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'Self-reliance key to deal with future security challenges'

INDIAN ECONOMY LIKELY TO GROW OVER 7% : NCAER



'Darling is the best script I have heard SO FAR'



QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

I changed the name of TRS to BRS as I wanted to expand nationally. I started in Maharashtra. Some work was done in Odisha and Chhattisgarh too. Unfortunately, we lost the elections in Telangana. I think regional parties must not remain constrained and should try to expand if they can



BRS chief KCR

P4

DON'T MISS...

2,580 register for Haj pilgrimage...

Minority Welfare Secretary K Harshavardhan has issued directives for coordination between officials and staff from Central and State Departments to ensure the success of the upcoming Haj Yatra. The first preparatory meeting, convened by the AP State Haj Committee, took place at Shah Zahoor Musafir Khana in Vijayawada on Tuesday to strategise for the Haj 2024 pilgrimage. During the meeting, Harshavardhan disclosed that 2580 people have registered for this year's Haj, against an allocated quota of 2902 pilgrims...

-PAGE: 3

Healthy lifestyle could counter...

Adopting a healthy lifestyle could counter the effects of life-shortening genes by more than 60 per cent, according to new research published in the British Medical Journal Evidence-Based Medicine. Researchers found four factors to make up the most favourable lifestyle combination -- not smoking, regular physical activity, adequate nightly sleep, and a healthy diet. The team, including researchers from Zhejiang University School of Medicine, China, found that while genes and lifestyle...

-PAGE: 5

Aluminum industry requires additional...

The Indian aluminium industry would require an additional capital expenditure of nearly Rs 2.2 lakh crore (USD 29 billion) to achieve net-zero carbon emission, according to a new study. The study by independent think-tank Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) said renewable energy power sources could abate 49 per cent of the total emissions from the industry. However, fully switching to renewable energy is not feasible right now because it is not always available. So a backup plan is needed...

-PAGE: 8

CSK eye all-round stability against...

An inconsistent Chennai Super Kings will have to display all-round solidity when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. The Super Kings have 10 points from nine matches, similar figures as that of Lucknow Super Giants, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals, and the defending champions would certainly like to breakaway from that mid-table gridlock with a win. However, the defending champions will be a worried lot as Punjab Kings, who have...

-SPORTS

Ten Naxalites killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ NARAYANAPUR/RAIPUR

Ten Naxalites including three women were killed in an encounter with security forces on the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday morning, police said. This was a second major blow to the Naxalites within 15 days. The site of Tuesday's encounter was 30 km south of Kalper village in Kanker where 29 Naxalites were killed in a gunfight with security forces on April 16, said a senior police official. Deputy Chief Minister and home minister Vijay Sharma termed the latest operation as a major success while also appealing the Naxalites to come forward for talks and give up the path of violence. The encounter took place around 6 am in the forest between Tekmeta and Kakur villages in Abhujmad area,



a Naxalite stronghold, when a joint team of the police's District Reserve Guard and Special Task Force was out on an anti-Naxal operation, a senior police official said. The operation had been launched on Monday night based on inputs

about the presence of armed Maoists in the region, he said. After the guns fell silent, the bodies of ten Naxalites, including three women, were recovered, he said. An AK-47 rifle and an INSAS rifle besides other arms, ammunition and

explosives were recovered from the spot, the official said. The identity of the slain Naxalites was yet to be ascertained. Deputy CM Sharma congratulated the security personnel for the success. No personnel was harmed during the gunfight, he noted. "The state government led by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai wants a solution to this issue through talks. If any Naxalite, or a big or small group wants to talk through video call or a mediator, we are ready and will arrange better rehabilitation for them. We urge them to join the mainstream. We want peace to prevail in Bastar and development to take place there," Sharma said. As many as 91 Naxalites have been killed this year so far in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region which comprises seven districts including Narayanpur and Kanker, according to police.

MUDRAGADA VOWS TO CHANGE HIS NAME IF PK WINS

PNS ■ KAKINADA

YSRCP leader Mudragada Padmanabham has said that he will change his name to 'Padmanaha Reddy' in the event of Pawan Kalyan's victory in the Pithapuram election. During a press conference held in Kirlampudi on Tuesday, Mudragada Padmanabham, a former minister and respected leader of the Kapu community, boldly stated his intention to contest against Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan in Pithapuram. "Should Pawan Kalyan emerge victorious in Pithapuram, I shall embrace the

name 'Padmanaha Reddy,' he declared. Expressing concerns over Pawan Kalyan's choice of language during campaign rallies, Mudragada criticised his opponent's perceived lack of depth in various subjects and apparent disregard for acquiring knowledge on pertinent issues. Reflecting on the Tuni train burning incident, Mudragada urged Pawan Kalyan to consult Jyotula Nehru, now allied with YSRCP, for insights into the matter's intricacies. He attributed responsibility for the incident to Chandrababu Naidu, dismissing



Pawan Kalyan's allegations against Mudragada also took exception to Pawan Kalyan's disparagement of him as unfounded.

Mudragada criticised Pawan Kalyan's political ambitions, suggesting that the latter's motivations for contesting elections were primarily self-serving

YSRCP's Kapu community MLAs, questioning the latter's commitment to supporting initiatives aimed at safeguarding the community's interests. Furthermore, Mudragada criticised Pawan Kalyan's political ambi-

tions, suggesting that the latter's motivations for contesting elections were primarily self-serving. He asserted that Pawan Kalyan's true calling lay in the realm of cinema rather than politics, predicting a decline in support for the Jana Sena party post-elections. Drawing attention to the socio-economic trajectory of Chandrababu Naidu, Mudragada challenged the former to disclose his financial standing from 1978 to the present, highlighting disparities between Naidu's humble beginnings and current wealth.

TDP-JSP serves 'Super Six'

Alliance's manifesto promises increase of old age pension to Rs 4,000, monthly financial aid of Rs 1,500 for women aged 19-59 years and free travel for women on APSRTC buses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, JSP president Pawan Kalyan, and BJP AP in-charge Siddharth Singh have jointly unveiled the alliance manifesto for the upcoming 2024 elections. The manifesto, a collaborative effort, aims to address the pressing issues of the State and fulfil the aspirations of its citizens by amalgamating TDP's 'Super Six' initiatives with JSP's 'Shanmukha Vyuham' vision. At the manifesto launch, Naidu reiterated the alliance's commitment to creating 20 lakh jobs within the next five years. He also announced a Rs 3,000 unemployment allowance for youth until they secure employment. Naidu emphasised the importance of enhancing productivity for economic growth, announcing plans for a statewide 'Skill Census' to bolster people's productivity - a pioneering initiative in the country. The manifesto promises monthly financial aid of Rs 1,500 to women aged between 19-59 years, totalling Rs 18,000 annually and Rs 90,000 over five years, along with free bus travel for women on RTC buses. Additionally, it outlines plans for nine hours of uninterrupted power supply for agricultural purposes and the free installation of solar pump sets, along with the integration of rooftop solar energy initiatives from the Central government. The alliance



TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena Party president K Pawan Kalyan released their election manifesto at Tadepalli near Vijayawada on Tuesday. BJP AP State election In-charge Siddharth Singh cheers on. -Pic by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

WHAT ARE 'SUPER SIX' SCHEMES?

- Creating 2 million job opportunities for youth within a five-year span.
- Introducing a Rs 3,000 unemployment allowance for youth until they secure employment.
- Offering Rs 20,000 financial aid annually to every farmer.
- Providing three complimentary cooking gas cylinders to each household.
- Ensuring access to safe drinking water for every household.
- Establishing a Mega District Selection Committee (DSC) alongside releasing an annual job calendar

manifesto also reaffirms the commitment to Amaravati as the State capital, the completion of the Polavaram project, and the repeal of the Land Titling Act. **Continued on Page 2**

LAND TITLING ACT

Oppn spreading false info: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

General secretary of the YSRCP Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has accused leaders of the opposition alliance of persistently disseminating false information regarding the Land Titling Act. He said that, in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the NITI Aayog of the Central government, the Land Titling Act is set to be implemented nationwide. Sajjala, along with Alla Ayodhya Ramireddy, held discussions with Avaniagadda MLA Simhadri Ramesh Babu, YSRCP MP candidate Simhadri



The YSRCP State general secretary clarified the distinction between land titling and land registration, asserting that following Jagan Mohan Reddy's assumption of office, a comprehensive land survey was conducted for the first time in nearly a century. Chandrasekhar Rao, and Kadakollu Narasimha Rao on Tuesday. During a subsequent press briefing in Avinagadda, Sajjala highlighted that the opposition parties, namely, TDP and JSP, are spreading baseless rumours regarding the Land Titling Act without under-

standing its intricacies. He clarified the distinction between land titling and land registration, asserting that following Jagan Mohan Reddy's assumption of office, a comprehensive land survey was conducted for the first time in nearly a century. **Continued on Page 2**

Perni asks Naidu to disclose cost of schemes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and YSRCP MLA from Machilipatnam, Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani), has called upon TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu to disclose the financial requirements for implementing the TDP's 2024 election manifesto. Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Nani criticised the TDP-Jana Sena alliance, alleging that 90 per cent of their joint manifesto is a replication of other political parties' agendas. He questioned Naidu's commitment to implementing Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's schemes, highlighting the absence of key promises such as special category status and assurances related to bifurcation in their manifesto. **Continued on Page 2**



Desperate Naidu mimicking YSRCP's schemes: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, taking a swipe at the TDP alliance manifesto, addressed a gathering in Pileru, stating, "In the 2014 manifesto, Chandrababu's photo was prominently featured alongside Modi and the adopted son (Pawan Kalyan), distributed to every household in the State. However, before unveiling the 2024 manifesto, the BJP headquarters instructed him not to use the Prime Minister's photo. This incident underscores the unfeasibility of his promises, as even the BJP does not endorse them." CM Jagan attributed the government's pension distribution challenges to complaints from

Chandrababu Naidu during his initial campaign meeting of the day near Tanguturu in Kondepi in Prakasam district. Jagan also participated in another meeting in Mydukur, urging people to juxtapose the unsubstantiated claims of TDP Chandrababu Naidu with the tangible progress under YSRCP. "A leader's credibility lies in fulfilling promises. I stand before you having delivered on our commitments over the last 58 months. Contrastingly, a leader who held office for 14 years has not a single pro-poor scheme worth recalling," asserted CM Jagan. **2**

"A leader's credibility lies in fulfilling promises. I stand before you having delivered on our commitments over the last 58 months. Contrastingly, a leader who held office for 14 years has not a single pro-poor scheme worth recalling."



