformative process. First, they introduce bacteria or enzymes to sour the milk, causing the milk proteins to separate as curds. These curds are then pressed, salted, and shaped, before embarking on a fascinating journey of aging. This aging process, which can last from days to years, is where the cheese develops its unique character - from the creamy comfort of brie to the sharp bite of cheddar. During this time, cheesemakers meticulously control factors like temperature, moisture, and the addition of herbs or spices, resulting in a stunning variety of textures and flavours.

Nutritional benefits of cheese

Cheese isn't just delicious, it's a valuable source of protein, calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin A. Some varieties even boast probiotics, friendly bacteria that promote gut health and immunity. However, moderation is key. Cheese can be high in fat, calories, sodium, and cholesterol. Additionally, those with lactose intolerance or milk allergies may need to steer clear.

Top cheese pairings

Cheese truly becomes a symphony of flavour when paired with the right complements. Let's explore some classic pairings:

- Cheese and crackers:** A timeless combination! Soft, spreadable cheeses like ricotta or brie find perfect partners in crisp, neutral-flavoured crackers. These crackers provide the perfect platform for the cheese's creamy texture to take center stage

- Cheese and bread:** A match made in heaven-bread offers a delightful textural contrast to cheese. Crusty baguettes pair beautifully with semi-firm cheeses like Gruyere, while softer breads complement creamy cheeses like Camembert.

- Cheese on-the-go:** For those of us with busy lives, single-serving cheese packets are a lifesaver. Handy little packs come in a variety of flavours and are perfect for picnics, lunchboxes, or whenever a cheese craving strikes. Pair them with crackers, bread slices, or even fruit for a quick and satisfying bite

- Cheese and fruits:** This pairing might surprise you, but it's an explosion of flavours! Sweet and juicy fruits like grapes, pears, or figs create a delightful contrast to the savoury notes of cheese. Think creamy goat cheese with sliced pears or sharp cheddar with sweet grapes.

- Wine and cheese:** There's a reason this pairing has stood the test of time. The right wine can take your cheese experience to a whole new level. For example, a bold red wine complements sharp cheeses like cheddar, while a light and fruity white wine pairs beautifully with milder cheeses like brie. This National Cheese Day, take the time to explore these pairings and discover new ways to enjoy your favourite cheeses. Whether you're a cheese connoisseur or just beginning your journey into the world of cheese, there's always something new and exciting to learn and taste.



what's brewing?

Chennai-based Advanced Gro Hair and Glo Skin has launched its 7th clinic at Kukatpally Road No. 1. The clinic was inaugurated by the managing director of the clinic, Saran Vel J and Vijetha Super Markets Pvt. Ltd., M. Jagan Mohan Rao.

Amazon India launches ML Summer School

Amazon India announced the registration dates for the fourth edition of Machine Learning (ML) Summer School, an immersive program that aims to provide students with the opportunity to gain key machine learning skills and technologies from scientists at Amazon. The registration period will run from 31 May to 21 June, 2024. The free educational course will be conducted over 4 weeks in July, covering eight modules that will provide students with an opportunity to gain skills on key ML topics.

ICICI Prudential Life settles death claims in just 1.27 days

The claim settlement ratio of ICICI Prudential Life stood at 99.17% in FY2024, one of the best in the industry. Significantly, the average turnaround time taken to settle a genuine death claim was just 1.27 days. For the fiscal year ended 2024, the company paid out a total of Rs. 1,867 crore as death claims.

Concentrations of cultural institutions

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has reaffirmed that Saadiyat Cultural District, along with its cultural institutions, is on track for completion in 2025. Saadiyat Cultural District is a global platform, emanating from a rich cultural heritage, celebrating traditions, and advancing equitable culture. Once completed, the diversity of Saadiyat Cultural District's institutions will make the district one of the most unique cultural platforms.

Varanasi to host Toyota's event

The Toyota Mobility Foundation (TMF) announced that Varanasi along with two global cities, Detroit and Venice, have been selected to host innovation challenges as part of the Toyota Mobility Foundation's Sustainable Cities Challenge. The goal of the \$9 million global initiative is to help cities accelerate toward sustainable mobility, fostering healthier and safer urban environments while enhancing people's ability to commute, work, study, and access services.

Sukriti now available in 20 states & 2 UTs

Kshema General Insurance Limited, announced the availability of its flagship crop insurance product Sukriti along with Prakriti in 20 states and two union territories of India. Kshema Sukriti's wider reach is a boon for farmers and their family members with insurable incomes. They can register for free and buy the crop insurance policy for only Rs 499 per acre to protect their crops.

IBAI engages IRDAI in progressive dialogue

The Insurance Brokers Association of India (IBAI) engaged in a deliberation session with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) at the Bima Vitarak Manthan. During the session at the Bima Vitarak Manthan, IBAI proposed initiatives to IRDAI for enhancing insurance awareness, developing innovative products, and fostering career opportunities in the insurance sector.

Sparx unveils its new spring summer range

Sparx has launched its product range for Spring Summer Collection 2024. The new range exudes stylish design and seamlessly blends functionality with fashion. Featuring adjustable fits, the new range support users of all genders and ages in their daily activities. The collection also offers a range of ultra-comfortable and trendy slippers.