Doctor ends life after killing family of four

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a gut-wrenching incident, a prominent doctor allegedly took his own life after killing his entire family of four at their residence in Patamata here on Tuesday. The deceased have been identified as Dr D Srinivas (40), a well-known orthopaedic surgeon, his mother Ramanamma (65), wife Usha Rani (38), and their children, daughter Sailaja (9) and son Srihan (8). According to Patamata police, Dr Srinivas was battling financial difficulties after reportedly facing losses at his orthopaedic hospital in Mogalrajapuram. The hospital recently underwent a management change, which is believed to have exacerbated his financial woes. Sources reveal Dr Srinivas was under immense pressure from creditors and lacked alternative means to clear his debts. The horrific incident came to light when a domestic worker at Dr Srinivas' residence found him hanging from the balcony ceiling

on Tuesday morning. The distraught maid immediately alerted the police and neighbours. Preliminary investigations suggest a possible murder-suicide. Police suspect Dr Srinivas might have brutally killed his mother, wife, and children by slitting their throats before taking his own life. Dr Srinivas was the son of D Jamala Naik, a retired Andhra Pradesh Police officer who served as the East Zone Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) for Vijayawada. Reports indicate Dr Srinivas had another son who works as a judge in Hyderabad. The Patamata police have registered a case of suspicious death and have shifted the bodies to the Government General Hospital for post-mortem examination. A thorough investigation is underway to ascertain the reasons behind the tragedy. NTR Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna and Deputy Commissioner Adhiraj Singh Rana visited the scene and are overseeing the probe.

'Jagan is Modi's remote control'



PNS ■ RAVULAPALEM

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila on Tuesday alleged that YSRCP chief and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is dancing to the tunes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which is akin to being operated through a remote control. The APCC chief made this assertion against Jagan, her elder brother, at Ravulapalem in Konaseema district as part of her electioneering tour across the State. "For the past five years, Jagan (Mohan Reddy) has become a remote control in the hands of Narendra Modi. He is doing whichever job Modi presses on that remote control," said Sharmila, addressing a press conference. When riots happened in Manipur, Modi muted the remote control to make Jagan Mohan Reddy go silent, she said. She made these remarks to rebut Jagan's recent claims that the Congress has become a remote control in the hands of TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu. Sharmila, who is contesting from the Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency highlighted that she is fighting the election only because the YSRCP chief has fielded her cousin Y S Avinash Reddy from the same constituency. **2**



'Jagan govt's policies hit Polavaram works'

PNS ■ ELURU

Jana Sena leader Pawan Kalyan has accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government of implementing misguided policies that have resulted in suspending construction activities on the Polavaram project.

During an election rally in Koyyalagudem in the Polavaram constituency, Pawan Kalyan pledged to personally meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to emphasise the significance of the Polavaram project. He criticised the current administration for failing to secure funding for the project's Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) package.



'If given an opportunity, I will advocate for financial support from Prime Minister Modi to ensure the timely completion of the Polavaram project'

"If given the opportunity, I will advocate for financial support from Prime Minister Modi to ensure the timely completion of the Polavaram project," Pawan Kalyan asserted, outlining his commitment to finishing the project by 2027 if his party comes into power.

Pawan Kalyan stressed the importance of the R&R package, stating that over 1.6 lakh individuals are awaiting rehabilitation, necessitating a budget of Rs 33,000 crore. He condemned the YSRCP government for allegedly exploiting

the project for financial gain and criticized their lack of urgency in completing the construction.

Highlighting the sacrifices made by countless individuals who have surrendered their land for the project, Pawan Kalyan emphasized the importance of providing them with due compensation.

To address the funding shortfall, Pawan Kalyan proposed the implementation of a nominal one-paisa cess on every purchase within the state. He suggested that this measure could generate the necessary funds within six months.

Expressing apprehension about the Land Titling Act proposed by the Jagan Reddy-led government, Pawan Kalyan characterized it as a potential tool for land appropriation, dubbing it the "Jagan Land Grabbing Act." He warned against the potential exploitation of loopholes in the legislation for the unlawful acquisition of land.

TDP-JSP serves...

Continued from Page 1

It pledges to increase the old age pension to Rs 4,000 from April 2024 and provide a Rs 6,000 pension for differently-abled individuals.

Highlighting the commitment to the BC community, the party chiefs announced a spending of Rs 1.5 lakh crores through the BC sub-plan over five years. They also pledged various measures, including pension increments, reservations in local body and legislative elections, and allocation of funds for self-employment opportunities for BCs.

Speaking on the 'Skill Census', the party chiefs emphasised its groundbreaking nature, aimed at identifying individuals with specific skills and providing them with appropriate training for a brighter future. They reiterated plans for uninterrupted power supply for agriculture and the promotion of solar energy, emphasising the decentralisation of power generation.

Both YSRCP, TDP neglected State's development: CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State secretary of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), V Srinivasa Rao, on Tuesday, led a roadshow via an open-top jeep and bike rally from Nunna to Ambapuram in the NTR district. The event saw participation from leaders and cadres of the Congress and CPM.

The rally commenced from the Swapna function hall at Nunna and traversed through Pathapadu, P Nainavaram, concluding at Ambapuram. Throughout the roadshow, CPM state secretary V Srinivasa Rao addressed the public gathered at various villages.

Addressing the audience, he advocated for the support to Gollu Krishna, the Congress Party's MP candidate, and Kallam Venkateswara Rao, the CPM's MLA candidate. He emphasised the collaborative efforts of the India Bloc parties, comprising the Congress Party, CPI, and CPM, towards the



state's development, underscoring their recently announced election manifesto. He levied serious accusations against both the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP, accusing them of neglecting the State's development. Rao criticized their failure to secure Special Category Status, implement bifurcation assurances, and address the backwardness of districts in Uttarandhra and Rayalaseema. Additionally, he scrutinised the manifestos of the YSRCP

and TDP-JSP-BJP alliance, highlighting their lack of focus on State development. Rao lamented the absence of significant progress during the tenures of TDP and YSRCP, particularly citing the stalled Polavaram Project and the plight of displaced individuals. Rao further alleged collusion between the TDP and the BJP-led NDA, as well as the YSRCP's support for the same alliance at the Centre, which he criticized for neglecting the state's interests. He urged vot-

ers to support candidates from the India bloc.

Moreover, he criticized both the YSRCP and TDP for overlooking the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for agricultural products and failing to address issues concerning labourers, employment, and welfare schemes. Rao contended that both parties were primarily focused on seizing the Chief Minister's chair without concrete plans for the state's development, including initiatives such as the Polavaram Project construction and the development of the capital Amaravati.

Present at the roadshow were Gollu Krishna, the Congress Party candidate for Machilipatnam Parliamentary Constituency, Kallam Venkateswara Rao, the CPM candidate for Gannavaram assembly constituency, along with CPM leaders Y Narasimha Rao, M Haribabu, M Anjaneyulu, and Congress party leaders Narayana, Naga Babu, among others.

Oppn spreading...

Continued from Page 1

This monumental effort, he noted, aimed to resolve long-standing land disputes spanning decades, with surveys completed in approximately 6000 villages across the state. Sajjala reiterated that once these surveys are completed following the directives of the Central government's NITI Aayog, the Land Titling Act will be rolled out nationwide.

In light of the opposition's failure to find substantive grounds for criticism against the YSRCP government, Sajjala accused them of resorting to unfounded attacks on the Land Titling Act, which has yet to be enacted.

He rebuked the former CM, asserting that his comments betray a lack of understanding of the situation.

Sajjala further said that the Chief Minister is bound by legal regulations and cannot act against them.

He attributed Chandrababu's false statements and misinformation campaign on land titling to desperation stemming from the imminent electoral defeat.

Sajjala went on to highlight that since Jagan Mohan Reddy assumed office, significant progress has been made in resolving issues related to disputed, assigned, and encroached lands across the state. He confidently predicted that the Opposition's voices would be silenced following the elections.

JBNP manifesto prioritises jobs for youth & welfare of farmers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

President of the Jai Bharat National Party (JBNP) VV Lakshminarayana, popularly known as JD Lakshmi Narayana, and candidate for the Visakhapatnam North constituency unveiled the party manifesto for the upcoming 2024 elections on Tuesday.

Declaring that the JBNP manifesto will change the State's path, Lakshminarayana highlighted the party's commitment to prioritise youth and agricultural development.

Lakshminarayana disclosed that the JBNP has allocated party tickets to individuals keen on serving society, particularly focusing on the youth across all 80 Assembly and 10 Lok Sabha constituencies where the party is contesting. In a bold move to showcase their dedication to electoral promises, all JBNP candidates pledged to declare their commitments on a Rs 100 stamp paper for their constituency for the next five years if elected, challenging incumbent parties to follow suit.



Lakshminarayana demanded that the YSRCP release a white paper detailing the State's debt accumulated over the past five years. JBNP candidates announced plans to embark on a door-to-door campaign over the next 14 days to distribute their manifesto, aiming to connect directly with voters and strengthen their electoral prospects.

Addressing the core elements of the manifesto, Lakshminarayana highlighted the party's focus on development, youth employment, and farmer welfare. Promises included ensuring a minimum support price for agricultural produce and providing financial assistance of Rs 5000 to farmers to cover agricultural expenses.

Aiming for rival parties, Lakshminarayana criticised the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena for their apparent silence on the unemployment crisis, while accusing the ruling

Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) of offering only freebies and welfare schemes without addressing long-term wealth creation and development.

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Perni asks...

Continued from Page 1

Nani challenged Naidu to account for the promises fulfilled by the TDP's 2014 manifesto during their tenure. Drawing a comparison, he noted CM Jagan's claim of fulfilling 99 per cent of the 2019 YSRCP manifesto promises and rallying for votes based on their track record. Highlighting the state's financial constraints, Nani commended CM Jagan's efforts in allocating substantial funds, approximately Rs 71,000 crore annually, towards welfare schemes despite challenges.

Addressing Chandrababu Naidu directly, Nani questioned the absence of commitments to uplift the state, such as the Kadapa Steel Plant and Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, in the current manifesto. He emphasized that previous assurances made in the 2014 manifesto regarding these projects were left unfulfilled. Furthermore, he alleged significant portions of the TDP's manifesto were borrowed from CM Jagan's agenda and even from the Congress manifesto in Karnataka.

Nani questioned Naidu's intentions behind pledging to implement CM Jagan's schemes, asserting that the TDP did not need to adopt such initiatives.

Vamsikrishna's nomination for Vizag-South sparks a row

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The nomination of MLC Ch Vamsikrishna Srinivasa Yadav of the Jana Sena Party (JSP) for the Visakhapatnam South Assembly constituency has caused unhappiness among members of the alliance parties, particularly the TDP and BJP. Even within the JSP, some sections expressed reservations about his candidature, citing concerns over his suitability for a constituency predominantly comprising fishermen.

However, despite initial mistrust, Vamsikrishna's grassroots campaign has gathered momentum, swaying opinion in his favour. Through rigorous door-to-door canvassing, frequent interactions with party workers, and engaging programs with diverse community groups, he has managed to rally support. Of late, Vamsikrishna has gained support from important people like TDP's Gandhi Babjee, former Brahmin Corporation



Chairman Sitharamaraju Sudhakar, and powerful business leaders. This surge in support has strengthened his electoral prospects. The Visakhapatnam-South constituency, one of seven in the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha region, holds crucial political importance. Historically, it has been a TDP stronghold, with Vasupalli Ganesh Kumar winning consecutively in 2014 and 2019. However, Kumar's recent switch to the YSRCP has created an opening for rival parties to challenge TDP's dominance.

In a bid to reclaim lost ground, TDP appointed seasoned politician Gandhi

Babjee as the constituency in-charge, hoping to mobilise grassroots support. Despite these efforts, the seat was ultimately allocated to the JSP as part of the alliance's seat-sharing agreement.

The electorate of Visakhapatnam South comprises diverse communities, including fishermen, Muslims, Vaishyas, Brahmmins, and long-standing migrant people. Notably, voters in this constituency prioritise a candidate's personality and local reputation over party affiliations, making it a unique electoral battleground. Incumbent MLA Vasupalli Ganesh Kumar, renowned for his strong grassroots presence and effective implementation of YSRCP initiatives, remains a formidable opponent.

His weekly grievance programme attracts significant attendance, underscoring his deep-rooted connection with the electorate.

DHARMANA'S CLARIFICATION

Land Titling Act not State govt's initiative

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Revenue Minister Dharmana Prasada Rao has clarified that the recent enactment of the new Land Titling Act is not a decision made by the State government, but rather a directive from the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. He emphasised the Centre's pressure on states to enforce this legislation, reinforcing that despite prior assertions against its implementation in their State, the ultimate decision rests with the central government. He pointed fingers at the opposition, particularly the TD party, for propagating false narratives about the Act.

While reiterating the State government's commitment to implementing the Act once consensus is reached, Rao emphasised the benefits it would bring to farmers through reforms and advanced technology in land surveys.



While reiterating the State government's commitment to implementing the Act once consensus is reached, Rao emphasised the benefits it would bring to farmers through reforms and advanced technology in land surveys.

Rao also addressed opposition criticism concerning projects like CART-2.0 in the registration department, emphasising the enhancement of online services and the ongoing modernization of registration processes. He criticized the previous TDP government for prioritizing real estate ventures over agricultural interests during their tenure. The Minister challenged

detractors to recognise the significant strides made in land distribution during Reddy's tenure, dismissing accusations of land grabbing as baseless. He defended Jagan's actions, citing measures such as granting house titles to millions and reclaiming land from unauthorized occupation. Rao reiterated the government's commitment to safeguarding farmers' interests and expressed readi-

ness for further discussions on the matter. Rao condemned attempts to mislead the public, particularly through false propaganda spread via social media channels.

He reiterated the government's commitment to transparency and urged stakeholders to engage constructively in the process of consensus-building for the Act's implementation.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Ashtami: May 01 05:46 AM to May 02 04:01 AM

Navami: May 02 04:01 AM to May 03 01:53 AM

Nakshatram:

Shravana: May 01 04:09 AM to May 02 03:11 AM

Dhanishta: May 02 03:11 AM to May 03 01:48 AM

Rahukalam: 12:13 PM to 1:48 PM

Yamagandam: 7:28 AM to 9:03 AM

Varjyam: 06:57 AM to 08:27 AM

Gulika: 10:38 AM to 12:13 PM

Amitakalam: 05:12 PM to 06:44 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 44°C

Humidity: 44%

Sunrise: 5:42 AM

Sunset: 6:27 PM

Updated: April 30, 2024 5:00 PM

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32,43,537 total number of voters in combined Krishna

While NTR dist accounts for 17,04,077 voters, the size of the electorate in Krishna district is 15,39,460

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the recently proposed final Special Summary Revision (SSR) released on April 25, a combined total of 32,43,537 voters were identified across the Krishna and NTR districts. Among these, Krishna accounted for 15,39,460 voters, while NTR district recorded 17,04,077 voters.

The largest electoral constituency within these districts was Penamaluru, boasting 2,94,928 electors. Meanwhile, Mylavaram claimed the highest number of voters in the NTR district and the second-highest in the erstwhile Krishna district, with a tally of 2,81,732 voters. Conversely, the Pedana assembly constituency had the smallest electorate, with 1,67,564 electors.

Officials reported that Krishna district's electorate stands at 15,39,460, with 7,93,332 females, 7,46,071



males, and 57 third-gender voters. A comparison with previous voter publications reveals an increase of 21,205 voters in Krishna district. However, there were 38,422 additions and 17,217 deletions since the last publication.

Penamaluru teeters close to the 3 crore voter milestone, situated on the outskirts of Vijayawada. It's anticipated to soon surpass this mark. Out of

2,94,928 voters, 1,52,577 are female, and 1,42,349 are male.

Similarly, the Gannavaram assembly segment boasts 2,79,054 voters (Male-134,226, Female-1,44,816), Avaniigadda-2,12,331 (M-1,04,568, F-1,07,745), Gudivada-2,04,271 (M-97,710, F-1,06,550), Machilipatnam-1,96,680 (M-94,788, F-1,01,8810), Pamarru-1,84,632 (M-89,433, F-95,207), and the Pedana segment has a

total of 1,67,564 voters, with 83,008 males and 84,556 females.

Turning to the NTR district, the Vijayawada Lok Sabha constituency accounts for 17,04,077 voters, with 8,73,427 females and 8,30,499 males. Mylavaram assembly constituency leads with 2,81,732 voters, comprising 1,36,740 males and 1,44,972 females.

The Vijayawada Central segment tallies 2,77,724 voters, including 1,34,829 males and 1,42,845 females. Similarly, Vijayawada East has 2,70,624 voters (M-1,32,441, F-1,38,160), Vijayawada West - 2,55,963 (M-1,26,634, F-1,29,296), Tiruvuru - 2,07,190 (M-1,01,994, F-1,05,190), Nandigama - 2,05,480 (M-99,398, F-1,06,076), and Jaggayyapet assembly constituency has 2,05,364 electors, with 98,463 males and 1,06,888 females.

LAND TITLING ACT

'Implementation of law only after land re-survey'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Advisor to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Ajeya Kallam, addressing a round table meeting on the Land Titling Act on Tuesday, assured that the Act will only be implemented after the land re-survey is complete and following consultations with all stakeholders.

Kallam highlighted the government's desire for reforms in land titling, re-survey, and e-stamping, aiming to improve the land records system. He

criticised misinformation surrounding the Land Titling Act, stating it wouldn't take land away from people.

He acknowledged a court order preventing the Act's immediate implementation. Additionally, he expressed concerns about alleged resistance to the Act despite its potential benefits. Kallam emphasized that land titles would be issued by courts, not the revenue department.

The discussion also addressed the need to address the shortcomings of the exist-

ing system, which Kallam attributed to the removal of the Karanam system without a proper alternative. This, he argued, has led to a rise in land disputes.

Kallam expressed disappointment over opposition to the Act, claiming it could delay progress for 50 years. He reiterated the government's commitment to protecting land ownership rights and creating a clear land registry.

Land law experts and YSRCP representatives also participated in the meeting.

'CHANDANOTSAVAM'

GVMC Commissioner helms preparations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Ahead of the much-awaited 'Chandanotsavam', the annual festival of Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Simhachalam, on May 10, Commissioner of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) CM Saikanth Varma asked the key officials to ensure meticulous arrangements for the smooth conduct of the festival, which draws thousands of devotees and visitors every year.

During the meeting, detailed discussions took place regarding crowd management,



traffic control measures, sanitation arrangements, and the provision of essential amenities for the convenience of devotees. Around three lakh devotees are expected to visit the temple on the day, including from Odisha and Chhattisgarh. It is on Chandanotsavam Day that devotees can see the original form (Nijaroopa Darshanam) of the deity.

Sandalwood paste that otherwise covers the lord during the rest of the year is removed on the day after performing various pujas.

Commissioner Varma stressed the need for effective collaboration between different departments to ensure seamless execution of the festival proceedings. Furthermore, the review meeting served as a platform for officials to assess the readiness of infrastructure facilities such as temporary shelters, parking areas, medical aid stations, and public utilities to accommodate the influx of visitors expected during Chandanotsavam.

Rs 3.33 cr in cash, illicit goods worth 3.46 cr seized

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To uphold electoral integrity, the NTR district administration has confiscated cash, gold, silver, drugs and liquor valued at approximately Rs 6.79 crore. This proactive seizure operation, conducted between March 16 and April 27, targeted cash, liquor, narcotics, precious metals, promotional items, and other valuable assets. To curtail the unlawful transportation of these items, a network of inter-state and inter-district checkpoints has been established throughout the district.

Comprising officials from various departments including Revenue, Police, CRPF, CISE, Commercial Tax, Income Tax, Excise, and Special Enforcement Bureau, multiple teams have been deployed around the clock at these checkpoints. Their primary objective is to scrutinize all suspicious vehicles and thwart any

attempts at illegal trafficking.

Of the total seized assets, cash amounted to Rs.3.33 crore, while gold and silver ornaments were valued at Rs.2.33 crore. Additionally, 8,180.40 litres of liquor, worth Rs.45.82 lakh, along with narcotics weighing 1,38,658 grams, valued at Rs.7.36 lakh, were confiscated. Furthermore, promotional items worth Rs.5.46 lakh and other goods valued at Rs.54.25 lakh were also seized.