TTTI students excel at IndiaSkills competition 2024

In a significant step towards supporting the "Skill India Mission" and "Viksit Bharat 2047," Toyota Technical Training Institute (TTTI) announced the exceptional performance of its students at the IndiaSkills Competition 2024, organised by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). Prem V earned a gold medal in additive manufacturing as an individual competitor.

LEAD sees 80% growth in students scoring above 90%

The 2024 batch of Class 10 students of LEAD has achieved a significant milestone in their CBSE board exam results. This year, 161 LEAD students scored above 90%, compared to 90 students last year. LEAD offers a complete system to schools to ace board exams with detailed lesson plans, resources for teachers, practice tests and mock exams for students. Additionally, the LEAD app provides students with unlimited practice opportunities, further supporting their exam preparation.

Innovation at ELASIA 2024

Delixi Electric announced its participation in ELASIA 2024, the 10th International Exhibition of Power Electrical and Lighting. Delixi Electric was launched in India in 2023. The brand brings to the event its advanced power distribution and industrial control products.

\$1,000,000 in scholarships

Students of Texas International Academy (TIA), an Intermediate College in Hyderabad, have achieved a remarkable milestone by collectively securing \$1,000,000 in scholarships to pursue B.Tech at some of the prestigious universities in the United States.

For the future of Indian girls

Whisper has created history by launching the nation's own Period Song, with India's biggest voices – Shreya Ghoshal and Sunidhi Chauhan. Both the musicians created their own versions of the 'Period Song', launching it on World Menstrual Hygiene Day. Through this catchy tune with very relevant, educative lyrics for young minds, the intent is to get every Indian to sing it and believe – Periods is a sign of being healthy.

Decoding 'Solve for Tomorrow'

Samsung's 'Solve for Tomorrow' serves as a platform that enables the convergence of innovative concepts that help in finding solutions for some of the most pressing global issues. This initiative transcends theory, extending an invitation to young innovators to lead and collaborate in building a sustainable future. The 'Solve for Tomorrow' platform recognises the importance of harnessing innovation for yielding advancements.



The 16th edition of the Hyderabad Jewellery Pearl and Gem Fair (HJF) is being organised by Informa Markets and is going to be held from June 7 to June 9 at the Hitex exhibition, Hall No. 4. Over 8,000 trade visitors are expected to attend the fair, with more than 350 exhibitors showcasing over 700 brands and 2,00,000 designs.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2		3	4	5
		6			
7		8			
		9			
10				12	
11					
		13			
14					
16				17	
18				19	

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Pepper might make you do this
- Use needles and wool to make something
- Quick
- Spread this on bread
- Rich
- Injured
- Repaired
- Factual
- Utters
- A weight to stop a boat drifting

DOWN

- Not in danger
- Less difficult

SOLUTION

N	E	I	G	H	B	O	R		
W	H	A	R	E	A				
T	I	E	J	E	M	S			
C	K	E	S						
H	I	M	E	T	P	R			
L	O	T	F	L	A	N			
D	O	V	E	L	A	N			
E	L	A	S						
A	R	G	E	N	T	I			

Vishwak Sen: I refuse to be pigeonholed as a Telangana actor

AHEAD OF THE FILM'S RELEASE, ACTOR VISHWAK SEN, OPENED UP ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE PORTRAYING THE LEAD CHARACTER IN *GANGS OF GODAVARI* WITH US IN A QUICK CHAT.

RAMYA SREE

This week, at the box office, three films have had a tug of war. Of the three films, *Gangs of Godavari* is one of the most ambitious films that actor Vishwak Sen is releasing. Directed by Krishna Chaitanya, the film stars actress Anjali and Neha Sshetty play female leads.

Bankrolled by S Naga Vamsi, the film has now hit cinemas. Ahead of the film's release, actor Vishwak Sen, renowned for his dynamic on-screen presence, opened up about his experience portraying the lead character in *Gangs of Godavari* with us in a quick interview. He shared, "When I signed on for *Gangs of Godavari*, I anticipated a film catering primarily to the youth. However, upon viewing the first cut, I realised its broader appeal transcends age groups. This film doesn't rely on vulgarity or

cringe-worthy moments. While some may find certain dialogues in the trailer distracting, one's perception of a film is shaped by their individual taste and perspective on life."

The actor also delved into the evolving landscape of Telugu cinema, drawing parallels with global cinematic trends as he expressed, "There's been a lot of buzz about Telugu cinema's global reach. Audiences today appreciate raw, unfiltered storytelling akin to classics like *The Godfather* and *Scarface*, or popular series like *Game of Thrones*. *Gangs Of Godavari* too embraces this ethos, featuring an intense pre-intermission fight devoid of slow motion or bombastic background scores. It's a calculated risk, but filmmaking is about pushing boundaries and evolving with the times."

Reflecting on his portrayal of the Godavari slang, he emphasised, "I was particularly mindful of nailing the Godavari dialect. I wanted to ensure my performance

felt genuine and avoided any criticism. Having seen the film, I believe I've done justice to the role and will not disappoint. I refuse to be pigeonholed as a Telangana actor. *Gangs Of Godavari* marks a pivotal moment in Telugu cinema, and I say this with confidence after a recent screening."

He also hinted at the potential for a sequel as he spilled, "While a sequel is on the cards, unlike *Hit*, I'll be reprising the lead role. *Gangs Of Godavari* isn't just a standalone film; it's the beginning of an enduring cinematic journey."

As anticipation mounts for its release, *Gangs Of Godavari* promises to redefine Telugu cinema, driven by Vishwak Sen's transformative performance and a narrative that transcends conventional boundaries.