Notably, there are 11 inter-state checkpoints established within the district, delineating the border between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. These include Jonnalagadda, Peddapuram, Garikapadu, Gandrai, Muktyala, and Vatsavai checkpoints falling under the Nandigama Revenue division. Similarly, Morsumilli, Gangineni Palem, Rajupeta, Tiruvuru, Rajavaram, and Vemireddy Palli checkpoints, managed under the Tiruvuru

Revenue division, are actively engaged in monitoring and intercepting suspicious activities.

To ensure effective oversight and enforcement, District Flying Squad teams, led by the Deputy Director of Mines & Geology, have been constituted. These teams, comprising officials and personnel from Revenue, Excise, GST, Police, Income Tax, and other pertinent departments, are actively engaged in field-level supervision and enforcement.

With 13 days remaining until polling day, intensified vehicle checks are being conducted at all checkpoints in accordance with guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI). These guidelines prohibit the transportation of cash exceeding Rs.50,000, as well as the illicit movement of liquor, narcotics, inducements, promotional items, and other valuables.

Waltair Division enhances services for passengers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



As the summer season heats up, the Waltair Division of the East Coast Railway is ensuring a smooth and comfortable journey for passengers by implementing a range of initiatives to address the surge in demand. The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager of the Waltair Division, K Saandeept stated that in response to the rising passenger demand, the division is not only running special trains but also enhancing existing services by adding more coaches. Currently, 12 special trains are in service, connecting destinations like Hatia, Secunderabad, Tirupati, SMV Bangalore, Kollam, and Kurnool Town, in addition to the usual 52 trains operating across the division.

To alleviate congestion, Waltair Division has added a greater number of extra coaches to trains. In March, 124 coaches were introduced, followed by an additional 210 coaches in April. These proactive measures have resulted in over 23,500 additional accommodations being made available to passengers during March and April.

Recognising the importance of basic amenities, the Waltair Division has ensured the availability of safe and potable drinking water at stations. Additionally, economical meal options are made accessible to passengers, enhancing their convenience during their journey. Moreover, in a thoughtful gesture to provide relief from the summer heat, the division has partnered with NGOs to distribute buttermilk to passengers at various stations, offering a refreshing respite during their travels.

CP reviews security steps for upcoming polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Police Commissioner of NTR district, PHD Ramakrishna, at a review meeting in Vijayawada on Tuesday, took stock of the security arrangements and delineated the roles and obligations of the police force during the electoral process.

He elucidated various facets of security arrangements, encompassing the deployment of specialised units like the striking force, special striking force, FST, SST, VST, and MCC teams.

The meeting also scrutinised security protocols for safeguarding strong rooms and counting centres.

Particular emphasis was laid on identifying and securing sensitive and critical polling stations across the district. CP Ramakrishna issued directives to officials to preempt any untoward incidents during polling at



NTR District Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna addressing a review meeting with officials to ensure strict and impartial bandobast arrangements for the ensuing general elections at the Commissionerate in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

these locations. He underscored the imperative for all police personnel to adhere rigorously to the guidelines stipulated by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

CP Ramakrishna also provided directives on the code of conduct for the police force during the electoral process. Discussions encompassed protocols to be observed post-polling and the responsibilities of law enforcement in the 48 hours

preceding the elections.

The Commissioner emphasised the paramount importance of impartiality among police personnel, emphasizing strict adherence to ECI directives.

He urged officials and staff to maintain a respectful demeanour towards voters, political party members, and supporters during the polling period. It was categorically stated that the police must not be the cause of any law and order disturbances during the electoral process.

Furthermore, guidelines for election campaign rallies were discussed.

CP Ramakrishna mandated that simultaneous rallies by candidates of different political parties should be avoided. Precautionary measures were advised to prevent potential clashes between party members and supporters.

AP POLYCET key released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP State Technical Education Commissioner Chadalawada Nagarani said that the preliminary "key" of the POLYCET 2024 entrance exam was released by the State Council of Technical Education on Tuesday.

She explained that the primary "Key" is available at <https://apsbtet.ap.gov.in> website. She further explained that if there are objections in the "key" then students can send their objections to asesams.apsbtet@gmail.com before 4th May.

The Commissioner announced that the final "key" will be placed on the website <https://apsbtet.ap.gov.in> on 5th May. Nagarani explained that the result process will be expedited and the entrance exam results will be released by May 10.

Hindu outfits pledge support to pro-orthodoxy parties

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 'Hindu Dharmika Conference' was organised by the Andhra Pradesh Sadhu Parishad Hindu Sanghams in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The conference aimed to protect and respect the Hindu orthodoxy.

One of the resolutions passed unanimously during the conference was to support political parties that respect and protect the Hindu Sanathana Dharma in the upcoming general elections.



Several Swamis, including Pithadhipatis, including Srinivasananda Saraswathi, Atluri Narayana Rao, Turaga Srimam, and Buchi Ram Prasad, graced the conference.

Srinivasananda Saraswathi Swamiji, who addressed the

conference, pointed out that for the past five years, there have been attacks on Hindu temples and priests, but the State government and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy have never responded to these incidents. He felt that if the government is given another chance, Hindu Dharma will lose its respect.

During the conference, he presented many examples of the damage to Hindu temples and attacks on priests. He also commented that the government is treating Hindus as mad people.

2,580 register for Haj pilgrimage from AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minority Welfare Secretary K Harshavardhan has issued directives for coordination between officials and staff from Central and State Departments to ensure the success of the upcoming Haj Yatra.

The first preparatory meeting, convened by the AP State Haj Committee, took place at Shah Zahoor Musafir Khana in Vijayawada on Tuesday to strategise for the Hajj 2024 pilgrimage.

During the meeting, Harshavardhan disclosed that 2580 people have registered for this year's Haj, against an allocated quota of 2902 pilgrims. The distribution includes 728 departing from Vijayawada, 1118 from Hyderabad, 725 from Bangalore, and nine from Chennai. Departures are scheduled between May 26 and June 9, with return journeys expected in Vijayawada between July 1 and 21, spanning approximately 38 to 42



days.

SpiceJet has extended its services to facilitate the journey of pilgrims departing from Vijayawada. Accommodation arrangements have been made at a nearby Madrasa near Gannavaram Airport for the convenience of Haj pilgrims. Harshavardhan emphasised the preparation of tents, provision of air coolers, ensuring cleanliness, uninterrupted power supply, and water availability at the Madrasa. Furthermore, the inclusion of women police personnel as

part of security measures has been suggested.

Regarding transportation, Harshavardhan mentioned that RTC officials are arranging AC buses to ferry pilgrims from Madrasa to Gannavaram Airport. Additionally, medical and health officials have been instructed to establish a medical camp at the Madrasa, providing vaccination and medical assistance as required.

Harshavardhan clarified the travel regulations for Haj pil-

grims, stipulating a 40-day limit and allowances of one 8 kg bag for hand luggage and two bags weighing up to 20 kg each for check-in luggage. Furthermore, each pilgrim will receive 5-litre Jam Jam water cans upon their return journey at Gannavaram Airport.

Notable attendees at the meeting included CRDA Additional Commissioner Sheikh Halim Basha, Airport Authority Officer Lakshmi Kant Reddy, AP Haj Committee Executive Officer L. Abdul Khader, and other officials.

Format C-1 (for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases:
As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: K.V.USHA
Name of political party: YSRCP
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)
Name of Election: AP LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION-2024
***Name of Constituency: 158-PENUKONDA ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY**
I, K.V.USHA (name of candidate), a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

| (A) Pending criminal cases | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|---|
| Sl. No. | Name of Court | Case No. and date | Status of case(s) and Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s) |
| 1 | JFCM, Kalyandurg | CC No. /2020 FIR No.79/2018 Dt.11-09-2018 | Charges framed. CC not allotted by JFCM, Kalyandurg 448, 341, 506 r/w 34 IPC. Criminal Tress-pass with wrongful restraint of a person with criminal intimidation |
| 2 | JFCM, Kalyandurg | CC No.468/2017 | Charges framed on 30-05-2017 188 IPC. Violation of Model Code of Conduct |
| | AP High Court | Criminal Petition No.1702/2024 in CC No.468/2017 | Interim Stay granted for 8 weeks. 188 IPC. Violation of Model Code of Conduct |

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences:

| Sl. No. | Name of the Court and dates of orders | Description of offence & punishment imposed | Maximum punishment imposed |
|---------|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | NOT APPLICABLE | NOT APPLICABLE | NOT APPLICABLE |
| 2 | NOT APPLICABLE | NOT APPLICABLE | NOT APPLICABLE |

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.
Note:- 1. The particulars regarding criminal cases pending against the candidate shall be in bold letters.
2. The matter in newspapers shall be published in font size of at least 12.
3. Details should be given separately for each case in separate rows.
4. If a candidate is contesting an election on the ticket of a particular party, he/she is required to inform the party about the criminal cases pending against him/her.
5. The candidate shall report about publishing of declaration regarding criminal cases immediately after such publication to the Returning Officer. In addition, he shall submit a report about publishing of the declaration regarding cases in Format C-4 along with the account of election expenses within 30 days of declaration of result of election. (a) In case of elections to the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies, this shall be submitted to District Election Officer concerned, (b) In case of elections to the Rajya Sabha and the State Legislative Council, this shall be submitted to the Returning Officer concerned

Sd/-
K. V. USHA

Personal accusations dominate poll campaign in AP

Ideally, victory in an election should spring from the merits of individual contestants that are highlighted in a proper manner through the prescribed democratic process. If a contestant does not hope to win by this process, he will resort to mudslinging over his opponents in the electoral battle. In the process of such skewed battles, issues relating to the families of leaders and contestants surface.



state latching on to extraneous issues, instead of sticking to core issues impacting the public.

As the state is going to polls on 13th May, political parties have drafted questionable strategies to gain an upper hand over their opponents. What stands out in their strategies is that leaders of the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the principal opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) are engaged in raking up personal and family matters. In this unseemly contest, the ruling party has moved a step forward in making accusations with a view to weaken TDP. On its part, TDP, in association with the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the Bharatiya

In the foregoing context, 'win the election at any cost' becomes the motto of all such contestants in modern-day politics. Today, electioneering in Andhra Pradesh presents the quintessence of such debased politics with the principal political players in the state latching on to extraneous issues, instead of sticking to core issues impacting the public.