It's official! Ranveer Singh exits Prasanth Varma's project

Rumours have been going around that the film *Rakshas*, which was said to be directed by Prasanth Varma and headlined by powerhouse Ranveer Singh, the duo, decided to part ways on the project due to creative differences. Amid speculations from various industry sources, the makers and actors

Singh mentioned, "Prasanth is a very special talent. We met and explored the idea of a film together. Hopefully, we will collaborate on something exciting in the future."

Prasanth Varma said, "Ranveer's energy and talent are rare to find. We shall manifest our forces, combining soon, sometime in the future."

Both parties, including Mythri Movie Makers, agree that everyone's intentions were right to make it happen, but sometimes things weren't meant to be at that time. The team shook hands with a promise to associate in times to come.



Vijay Antony's poetic action film *Toofan* teaser launched



Hero Vijay Antony, well-known to South audiences through various films, is set to appear before the audience with the film *Toofan*. Recently, his movie *Love Guru* achieved significant success in Telugu. *Toofan* is being produced by Kamal Bora, D. Lalitha, B. Pradeep, and Pankaj Bora under the banner of Infinity Film Ventures. This company previously produced *Raghavan* and *Hathya*, both starring Vijay Antony. Directed by Vijay Milton, *Toofan* is a poetic action entertainer. The story revolves around a man who changed the future of a society that once looked down on him. Currently, the shooting of *Toofan* is in its final stages. The filming, set on an island, took place in Andaman and Diu Daman. The film is scheduled for a grand theatrical release in June. Recently, the teaser for *Toofan* was released at Hyderabad's Prasad Labs. During the event hero Vijay Antony said, "*Toofan* is an action-packed movie. It will appeal to all sections of the audience. Our producers have invested significantly, ensuring high production values without compromising anywhere. Our director, Vijay Milton, has worked

on many films as a cinematographer. He was the cinematographer for the Telugu film *Premitsa*. It was a pleasure working with Vijay, Bhashyasree has been continuously traveling with me. This movie will also bring him good recognition. Producer Vamsi Nandipati, who will be associated with *Bicchagadu 2*, has my appreciation for attending this program. *Toofan* features a cast of well-known actors like Sathyaraj, Sarath Kumar, and Daali Dhanunjaya. We are planning to release it in June. I hope you all like it. My recent words about reviewers were not intended for everyone. The movie is our baby. Just as you would get angry if someone insulted your baby, we feel hurt when someone criticises our hard work. We mentioned that our movie could suffer due to reviews from a few people with bad intentions. It was a personal response. The media has the right to review movies, and I respect that freedom. Recently, some Telugu movies haven't been well received in theatres, but films like *Hanuman* and *Tillu Square* did well at the box office. If the content is good, the audience will surely come to the theatres."

Action packed trailer of *Weapon* out now

Weapon, directed by Sathyaraj, is not your average action film. A spectacular mix of drama, suspense, and action, it's likely to delight fans of action films. A fascinating trailer for the upcoming action-thriller *Weapon*, starring Sathyaraj and Vasanth Ravi, has been released by the film's directors. The film, which is directed by Guhan Senniappan, stars Rajiv Menon, Tanya Hope, and Rajeev Pillai among its impressive cast. In the teaser, Sathyaraj is portrayed as an unstoppable superhuman, and Vasanth Ravi and his group are assigned the difficult task of defeating him. Produced by Million Studio's MS Manzoor, *Weapon* showcases a remarkable cast of actors, including Benito Franklin, Mime Gopi,



Harom Hara trailer offers riveting action thriller with unique story

Sudheer Babu, known for his versatility in choosing roles, is all set to enthrall audiences with his upcoming film *Harom Hara*. Directed by Gnanasagar Dwaraka of *Sehari* fame, this intense action thriller is produced by Sumanth G Naidu under the banner of SSC (Sree Subrahmanyeswara Cinemas). As anticipation mounts, the makers unveiled the theatrical trailer on the auspicious occasion of Superstar Krishna's birth anniversary on Thursday.