Janata Party (BJP), has raised its voice against the alleged corruption under the YSRCP regime with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at the helm. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is facing serious criticism even from his sister and Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee chief YS Sharmila

Reddy. He could become an MP in 2009 by virtue of being "CM's son", thanks to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. He later left the Congress to form his own outfit ostensibly because the party did not permit him to take up 'Odarpu yatra' (programme of consoling families of those had reportedly ended lives or died of shock over the



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist

death of former AP CM Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy under tragic circumstances). Many people believe that the real reason for Jagan to form YSRCP was that the Congress did not allow him to be the 'natural'

successor of YSR. So, he formed YSRCP (Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party, with the initial letters of the first three words resembling his father's initials). He engaged his sister Sharmila and mother Vijaya Lakshmi in party activities. Sharmila in fact took up 3,500-km padyatra when her brother was in jail for 16 months, following criminal cases filed against him for serious economic offences.

After becoming the Chief Minister, Jagan marginalised his mother and sister in the party. Feeling suffocated within the party that she had helped grow, Sharmila moved to Telangana State to float YSR Telangana Party, which ultimately merged with the Congress. The Congress lead-

ership then assigned her the job of PCC chief with the main task of working against Jagan.

As TDP, JSP, BJP are working together to unseat Jagan under the banner of NDA with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sharmila is working with the Left parties in one voice against the YSRCP regime. Leaders and cadre of YSRCP believe that the damage being done by Sharmila cannot be wished away. Sharmila has accused Jagan of shielding those behind the gruesome killing of Dr.YSR's brother and former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy. This prompted Jagan to give a series of explanations that he was innocent along with his cousin and MP YS Avinash Reddy

who had allegedly confronted with late Viveka for the Lok Sabha seat at the behest of Jagan.

Jagan too hit back at his sister. He accused her of being a pawn in the hands of those who had been working to defeat him. Political circles in AP feel that it is not an issue that can be brushed aside. They say it has disappointed the women folk in the party, though they are not in a position to counter the words of their leader.

The political situation appears to be grim with the exchange of personal barbs. Vijayalakshmi is nowhere in the picture these days, perhaps because she is torn between her son and daughter amid too much washing of dirty linen in public.

Contestants warned against violating MCC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has warned of registering cases against the contestants, if they defy the code of conduct and lure the voters with money.

The Collector, along with general observers Krishnakanth Pathak, SA Raman, expenditure observers S J Bhatia, P Keerthi Narayan, M Gourav Madhukar and police observer T Sridhar, held a meeting and explained the contestants of the Eluru Parliamentary constituency the election guidelines and the conditions of code of conduct.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the contestants should not make comments in their campaign that are personally derogatory to other candidates, stating that a special vigilance has been laid to check luring voters with money. He warned of registering cases against those who entice voters with money and valuables.

The candidates should follow the guidelines of the Election Commission and cooperate with the district administration to ensure that the elections are conducted



smoothly. He said that the candidates will have to get permission in every aspect of their campaign activities such as rallies, public meetings, and advertising through vehicles and LED screens.

The candidates can get permission for all events related to election campaigns like the use of vehicles, holding meetings, rallies and advertisements through the Suvidha app. The permits have to be submitted 48 hours in advance. Permissions are granted within 24 hours to 48 hours of application.

Regarding expenditure, the expenses should be recorded in a separate register with vouchers and bills, he said, adding the district committee has fixed the prices for each item regarding the expenditure incurred by the candidates in the elections. Candidates

should verify their election expenses in three instalments on May 3rd, 7th and 11th in the District Election Expenditure Scrutiny Cell, he told the candidates.

Collector Pranna Venkatesh said that 917 voters who are above 85 years of age are being provided voting from home through a secret mode. The distribution of voter's slips began in the district. He said that there are 1744 polling stations in the district of which 414 were identified as problematic and elaborate security is being made for the polling stations.

Arrangements were made for a video graph and webcast of the polling process. Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, DROD Pushpamani and ZP CEO K Subba Rao were among those who were present.

Rs 2.51 cr cash seized in Nellore district so far: SP

PNS ■ NELLORE

District Superintendent of Police Arif Hafeez has said that during checking of vehicles Rs 2.51 crore were seized in the district so far and 3 BSF battalions and 4 Tamil Nadu Special Armed Force teams were deployed to conduct elections peacefully in Nellore district.

Addressing the media, along with district Collector M Harinarayanan, here on Tuesday, the SP said that extensive checking of vehicles has been taken up by the election officials as well as the police at various places in the district.

He said that besides the seizure of Rs 2.51 crore cash, the officials seized liquor worth Rs 26.50 lakh. As many as 982 rowdy sheeters bound over. The checking of vehicles at the district border has been intensified, he added.

To conduct elections peacefully in the district, 3 BSF and 4 Tamil Nadu Special Armed Force teams were deployed in the district. Awareness programmes are being conducted in the rural areas to sensitize the people on exercising their franchise.



IG directs officials to visit every polling station

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Guntur range IG Sarvashrestha Tripathi has directed the police officials to visit all polling stations before the polling and make required security arrangements to conduct elections peacefully in the district.

The IG held a meeting with SP Garud Sumit and other officials here on Tuesday and reviewed the security aspects. He also reviewed the deployment of forces to conduct elections.

Speaking on the occasion, the IG said that the district police should be alert during the elections and the police officers and staff should follow the Election Code of Conduct (MCC) and perform their duties transparently.

He told the officials to ensure that the voters freely exercise their right to vote in elec-



tions. The IG advised the officials to work together efficiently to conduct free & fair elections.

The officials were warned of taking stringent action if they found indifference towards the election duties.

The IG directed the police officers to take steps to install CC cameras at important intersections in villages, organize visible

policing, visit villages and create wide awareness among the people about the Election Code.

"The police officials should visit every polling station in the district and take planned security measures there. According to the District Election Management Plan, adequate security measures should be taken in the polling centres with strong provision and deployment of central armed forces," IG Sarvashrestha Tripathi instructed the officials.

Trouble mongers, electoral offenders of previous elections and criminals who disturb the peace in elections should be bound over and should be counselled, he told them. Additional SP (Admin) K Nageswara Rao and AR ASP Ashok Babu were among those who attended the meeting.

Vizag Police launch Pulse Active Stations

They will provide convenient access for police officers to monitor their health status

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to prioritise the health and well-being of its personnel, the city police partnered with the CMR Group to launch two advanced Pulse Active Stations with BMI machines. These state-of-the-art digital kiosks provide convenient access for police officers and staff to monitor their health status regularly. Equipped with advanced alert systems, the machines will notify users directly on their mobile devices in case of concerning readings,



prompting them to seek further medical attention.

The initiative underscores the importance of proactive health management within the police force. Championed by Commissioner of Police Dr. A. Ravi Shankar, a medical doctor

himself. The programme recognises the critical role of preventive healthcare. Dr. Shankar has spearheaded various well-being initiatives for his department, including providing access to blood pressure monitors, organising targeted medical camps for women's health issues, and offering health consultations through dedicated software applications.

Drawing from his experience as a police health security officer, Dr. Shankar highlighted the concerning trend of health issues among police personnel

due to a lack of awareness and preventive measures. In response to this challenge, the "Culture of Good Health" programme was launched in collaboration with the CMR Group. This comprehensive initiative aims to equip police staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Joint CP C Fakirappa, Mavuri Venkata Ramana (Chairman & Managing Director of CMR Groups), DCP (Crimes), ACPs, and other senior officers attended the launch ceremony.

People impressed with 'Super Six': Gottipati

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) candidate Gottipati Ravi Kumar has claimed that the 'Super Six' welfare schemes have impressed the people and exuded confidence in coming to power.

Gottipati Ravi Kumar, who is the TDP's sitting MLA, carried out an election campaign in Addanki town on Tuesday. He conducted a door-to-door campaign explaining the Super Six welfare schemes. He wooed voters to elect him once again and elect Lok Sabha candidate Tenneti Krishna Prasad.

He alleged that the YSRCP leaders removed pensions to the TDP sympathizers. As many as 50-year-old age pension of TDP sympathizers were removed without reason, Gottipati fled.

Stating that the drainage system in Addanki is in bad condition, he assured of reconstructing the drainage system in a planned manner if the TDP is voted to power.

He recalled that the Rs 80 crore drinking water project was sanctioned when the TDP was in power but the YSRCP could not complete the project during their five-year regime. "The YSRCP hiked the

power tariff in the name of surcharges, fixed charges and true-up charges. The YSRCP government has hiked the power tariff for 9 times during its five-year rule. The RTC bus fares were hiked three times making the bus journey expensive to the common men," Gottipati Ravi Kumar alleged.

The dream of owning a house of common men has become unaffordable after the YSRCP government came to power as the prices of all materials have gone up.

"During the TDP regime, 3,13,382 houses were constructed for the houseless poor. Over 1000 TIDCO houses were constructed on the outskirts near Singarakonda and 90% of construction has been completed. But the YSRCP government has failed to complete the 10% construction resulting in the houses not being handed over to the beneficiaries," he slammed.

Stating that the YSRCP government has imposed a garbage tax, the government is selling harmful liquor to the poor. He called upon women to be prepared to defeat the YSRCP. BJP and JSP leaders also participated in the election campaign.

Workers' strike enters 22nd day at Adani Gangavaram Port

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ongoing strike by the workers at Adani Gangavaram port has reached the 22nd day with no resolution in sight. Despite efforts from various stakeholders, including the district authorities and Labour Department officials, the management of the port remains unresponsive to the workers' demands. Despite repeated attempts at negotiation, the port management has shown reluctance to address the demands of the striking workers. The workers allege that the management is

shirking responsibility and pushing the issue onto State and district authorities.

Visakhapatnam District Collector Mallikarjuna engaged in discussions with the displaced workers, proposing a solution involving the immediate transportation of coal.

However, the workers rejected the proposal, citing past unfulfilled promises by the port management, including compensation for accidental deaths. Further negotiations took place at the office of the Department of Labour, where officials urged the workers to end the strike

due to the impact on the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. The workers reiterated their demand for compensation, reducing their initial request from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 35 lakh each, with a willingness to settle after a month.

The workers expressed frustration over the lack of resolution, emphasising their previous unsuccessful strike actions and the management's failure to address their grievances. They have submitted a letter to the Labour Department, reiterating their demand for compensation and threatening to boycott the elections if their concerns are not addressed promptly. As the strike enters the third week, tensions remain high between the displaced workers and the management of Adani Gangavaram port.

Despite repeated attempts at negotiation, port management has shown reluctance to address labourers' demands

Chandrababu calls YSRCP's manifesto a 'miserable failure'

PNS ■ DENDULURU

TDP chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu, on Tuesday, asked how an inefficient person who cannot stand by the farming community can be a leader. Naidu said that the election manifesto of the TDP alliance is good while the YSRCP manifesto is a miserable failure.

Naidu warned those who have filed illegal cases against the leaders of various opposition parties of stringent action and they will be paid back with interest.

Naidu asked why CM Jagan's photos were being printed on the Pattadar passbooks except to threaten the owners of the properties. "We have formulated the manifesto keeping in view the welfare of women," the TDP chief observed and promised to personally take the responsibility to implement district-wise reservations for

Malas and Madigas. He said that it is the responsibility of the Denduluru voters to elect



Chintamaneni Prabhakar and Mahesh Yadav who are contesting to both the Lok Sabha and the Assembly from here.

Termining the Land Titling Act as the land grabbing act, Naidu expressed apprehensions that efforts are on to grab the lands of the people. He also pointed out the questions raised by the people when Bharathi Reddy, the wife of CM Jagan, was campaigning in Pulivendula earlier in the day. Several persons asked Bharathi Reddy as to why CM Jagan's photos are printed on the pattadar passbooks, Naidu said.

'All regional parties must try to expand nationally'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS President K. Chandrasekhara Rao said that he wanted to expand his party nationally and that all regional parties should try to do so if they can.

"I changed the name of TRS to BRS as I wanted to expand nationally. I started in Maharashtra. Some work was done in Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Unfortunately, we lost the elections in Telangana. I think regional parties should not remain constrained and should try to expand if they can," KCR said.

He predicted that a third-front government would be formed at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections. Regional parties are growing in stature and will be the deciding factor



in government formation, KCR said.

"The strength of regional parties is increasing. See the TMC in West Bengal and the

AAP in Delhi and Punjab. These regional parties will play a big role and will be the deciding factor. Neither the BJP nor the Congress will win," KCR said.

On whether there is a chance of a third front coming to power, KCR said, "It can happen. But after the results are declared, I think that regional parties will play an important role in forming the government."

On how the BJP-led NDA and INDIA will fare in the general elections, the BRS chief said that the NDA will get only around 200 LS seats.

"INDIA is nothing. Even the NDA is also not very big. Many parties have left the coalition but they can get around 200 seats," he said.

On being asked who could be the PM candidate of INDIA, he said, "It is too early to say now. Let's wait for the results. The NDA will not get a majority and the BJP will not reach 272 seats."

When questioned about his support for the BJP or the Congress, he said "The BRS will be fighting against both of them. We have to fight with the Congress and the BJP. Both of them are 'enemies' of Telangana and this has been proved several times. So we need to fight both," he said.

KCR said that people will vote against the BJP. Attacking the Congress, he said the whole country knows about the 'corruption' of the Congress.

"The farmers are suffering. Both the BJP and the Congress did injustice to them. People will vote against Modi. I think the BJP won't attain a majority on its own," KCR said.

"The entire country knows about the corruption of the Congress. That is why they are called 'Scamgress,'" he added.

Advanced Automatic Block Signalling system for 14.82 km

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In yet another major development and advanced infrastructural upgrade, Vijayawada Division, South Central Railway, has commissioned an Advanced Automatic Block Signalling System for a stretch of 14.82 km between Nidadavolu and Kovvur stations. Narendra A Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, said that this commissioning aims to enhance safety and efficiency along the Divisional Railway network. He explained that it took an investment of Rs 21.83 crore within nine months to execute and materialise this ambitious project in the most congested section of the Nidadavolu-Kovvur section. He further explained that the project was executed by the Gati Shakti Unit of the Vijayawada Division.

Narendra Patil stated that the Automatic Block Signalling (ABS) system in the Indian Railways is a method of railway signalling that divides a railway line into successive track sections or blocks. He further stated that the ABS operation allows trains to operate automatically, enhancing safety and sectional capacity and with this commissioning, a total length of 37.7 km stretch is equipped with Automatic Block Signalling System across Vijayawada Division.



INDIA CORNER

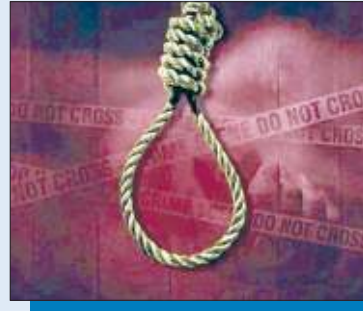
Puri railway station to be adorned with wheels of chariots

The Indian Railways will procure three wheels, one each from the three chariots that represent the famous Jagannath Rath Yatra, to place them at the centre of the concourse of Puri railway station being redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. "Every year when the Rath Yatra ends, the three chariots are dismantled and the timber is used in the temple kitchen to cook 'Kotha Bhoga' (dishes for the gods)," said Manojaya Rath, one of the principal architects from Rath Architectonic that has designed the new station. He added, "However, the Indian Railways, in accordance with our design, will procure one wheel from each of the three chariots from the upcoming Rath Yatra to be held in late June or early July this year and these will be placed in the world-class railway station at Puri." Puri railway station is one of the 1,321 stations of the country which is being redeveloped to offer world-class passenger amenities under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, and it is expected to be ready by July, 2024.



Another NEET aspirant commits suicide in Kota

A 20-year-old NEET aspirant allegedly hanged himself here days before appearing for his third attempt at cracking the exam. "Sorry papa, I couldn't do it this year as well," a note found in the room said. This is the ninth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in the coaching hub stood at 26 in 2023. Rajasthan native Bharat Kumar Rajput was found hanging from the ceiling fan on Tuesday morning, police said. They said a one-line suicide note was recovered from the room saying 'Sorry papa, me is saal bhi nahi kar paya' (Sorry papa, I couldn't do it this year as well). Rajput had taken the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) twice before and was scheduled to appear for his third attempt on May 5, Jawahar Nagar Sub Inspector Gopal Singh said. The student lived in a paying guest (PG) room in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar and was preparing for the medical entrance exam for the past one year.



Woman kills self in AIIMS hostel room in Delhi

A 21-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide by hanging herself in her hostel room at AIIMS here on Tuesday and a suicide note was recovered, police said. According to police, one of the hostel staff found the woman hanging from the ceiling fan in her room around 11.30 am and alerted the authorities. Upon investigation, the police recovered a suicide note in which she had stated that she was depressed because of her nursing studies and preparations for the Bihar Public Service Commission exam, police said. The woman was a second-year BSc student. Her family, who lives in Bihar were informed about their daughter. Further investigation is underway, they said.



'Self-reliance key to deal with future security challenges'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Warfare has transcended into new domains, such as space, cyber, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems, and India must develop indigenous capabilities to deal with future security challenges, Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande said on Tuesday.



The Army chief especially underlined the importance of "technology infusion" and "self-reliance" in the armed forces, saying both are distinct yet interconnected. Gen Pande said India must develop its indigenous military capabilities as no country will share the latest, advanced and critical technology with it.

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"Warfare has transcended into new domains, such as space, cyber, electromagnetic spectrum and information. Consequent to these developments, conventional force ratios, which was the measure of military strength and superiority in the past, stand blunted today," he said.

Gen Pande made the remarks at the fourth Gen K Sundarji memorial lecture.

He highlighted the need for embracing technology in order to maintain a competitive edge on the battlefield.

"The imperative of technology infusion into warfighting systems and to keep pace with technological progression, remains enduring to this day," he said.

"The impact of external dependency for critical components, supply chain disruptions and weaponisation of denial regimes came to the fore, during the (Covid-19) pandemic and also from the lessons of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict," he said.

"We need to recognise that no country will share the latest, advanced and critical technology with us," he said.

The Army chief said being import dependent for critical technologies entails the risk of remaining behind in niche areas.

"The answer, therefore, lies in being self-reliant and achieving self-sufficiency in critical technologies through indigenous research and development," he said. Gen Pande said the growing centrality of cyber domain in critical infrastructure has resulted in it emerging as a new battleground of digital confronta-

tion. "Information operations today have gained new dimensions," he said. "When we talk about digitisation of the battlefield, we are witness to a manifold increase in the lethality and accuracy of kinetic instruments and increased proliferation of technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics and nano-technology," he said. The Army chief said disruptive and dual use technologies and their proliferation at unprecedented scale are transforming the character of modern wars.

"A suite of digital technologies, encompassing electronic warfare, micro-electronics, drones, precision attack systems, loiter munitions and star link terminals are challenging traditional force multipliers," he said.

"Swarming is contesting surgery, surveillance and precision are scoring over fire and manoeuvre, and the light and small are prevailing over the large and heavy," he added.

Gen Pande said his force has been focusing on developing indigenous capabilities.

SC directs inspection of detention camps for foreigners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that a number of foreigners have been languishing in detention centres for years, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the State Legal Services Authority of Assam to apprise it about the foreigners detained for more than two years.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan also directed the legal services authority to constitute a team to visit the detention centres to find out the facilities made available to foreigners.

A report in this regard will be submitted by May 15, 2024, the bench said.

The top court observed that the Centre and the state government will have to take some action on the issue of foreigners languishing in detention centres for years.

"We direct the State Legal Services Authority of Assam to visit the detention centres of foreigners and ascertain from the records therein how many foreigners have been detained for a period of more than two years."

SC questions ED on timing of Kejriwal's arrest, seeks its reply

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming life and liberty as "exceedingly important", the Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the Enforcement Directorate on the timing of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest ahead of the general elections in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which continued hearing on the Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest for the consecutive day, posed several queries to Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the ED, and sought his reply on Friday.

"Life and liberty are exceedingly important. You can't deny that," the bench told Raju and sought his reply, saying, "the last question is with regard to the timing of the arrest, which they have pointed out, the timing of the arrest, soon before the general elections."

The bench also flagged the long time gap between initiation of adjudication proceedings in the case and the action of arrest, saying the section 8 of the



Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) provides a maximum limit of 365 days.

The apex court is likely to continue hearing on Kejriwal's plea on Friday as the two judges will be sitting in different combinations from Wednesday.

It said, "Mr. Raju, we have some questions, which we would like you to answer, when you make your submissions. First is without there being any adjudicatory proceedings, can the ED initiate a criminal proceedings in view of several judgements of this court on PMLA."

The bench said in this case

there are no proceedings of attachments so far and if there are any such proceedings, then the ED will have to show how petitioner (Kejriwal) is connected to it.

Justice Khanna said the verdict on the bail plea of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is in custody in the excise policy scam case, was divided into two parts – the first part was in favour of Sisodia and the second part was against him.