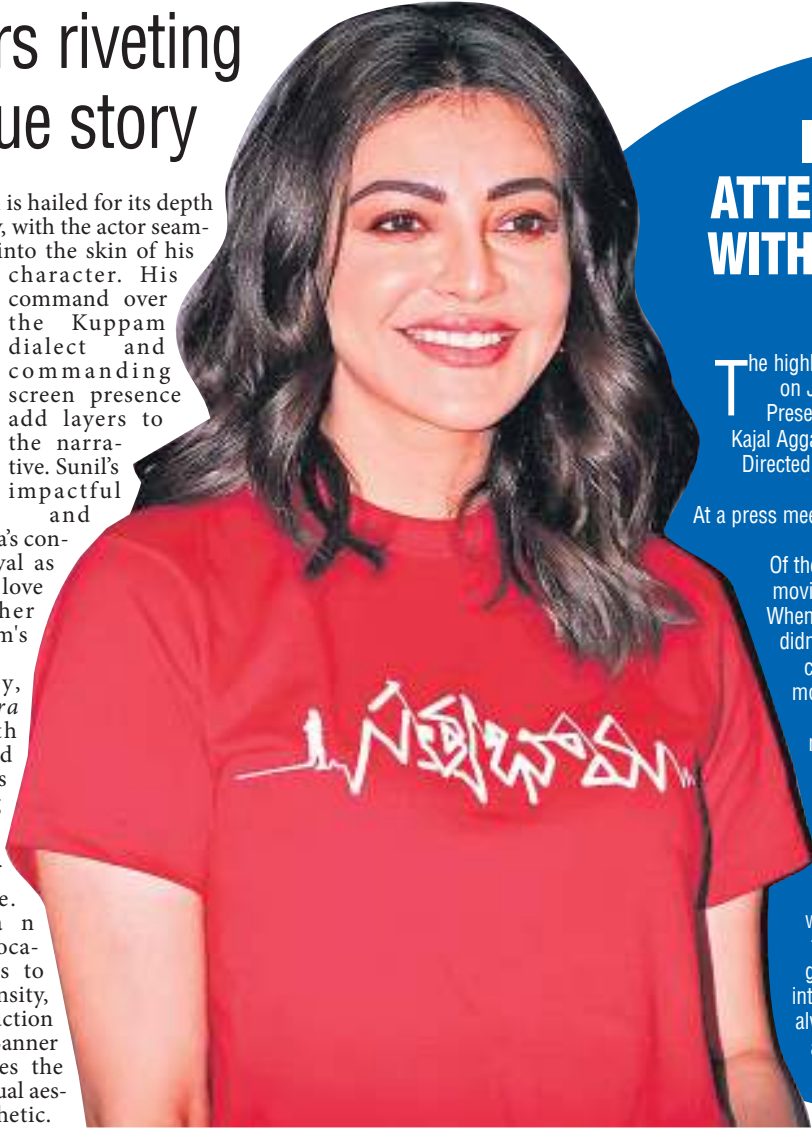
The trailer offers a glimpse into the intriguing narrative of *Harom Hara*, set against the backdrop of 1989 in the Kuppam region of Chittoor district. Sudheer Babu portrays the role of Subrahmanyam, a gunslinger who seizes a golden opportunity amidst escalating violence in the city. As Subrahmanyam delves into the clandestine world of gun-making, he finds himself entangled in a web of danger and intrigue, with law enforcement hot on his trail.

Director Gnanasagar Dwaraka's bold choice of subject matter sets *Harom Hara* apart, marking a departure from conventional narratives in Tollywood. The trailer is a testament to his directorial prowess, with powerful dialogues and captivating visuals that promise an immersive cinematic experience. Sudheer Babu's portrayal of

Subrahmanyam is hailed for its depth and authenticity, with the actor seamlessly slipping into the skin of his character. His command over the Kuppam dialect and commanding screen presence add layers to the narrative. Sunil's impactful performance and Malvika Sharma's convincing portrayal as Sudheer Babu's love interest further enhance the film's appeal.

Technically, *Harom Hara* shines, with Aravind Vishwanathan's breathtaking cinematography capturing the essence of the narrative.

Chaitan Bharadwaj's evocative score adds to the film's intensity, while the production design by SSC Banner elevates the visual aesthetic.