"You (Raju) have to tell us which part of Sisodia verdict does the petitioner (Kejriwal) case lie," the bench said.

Congress means corruption and commission: BJP chief Nadda

PNS ■ HAVERI (KARNATAKA)

BJP president J P Nadda on Tuesday said Congress means corruption and commission, while the INDIA bloc is an alliance to save dynasts and corrupt.

He questioned whether the INDIA Alliance have any prime ministerial candidate.

"Congress means corruption, Congress means commission, What is INDI Alliance? (We say) our leader Modi ji will become the prime minister (if BJP comes to power) and INDI Alliance says they will have five prime ministers in five years (if they come to power)," Nadda said.

Addressing a gathering at the end of a roadshow at Byadagi here, in support of BJP's Haveri



Lok Sabha candidate and former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, he asked: "Who is their (INDIA bloc) prime ministerial candidate? Do they have any leader like Narendra Modi, who can tackle situations like COVID?"

"INDI Alliance is just for power, they don't have anything

to do with you. The INDI Alliance is for two reasons -- 'Pariwarwad bachao' (save dynasts) and 'Bhrashtachariyonko bachao' (save the corrupt), -- they don't have any other work," he added.

Highlighting various "scams" of Congress and its INDIA bloc partners, Nadda said, "...they are all corrupt. D K Shivakumar (Karnataka Deputy CM) was involved in a scam or not? Isn't Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, P Chidambaram, Lalu Prasad Yadav, ...D K Shivakumar are out on bail or not?"

Also listing out various INDI Alliance leaders who are in jail, including Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, he said, "All these people are either on bail or in jail."

'My soul is 'restless' for common man'

PNS ■ PUNE

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the "bhakti aatma" jibe, saying his soul is "asvatha" for the cause of farmers and the common man, and ready to be restless "100 times" to highlight their plight.

"There is a 'bhakti atma' (wandering soul) in Maharashtra. If it does not manage success it spoils others' good work. Maharashtra has been a victim of it," Modi had said at a rally on Monday, hitting out at Sharad Pawar without taking his name.

Addressing an election meeting on Tuesday, Pawar recalled PM Modi's 2016 statement about having come into politics holding the former's finger, and said "Modi is angry with me of late".

"Some years ago, PM Modi had delivered a speech in Pune stating that he (Modi) had come into politics by holding the finger of Pawar



saheb. Yesterday, he said a 'restless' soul in Maharashtra has been causing restlessness across the state for the last 45 years.

"Modi had also said this soul was creating obstacles for the government. He also spoke about the need to safeguard against this soul," Pawar said while addressing an election meeting in Junnar tehsil for NCP

(SP)'s Shirur Lok Sabha candidate Amol Kolhe. Pawar further said he has read Modi's speech and the (bhakti aatma) statement.

"It is correct that the soul is 'asvatha' (restless) but not for the self but to highlight the hardships faced by farmers. I am restless to put forward the plight of the common man

suffering from inflation. I am ready to be restless 100 times to highlight the woes of the people," the veteran politician said.

Pawar also criticised the prime minister for dubbing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi a 'shehzada' (prince), saying three generations of his family had served the country and sacrificed their lives. The Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) chief further said that hardships faced by the common people and other issues should be raised.

"I imbued these values from the first chief minister Yashwantrao Chavan. We will not compromise on these values," said Pawar.

He said Modi had promised to bring down the prices of fuel and LPG cylinders after coming to power (in 2014).

"But check the prevailing prices of these commodities," he said.



Education is greatest gift to society: Dhankhar

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday said that education is the greatest gift for society and the most effective medium to bring about a change. He emphasised that all children should get opportunities to explore their talents as per their interests.

"I have been saying this for a long time. As soon as a child is born, people decide that he will become a doctor, an engineer, and so on. No one pays attention to what the child wants. Let them create their own path," Vice President Dhankhar, who was addressing students of a private school here, said.

He termed education as the greatest wealth and said that special attention has been given to education in the Constitution.

According to an official statement, the vice president said, "What is the greatest wealth? The greatest wealth is knowledge. And, what is the greatest gift? Education."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming health an "orphan", Indian Medical Association chief Dr R V Asokan says no lessons have been learnt after the Covid crisis and it doesn't figure as a top priority for political parties with everyone in the "all is well" zone.

In an interaction with editors, Asokan also described the government's flagship Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme as "poorly structured and underfunded" and called for increasing investments in the health sector.

"Health is an orphan. Nobody wants to talk about health even after the Covid

'Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme poorly structured'



pandemic, where it was acutely felt even as a matter of internal security. We have not learnt

any lessons. We continue to be in the same 'all is well' zone," he said.

"Health sadly does not figure among the top priorities of political parties," Asokan said in response to a question on attention to the sector during the ongoing elections.

Dwelling at length on the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme, Asokan said the scheme had "great vision" and there were great

expectations from it.

"But it was structured poorly. And underfunded to the extent that it will collapse. Why I say this is because it was envisioned by the prime minister for people below the poverty line but perhaps it was structured by the NITI Aayog and bureaucrats," Asokan said.

"The care in government hospitals is already free. So what is the new that the patient gets? Whether it is routed through the government hospital or through Ayushman Bharat, the patient does not get anything new. So the goodwill that had to be generated in the public did not develop. That political dividend didn't occur."

Cong workers hold sit-in, demand Gandhi family member as Amethi candidate

PNS ■ AMETHI (UP)

Congress workers here in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday held a sit-in, demanding that the party name a member of the Gandhi family as its candidate from the Amethi Lok Sabha seat.

The constituency goes to polls on May 20 in the fifth round of the seven-phase general elections.

Only three days are left for the filing of nomination

papers but the Congress is yet to declare a candidate for the seat, the party's district spokesperson, Anil Singh, said.

Leaders and workers, including Congress district president Pradeep Singhal and former district president Yogendra Mishra, were gathered at the party office here with posters reading "Amethi maange Rahul Gandhi, Amethi Maange Priyanka Gandhi (Amethi wants Rahul

Gandhi or (his sister) Priyanka Gandhi Vadra".

"People of the constituency and Congress workers want a member of the Gandhi family as their candidate. We want Rahul Gandhi to contest from Amethi to bring back its lost honour," Singh said.

The demonstrators demanded that the Congress immediately declare a candidate in Amethi and that its nominee be from the Gandhi family.

Healthy lifestyle could counter genetic risk of shorter life, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adopting a healthy lifestyle could counter the effects of life-shortening genes by more than 60 per cent, according to new research published in the British Medical Journal Evidence-Based Medicine.

Researchers found four factors to make up the most favourable lifestyle combination -- not smoking, regular physical activity, adequate nightly sleep, and a healthy diet.

The team, including

researchers from Zhejiang University School of Medicine, China, found that while genes and lifestyle together impact a person's lifespan, an unhealthy lifestyle could heighten the risk of dying prematurely by 78 per cent, regardless of their genetic inclinations.

However, "the genetic risk of a shorter lifespan or premature death might be offset by a favourable lifestyle by approximately 62 per cent", the authors wrote.

The researchers analysed



The genetic risk of a shorter lifespan or premature death might be offset by a favourable lifestyle by approximately 62 per cent

the data of more than 3.5 lakh adults, recruited to the UK Biobank between 2006 and 2010, and whose health was tracked up until 2021. Each participant's genetic predisposition to a longer or shorter lifespan was arrived at using a polygenic risk score (PRS). Lifestyle factors including diet and sleep habits were also studied.

The authors found that starting a healthy lifestyle at the age of 40 years could enhance life expectancy by roughly 5.5 years in those

having a high genetic risk of a shorter lifespan.

They added that given how lifestyle habits tend to be cemented before middle age, measures taken to address the effects of life-shortening genes are needed before then.

The researchers also found that regardless of lifestyle, individuals having genes favouring a shorter lifespan were 21 per cent more likely to die early than those having genes favouring a long life.

Further, the combination of life-shortening genes and an

unfavourable lifestyle could place an individual twice as likely to die compared to one having both long-life genes and a favourable lifestyle.

"This study elucidates the pivotal role of a healthy lifestyle in mitigating the impact of genetic factors on lifespan reduction," the authors wrote.

The team acknowledged that European ancestry of the participants could limit applying the findings to a wider population. Further, being an observational study, no causal links could be established, they said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Repeat offenders

Pro-Khalistan slogans raised again at Toronto event in front of Trudeau; India hits back

Yet another event which saw pro-Khalistan slogans being raised, this time in Toronto, has triggered diplomatic tensions between India and Canada. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was also present in the programme, which made it look like the Canadian Government was condoning the act. It prompted India to summon in New Delhi a Canadian diplomat and express strong disapproval. The event, celebrating cultural diversity and inclusivity, took an unexpected turn when a group of individuals began chanting slogans in support of Khalistan, a separatist movement. The unfortunate incident is indeed a setback to ongoing discussions between the countries on various issues. For India, the incident struck a sensitive chord as it perceives the Khalistan movement a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Indian authorities view any display of support for Khalistan, especially in the presence of heads of State, with utmost seriousness. The Indian Government, therefore, wasted no time in conveying its concerns to Canadian authorities. The summoning of their diplomat serves as a clear signal of India's displeasure and underscores the gravity with which it views the matter. Meanwhile, in Canada, the incident has sparked discussions about the limits of freedom of expression and the implication of such incidents on diplomatic relations.



While Canada may uphold the principles of free speech and assembly, the chanting of pro-Khalistan slogans on its soil in the presence of its Prime Minister raises questions about the appropriateness of such actions, particularly in a diplomatic context. Trudeau, who has been an advocate for multiculturalism and diversity, has yet to publicly comment on the incident. However, it is expected that he will address the matter in due course, considering the diplomatic ramifications and the need to maintain constructive relations with India. Given the history of the roots of Khalistanis in Canada, it was a foregone conclusion that something of this sort might come up. The Canadian Prime Minister should have ensured in advance such a thing would not happen as it reflects badly on his Government and strains relations with India. Indeed, pampering Khalistanis on its soil is going to be a problem for Canada as history repeats itself and all those regimes that once harboured such elements have paid a heavy price for it. The incident also underscores the complexities of managing diaspora politics, particularly when it intersects with sensitive geopolitical issues. Canada is home to a significant Sikh population, many of whom have strong ties with India and hold varying views on the Khalistan movement. Ultimately, the Toronto incident highlights the interconnectedness of global politics and the need for vigilance in safeguarding the principles of sovereignty, unity and respect for diverse perspectives. It is a stark reminder that actions and words uttered in one corner of the world can have far-reaching implications, shaping the course of international relations for years.