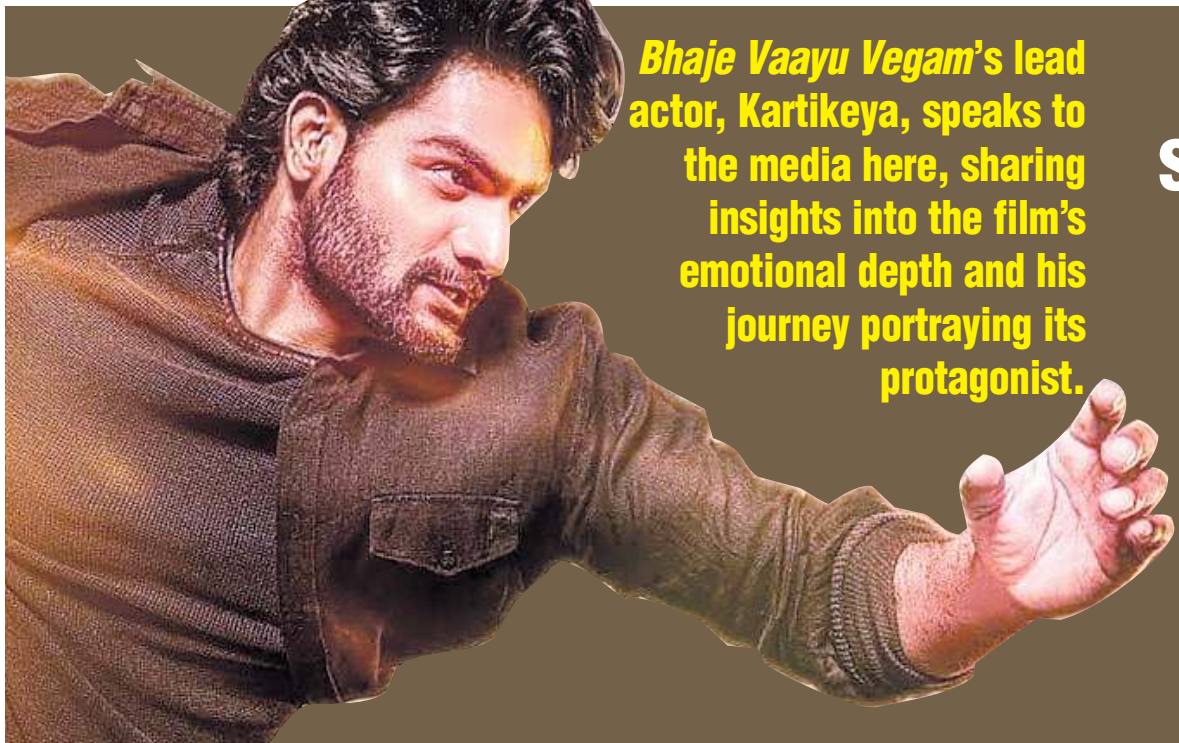
I MADE A NEW ATTEMPT IN MY CAREER WITH *SATYABHAMA*: KAJAL AGGARWAL

The highly anticipated crime thriller *Satyabhama* is all set to hit the silver screen on June 7, promising an enthralling cinematic experience for moviegoers. Presented by the esteemed production company Aarum Arts, the film features Kajal Aggarwal in the lead role, with Naveen Chandra portraying a pivotal character. Directed by Suman Chikkala, *Satyabhama* delves into the intricate world of crime investigation, blending action and emotion seamlessly.

At a press meet held in Hyderabad on Thursday, the cast and crew shared their insights into the making of the film and what audiences can expect. Of them, Kajal Aggarwal expressed, "I made a new attempt in my career with the movie *Satyabhama*. This is the first time I am doing such a character and movie. When I heard the story, I liked it and felt it was new, so I decided to do the movie. I didn't have a specific type of story or character in mind. I will do any genre if the content is good. Before *Satyabhama*, I had many offers for female-oriented movies, but I wanted to take them on only when I was confident enough. I feel a sense of responsibility rather than pressure when doing lady-oriented movies. This film has many new emotions." The actress further continued, "For the first time in my career, I did action and performed huge stunts, working hard for them. *Satyabhama* is not my second innings, but one can think my career will go in another new direction. Acting is my passion, and that's why I returned to movies after focusing on my personal life. In this film, my character balances both personal and professional lives. During the making of this film, we met a senior police officer who explained how criminals today are committing crimes using technology such as gaming and virtual reality. We found his insights very interesting and incorporated them into the story. I've always wanted to do a full-length action movie, and I feel that desire has been fulfilled with *Satyabhama*."

KD - *The Devil's* 'Satyavati' aka Shilpa Shetty, wraps up shooting

Earlier in 2024, Shilpa Shetty enthralled the audience with her performance in the *Indian Police Force*. And now, she is set to impress all as Satyavati in *KD - The Devil (Part 1)*. Shilpa Shetty has wrapped up the last schedule for the *Dhruva Sarja* and *Sanjay Dutt* film in Mysore. In March, it was announced that the actress would be joining KD's battlefield as Satyavati. In the poster, Shilpa was seen sporting a retro look, she wore a polka-dot sari and oversized glasses. *KD - The Devil's* director Prem had called Shilpa a powerhouse and wrote, "A war is between kingdoms, and a kingdom needs a powerful Satyavati." While Shilpa has worked in Kannada films before, in this one she will also be joined by Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi. A period action entertainer based on true events from 1970s Bangalore, *KD - The Devil Part 1* also stars V Ravichandran. KVN Productions presents *KD-The Devil* directed by Prem. The pan-India multilingual is all set to release in Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi.



Bhaje Vaayu Vegam's lead actor, Kartikeya, speaks to the media here, sharing insights into the film's emotional depth and his journey portraying its protagonist.

'BVV offers a blend of heroism, action, sentiment and emotion,' says Kartikeya

RAMYA SREE

In anticipation of the worldwide theatrical release of *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam*, lead actor Kartikeya Gummakonda sat down with the media to share insights into the film's emotional depth and his journey portraying its protagonist. Presented by UV Creations, and produced under the banner of UV Concepts, *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* is directed by Prashant Reddy, featuring Iswarya Menon alongside Kartikeya. Reflecting on his decision to take on the role, Kartikeya remarked: "Prashanth Reddy narrated the script of *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* to me during the lockdown and the emotional resonance of the story struck a chord with me instantly. Despite initially commencing another project, I was drawn back to this film due to its compelling narrative. We took our time with production to ensure we delivered the best possible version to our audience, hence the noticeable change in my appearance throughout the film." Kartikeya emphasised the film's thematic relevance to his current image as an actor: "*Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* aligns perfectly with my evolving persona as an actor. I believe a hero should embody relatable qualities and confront challenges in an inspiring manner. This film offers

a blend of heroism, action, sentiment, and emotion, which resonates deeply with me. While it may not feature the same intensity of action as *Khaidhi*, its emotional drive and gripping storyline captivated me from the start." Regarding the film's musical elements, Kartikeya shed light on the strategic integration of songs within the narrative: "*Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* deviates from the conventional approach to song placement in cinema. Instead of disrupting the flow of the narrative, each song serves to advance the story organically. While one particular song from the film has garnered attention, our focus remains on seamlessly integrating music to enhance the overall storytelling experience." In closing, Kartikeya expressed his appreciation for the collaborative effort behind the film. He shared, "I attribute the success of *Bhaje Vaayu Vegam* entirely to the vision of director Prashanth Reddy. While I offer input on matters close to my heart, the creative direction of the film rests solely with him. Working alongside Rahul Tyson has been a rewarding experience and his involvement adds a fresh dynamic to our on-screen chemistry. As I look ahead, I remain committed to exploring diverse roles and collaborating with talented filmmakers like Prashanth in the future."



WEARING INDIA JERSEY IS DIFFERENT FEELING, HOPE TO MAKE IT COUNT: RISHABH PANT

PTI ■ NEW YORK

It would be 527 days since his life-threatening accident when Rishabh Pant donned the India jersey on June 5 at the Nassau County ground for the opening T20 World Cup match against Ireland and he can't wait for it. On March 23 this year, Pant wore the blue of Delhi Capitals while making an emotional comeback after the horrific car crash in 2022 but he is more eager to wear a different shade of blue -- the 'India Blue' to be specific. "Getting back on the field with an Indian jersey on is a different feeling altogether. This is something I missed a lot... Hopefully I (can) make it count and make it better from here," Pant told BCCLTV on the sidelines of India's first net session ahead of the warm-up

game against Bangladesh on June 1. Pant, who underwent an intense 15-month rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy, had teammate Suryakumar Yadav for company during this interaction and recalled the time how his presence helped him cope with the loneliness of his injury management programme in the NCA. "Seeing the team here and meeting them again, spending time, having fun with them, having a conversation with them, I really enjoyed," a beaming Pant said. Having scored 446 runs in 13 IPL games, Pant is slowly getting back into the groove. The leaner and fitter Pant looked in nice touch at the India nets at the Catiague Park on the outskirts of New York City.

Pant also spoke about the prospects of cricket gaining popularity in the USA going forward. He felt the T20 World Cup could be the start of an eventual chapter. "We are used to playing in certain countries but this is a different prospect. It has opened up a different channel for sport because I feel cricket is growing around the world and... Getting the exposure here would be nice for cricket as well as USA cricket," he said. He spoke about the drop-in pitches that will be used during the tournament and also the bright sunshine that he and the rest of the team is getting used to. "New pitches are there. I'm just getting used to the conditions. The sun is a little bit brighter here, so just getting used to the conditions over here. Let's see how it goes," Pant concluded.

Ponting picks IPL top performers Bumrah, Head to dominate T20 World Cup

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting has picked Indian Premier League (IPL) top performers Jasprit Bumrah and Travis Head to excel among the bowlers and batters respectively in the T20 World Cup starting June 2. India's pace spearhead Bumrah stood tall among the bowlers with 20 wickets in 13 matches for Mumbai Indians despite the five-time winners enduring their worst-ever campaign in 17 editions of the IPL, while Australian Head struck 567 runs in 15 matches. Despite MI's all-round struggles, Bumrah shone brightly with his supreme control with the ball, maintaining an enviable economy rate of a mere 6.48 in a tournament wherein each of the top 10 bowlers went for at least eight runs per over. "My leading wicket-taker for the tournament will be Jasprit Bumrah. I just think an outstanding performer, contributor for a number of years now. He's just come off an outstanding IPL," Ponting was quoted as saying in 'The ICC Review'.



"What he can do with the new ball, he swings the new ball, he has the seam up. But at the end, his economy rate at the end of the IPL was less than seven runs an over. "He takes wickets. He does bowl a lot of the hard overs too. When you bowl the hard overs in T20 cricket, it gives you a chance to pick up a lot of wickets along

the way. So, I'm going with him," said Ponting, who coaches Delhi Capitals in the IPL. Even though Head finished fourth in the list of those with most runs in this IPL, it was the manner he got them which impressed the most. Head's strike rate remained in excess of 200 for a large part of the IPL, with the

left-handed batter eventually finishing at 567 runs in 15 matches at 191.55, average of 40.50, and featuring one century and four fifties. "My prediction for the leading run-scorer will be Travis Head. I just think everything he's done, whether it be red-ball or white-ball in the last couple of years, has been of the highest quality. I think he's playing fearless cricket at the moment," said Ponting of his compatriot. "It'll be exactly the same for Australia. He might not be the most consistent on the way through this tournament, but he'll be right up there with the leading run scorers. As I've said, if he spends any amount of time at the wicket for Australia, he'll win more games than ever." The T20 World Cup will be held in the West Indies and the USA from June 2 to 29.

Story of Uganda's inspirational rising stars

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An estimated 60 per cent of Ugandan population lives in slums and fast bowler Juma Miyagi is a cult figure in these impoverished areas. These usually football-loving people would be keenly following him and the Ugandan cricket team's debut at the ICC T20 World Cup, trying to live a sporting dream through his exploits. Miyagi grew up in the slums of Naguru, located on the outskirts of Kampala, and two years after representing Uganda at the U-19 level in the Caribbean, the 21-year-old will be shouldering the

senior team's bowling attack at the ICC showpiece that kicks off on June 1. Uganda qualified for their maiden cricket World Cup last November. Miyagi, who has 34 wickets in 21 T20 Internationals, grew up in the slums and continues to live there with his family to date. The same is the case for other T20 World Cup squad members including Simon Ssesazi and travelling reserve Innocent Mwebaze. They have grown up in areas which lack clean water, sewage systems and have little or no access to health care in poorly constructed pigeonholes that pass for rooms. Their fellow slum dwellers

From slums of Kampala to T20 World Cup



look up to them as all three of them have given hope to the struggling community. Their story of hardship even moved Uganda's Indian head coach Abhay Sharma, who took charge of the team ahead

of the ICC event beginning on Saturday. Sharma is not completely unaware of slums as India has one of Asia's biggest slums in Dharavi, Mumbai but being in Kampala was eye-opening

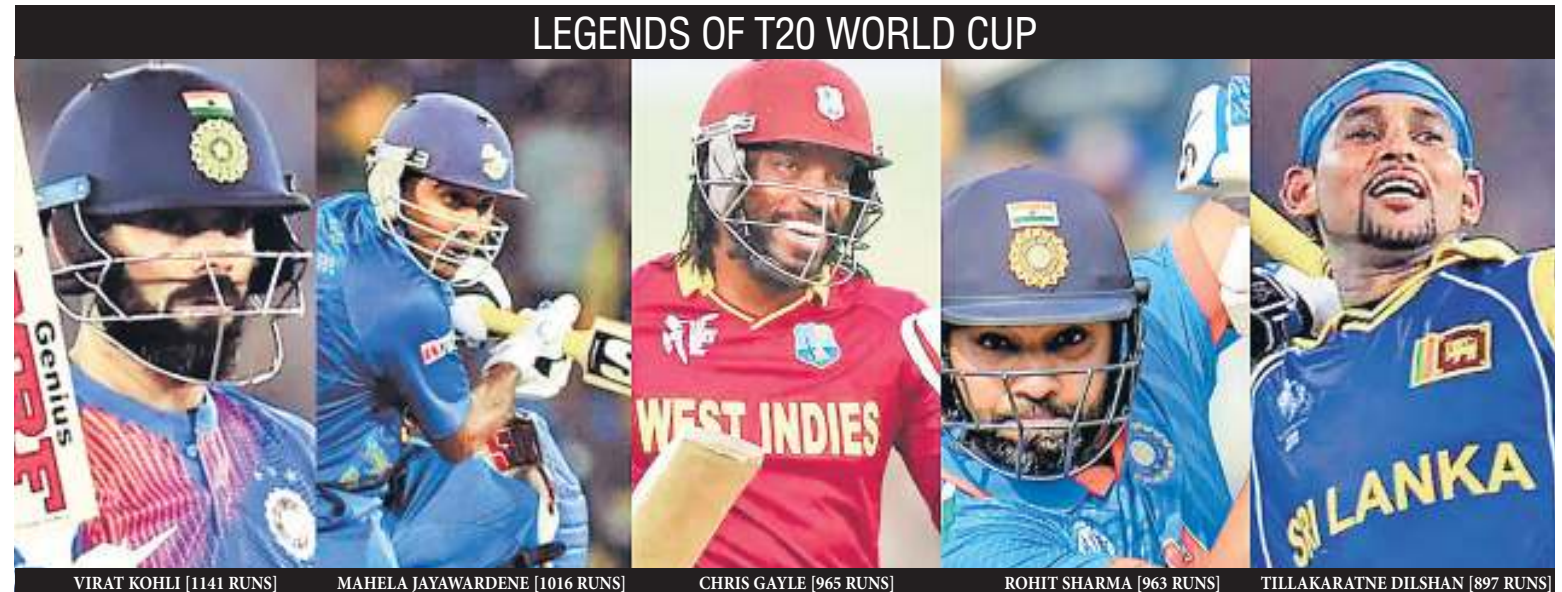
even for him. Having spent some time with the players on and off the field, Sharma's respect for the players has increased manifold. "Some of the players come from very humble backgrounds and it is inspiring to see them play for the national team. "I didn't expect them to live in such conditions before I arrived. Their respect for coaches is also immense. The players think we can change their lives," he told PTI from Trinidad, where the team is based at the moment ahead of its World Cup opener against Afghanistan in Guyana on June 3.

Leading run-getters and batters with best strike rates

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With cricket's slam-bang version set for its ninth World Cup, PTI gives a rundown on the leading run-getters and the ones with best strike rates in the T20 showpiece. **LEADING RUN GETTERS** **Virat Kohli [1141 runs]:** Who else at No. 1 but the King himself? The talismanic Indian batter has been an absolute beast in the marquee event, scoring over a thousand runs across five editions. His ability to thrive under pressure and deliver match-winning performances has cemented his reputation as one of the finest batters in T20 cricket. He holds the record for most runs in a single edition of the tournament — 319 in 2014. He was also sensational in the 2016 edition, scoring 296 runs. **Mahela Jayawardene [1016 runs]:** The now retired Jayawardene's performances in T20 World Cups have been

instrumental in former champions Sri Lanka's success in the tournament. He was a consistent scorer across the five editions he played. **Chris Gayle [965 runs]:** One of the most prolific and entertaining hitters in cricket history, Gayle is widely regarded as one of the most destructive batters, particularly in T20s. No longer competing for the West Indies, his performances in T20 World Cups have been nothing short of spectacular, making him a fan favourite and an important player for the West Indies when they won their maiden title in 2012. **Rohit Sharma [963 runs]:** The current India skipper has been a key player for his team in the T20 World Cups, especially after taking on the opening position. His ability to score big runs and provide stability at the top of the order has been crucial for India's success in the tournament. He has played all editions,



scoring 963 runs, including 91 fours at a strike rate on 127.88. **Tillakaratne Dilshan [897 runs]:** The leading run-scorer in the 2009 edition with 317 runs from seven matches, the

retired Dilshan, with his aggressive batting style and ability to provide quick starts at the top of the order, was a vital cog in the Sri Lankan team's lineup across six

editions. **HIGHEST STRIKE RATES** **Jos Buttler [144.48]:** Regarded as one of the most dynamic and destructive batters, Buttler's greatest

strength lies in his ability to score rapidly and that is why he has the best strike rate in the T20 World Cup history that fetched him 799 runs in 27 matches.

AB de Villiers [143.40]: The now retired South African has had an outstanding strike rate in T20 World Cups. His ability to score quickly and decisively made him one of the most

feared batters. De Villiers collected 717 runs in 29 innings with the help of 51 fours and 30 sixes. **Chris Gayle [142.75]:** Gayle's unparalleled level of fearlessness and confidence helped him to an amazing 142.75 strike rate in the T20 World Cups. The Jamaican always backed himself to take on any bowler. Gayle is the only player to have scored two centuries in the event, both of which were match-winning efforts. **Mahela Jayawardene [134.74]:** Jayawardene had an impressive average of 39.07 and a strike rate of 134.74, a fine reflection of his ability to score quickly while maintaining consistency. **David Warner [133.22]:** Warner's aggressive approach will once again be crucial for Australia. His ability to score runs quickly and efficiently has made him one of the most exciting and effective batters in T20 World Cups.

Indian women's hockey team gets rousing welcome in London

PTI ■ LONDON

The High Commission of India here gave a rousing welcome to the country's women's national hockey team as dignitaries sang paens to the players for their achievements in the sport after overcoming obstacles on the road to success. The women's team, along with the senior India men's squad, is in the United Kingdom for the FIH Pro League fixtures starting this weekend. The Indian men's and women's sides are scheduled to play their counterparts from Germany here on Saturday. "Each one of them represents every part of India and every region and community of India. Their stories are the most wonderful stories of what is possible in India," said Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami, in his address at the reception. The reception was held at the India House on Wednesday evening. "Each one of these girls is a story of sacrifice and struggle by their parents, and also a story of triumph and of spirit. "These young ladies inspire every one of us today because what they have achieved tells us that there is no ceiling to human ambition, there is no ceiling in a country like India - where anything and everything can be possible," Doraiswami added. The team, led by captain Salima Tete and coach Harendra Singh, were greeted by cheering supporters as



community leaders and sports fans gathered at a special reception in their honour. Their first fixture will take place when they play Germany in London on Saturday and members of the Indian diaspora were encouraged to turn out in large numbers to support the team. The Indian teams are coming to the UK after playing some difficult Pro League matches in Belgium against sides such as Argentina, Ireland and the hosts.

The Indian envoy, himself a hockey player, reflected upon how playing England on their home soil will bring back some memories for the women's team after narrowly losing to them in the last Olympics' playoff. "We really look forward to being able to come and support you and to tell everybody what great stuff is happening in Indian hockey and what great stuff Indian women are doing in changing India. "Every goal that you score, every

game that you play and every day that you train and get better, India becomes a better country. And for that thank you very, very much," he said. The Australian High Commissioner to the UK, Stephen Smith, was among the special guests at the event, and he said India "taught" Australia how to improve their hockey and become a heavyweight in the sport. "The reason that Australia has become so good at hockey is because

the Indians taught us everything," said Smith in his address. "In Australia, as in every continent in the world, there is a large Indian diaspora and in the 1950s and 1960s that Indian diaspora taught Australians how to play hockey. It is the case that we adjusted to the artificial turf game, and what I call the horizontal game, better or more quickly than India. "But that doesn't mean that India is not a hockey playing country to be admired, both in the men's game and in the women's game," he added. The Deputy High Commissioner of India to the UK, Sujit Ghosh, indulged in light-hearted conversations with some of the players and their coach and discovered the many hidden talents of the team. In his address in Hindi, coach Harendra said, "India taught the whole world how to play hockey... If there is a vishva guru in hockey, then that's India. "Yes, there are ups and downs in this journey, but I am extremely proud to see what our women's team has achieved in the last few years." He added, "Winning or losing aside, whenever our team is on the pitch there is a certain fear among the opponents. This reflects the changing landscape of our country as a whole, where women have a large share in the rise of India today." Over the next couple of weeks, the Indian teams will play their matches at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London.

FC Goa, midfielder Brandon Fernandes set to part ways

PTI ■ MARGAO

Indian Super League side FC Goa on Thursday said midfielder Brandon Fernandes will leave the club after his contract ends this summer. The 29-year-old Fernandes, who joined FC Goa in 2017, netted 17 goals in 130 outings for the club. He helped the Gauris win the Indian Super Cup in 2019, the ISL League Shield in 2019-20 and the Durand Cup in 2021. Fernandes also holds the record for most assists in the club's history (31). Having begun his youth career in 2002, Fernandes played for Goa United and Salgaocar FC and made his senior debut with ASD Cape Town in 2013. Fernandes made his senior debut in India in 2015 with Sporting Goa FC, which was followed by his debut in ISL for Mumbai City FC in 2015-16. He also represented Mohun Bagan (in 2016 on loan) and Churchill Brothers (2017) before joining FC Goa. FC Goa CEO Ravi Puskar said in a statement released on the club's website, "He became ingrained into the fabric of the club and was one of the pillars upon which sporting success was built in the seasons he was with us."



Puskar said the club will be open to have Fernandes back in their fold in any capacity. "While he leaves us today, Brandon will always be welcomed back to FC Goa in whatever capacity he may choose with open arms." Fernandes, who has also played 25 matches for India since 2019, helped the national side win the SAFF Championship in 2021. He is expected to join Mumbai City FC for the next season.