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PICTALK



Fireworks light up the sky at the Golden Temple on the birth anniversary of Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur, in Amritsar PTI

Recognising workers' resilience and struggle

On International Labour Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to worker welfare and advocate for fair, empowering policies

On May 1st, as we celebrate International Labour Day, these words of Karl Marx resonate with renewed significance. May Day is not merely a day of rest; it is a powerful reminder of the resilience and collective strength of workers worldwide. It is a day to honour the countless individuals who have fought for the rights and dignity of labourers and to recognise the ongoing struggle for justice in the workplace. Every year on May 1st, International Labour Day serves as a poignant reminder of the struggles, sacrifices and triumphs of workers worldwide. It is a day to honour the contributions of labourers across various countries and industries, while also acknowledging the ongoing battle for labour rights and social justice. As we commemorate International Labour Day trace back to May 1, 1886, when workers in



Chicago staged a massive protest demanding an eight-hour workday. This pivotal event led to the establishment of International Workers' Day, symbolising the collective struggle for fair labour practices. Since then, May Day has evolved into a global movement, with workers from all walks of life coming together to advocate for their rights. May Day holds immense significance in highlighting the importance of workers' rights. It serves as a platform to address issues such as fair wages, equal opportunities, maternity benefits, healthcare and safe working conditions. By amplifying the voices of workers, May Day fosters solidarity and empowers individuals to strive for better living standards and dignity in labour.

In India, May Day was first celebrated in 1923 by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan in Madras (now Chennai). Led by visionary leaders like Singaravelu Chettiar, this event marked the beginning of a movement to champion the rights of workers. Since then, May Day has been observed with fervour across the country, with various labour organisations leading rallies and campaigns to advocate for workers' welfare. Dr BR Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's labour movement, played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of marginalised labourers. He emphasised the principles of equal pay for equal work, maternity benefits, eradication of discrimination and fair treatment of workers.

Through his leadership and advocacy, Dr Ambedkar laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable society. While we have made significant strides in advancing labour rights, challenges persist. Many workers, especially those in the informal sector, continue to face exploitation and lack of protection. We must address these issues and work towards creating a more just and equitable working environment for all. As we celebrate International Labour Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to the welfare of workers. We must advocate for policies that promote fair labour practices, empower workers and ensure their wellbeing. As International Labour Day dawns upon us once again on May 1st, 2024, let it serve not just as a commemoration of past struggles, but as a beacon lighting our path towards a future where every worker's dignity is honoured, every voice is heard and every dream finds its fulfilment in a world of equality and justice. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)



SANTOSH MATHEW

Why is the BJP avoiding China in campaigning?

The BJP's election focus has shifted away from recent China tensions, opting instead to highlight Nehru's actions during the 1962 conflict



ASHOK K MEHTA

China has been generally missing from election manifestoes and campaigning so far. Former Army Chief Gen Naravane at a literary festival in Ajmer recently called China India's primary threat adding confrontation along LAC was a good thing as it exposed this ground reality that Delhi was shy to admit. EAM S Jaishankar and especially Defence Secretary Giridhar Armane have made unkind references to Beijing. In his book Four Stars of Destiny Naravane has written extensively about the India-China confrontation which started under his watch. It was a serious failure of intelligence which allowed the Chinese PLA to occupy nearly 2000 square km of territory on the Indian side of LAC corresponding to their 1956 claim line. The avoidable tragedy at Galwan and the refusal of the Chinese to restore the status quo ante April 2020 even after 21 rounds of military dialogue (the last round on 21 February) place India at a serious disadvantage. In 1998 India gave China as the reason for conducting nuclear tests which incensed the Chinese, requiring then foreign minister Jaswant Singh to travel to Beijing to "untie the knot". I was witness to the repair exercise in Beijing even as then our Army was retaking Tololing Heights, Kargil. Singh had to say that China was not a threat. Later then defence minister George Fernandes called China the number one threat though it was misreported as "No 1 enemy". This caused a diplomatic furore as China is acutely sensitive to being seen as or worse a threat by any country. The Government is careful in its articulations on China as it hopes to secure full disengagement diplomatically. But the gloves came off Feb /Mar. Jaishankar speaking at the Raisina dialogue said that China should not be allowed to play mind -games to counter which India must use other means (implying US help) to seek better equilibrium. His comments came a day after ARmane at the INDUS-X FORUM in Delhi unprecedentedly called Beijing a bully adding "we expect our friend US will be



there in case we need their support". Not since 1962 have we sought unequivocally US military support. This is bound to have upset China. Worse, no Indian official had ever called China a bully. Surprisingly China has not reacted. Naravane's book and excerpts have been withheld by the Government in damage control after publishers circulated excerpts of Operation Snow Leopard Night 29/30 August 2020 which belittle the Government's political control in war and explosive comments on Agniveer. Armed with material from the horse's mouth, the opposition is targeting the Government in China and Agniveer — during election rallies where foreign policy is an issue. How Army intelligence cleared the book for publication is a mystery. In parliament on 10 Feb 2021. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had informed Parliament about withdrawals in the North Pangong Tso Lake Fingers area. But he made no mention of vacation from Kailash Heights, which presumably was implied in 'mutual withdrawal'. But Singh added: "Chinese side is aware of our resolve not to allow an inch of territory to be taken". Former NSA, Shiv Shankar Menon in his writings has observed: "we don't know what happened in South Bank (Kailash heights) as we know

FORMER ARMY CHIEF GEN NARAVANE RECENTLY HIGHLIGHTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CAUTIOUS ARTICULATIONS ON CHINA AIM TO SECURE FULL DISENGAGEMENT DIPLOMATICALLY, DESPITE THE SERIOUS INTELLIGENCE FAILURE ALLOWING CHINESE OCCUPATION OF INDIAN TERRITORY ALONG THE LAC

about North Bank (Pangongtso Lake)". Recently Congress leader Jairam Ramesh cited an X post by Chushul Councillor Konchok Stanzin of autonomous Ladakh Hill Development Council that the Rezangla battle 1962 memorial was dismantled as it fell in the 'buffer zone' negotiated with China during the vacation of Kailash Heights. That undisputed Kailash Heights in Indian territory had been made a buffer zone is a revelation that the Government never even informed parliament. In the critical operational situation replete with vertical and horizontal escalation that developed at Kailash Heights that critical night, no political guidance had been provided by CCS/RM/PM to Naravane which became clear from his conversation with Singh urgently seeking orders. With Naravane's book and excerpts embargoed for release, the book may never materialise as it showed the political direction of a war-like situation in poor light. But Naravane will know why he didn't become CDS even as critical Kailash heights are lost for perpetuity. In the election campaign, no BJP leader has so far mentioned Galwan or Kailash heights which were examples of valorous use of force against China as it could open a can of worms. Keeping Naravane

out of the fray, the opposition is attacking the Government for losing 2000 sq km of land as well as 26 of 65 patrolling points. Campaigning in Pune and speaking to the media on 12 April, Jaishankar emphasized "there was no encroachment by China; it has not occupied any of our land; but the situation is sensitive, competitive and challenging." The PM, HM and RM have all also denied loss of territory. In his interview with *Newsweek* in response to a question on China, PM Modi's terse reply was: "New Delhi ties with Beijing are important and the prolonged situation at the border should be addressed urgently, for peace and tranquillity to be restored and sustained at the borders". The Chinese welcomed the statement adding sound and stable ties were in common interest. Restoring the LAC to April 2020 as sought by India, the Chinese will never do. It's tough to conceive of a compromise formula. Consequently, the C word is almost missing from the BJP election discourse, cleverly diverted to Nehru's follies in 1962. But Naravane deserves praise. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka and a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHALLENGES FOR NEW GOVERNMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Challenges loom ahead of the July Union Budget," published on April 30, this is my response. The forthcoming union budget already stirs anticipation, underscoring the critical juncture India faces. Economic discourse dominates electoral debates, eclipsing divisive issues. However, the electorate's focus on core economic woes signals a paradigm shift. Spiralling inflation, mounting household debts and sluggish job creation demand urgent attention. Yet, electoral promises veer towards populism rather than pragmatic solutions. The fiscal landscape is daunting, with staggering debt repayments curtailing budgetary flexibility. Amid global economic headwinds, India's export slump exacerbates trade deficits. Addressing structural issues like low productivity and high taxation is imperative for sustained growth. Furthermore, infrastructural development must align with socio-economic welfare, assuage rural discontent and foster inclusive growth. A judicious blend of public and private sector involvement and prudent fiscal policies can steer India towards its lofty economic aspirations. Ultimately, the onus lies on the new Government to navigate these challenges deftly, prioritising the populace's wellbeing over partisan agendas. **Neha Iyer | Pune**

ENGAGING YOUTH IN POLITICS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Why are the young not joining politics?" published on April 30, this is my response. Witnessing the apathy of young voters towards participating in the political process is disheartening. While some may feel disillusioned with the quality of politicians, others might believe their voices won't make a difference. However, by abstaining from voting, they relinquish their right to shape the nation's future. On the other end of the spectrum, the

State Assembly sessions



Apropos the news article, "Delhi, other state legislative meetings dwindle," published on April 29, this is my response. As someone who follows daily news, the pattern of state assembly sessions raises concerns. The data compiled by PRS Legislative Research reveals a significant disparity in the number of days assemblies convene. While some states meet

the constitutional mandate of at least one session every six months, others fall drastically short. The emphasis on budget sessions, evident from the majority of sittings concentrated within these periods, indicates a rushed legislative process. Such haste might compromise the quality of debate and scrutiny essential for robust policymaking. Moreover, the prolonged sessions in some states, stretching beyond a year in extreme cases, question the efficiency and accountability of legislative bodies. The instances of bills being passed swiftly after introduction raise doubts about thorough deliberation and stakeholder consultation. Efforts to streamline legislative processes and ensure meaningful engagement during sessions are imperative to uphold democratic principles and deliver effective governance. **Nisha Menon | Bhopal**

lack of interest among older individuals in entering politics is concerning. The decline in ethical and social values, coupled with the high cost of electioneering, deters many from pursuing political careers. Addressing these issues requires systemic changes, such as the delimitation of electoral constituencies and measures to reduce election expenses. Compulsory voting could also enhance participation and diminish the influence of vote-bank politics. Moreover, curbing the distribution of freebies is crucial to prevent elections from devolving into mere transactions. True democracy demands active engagement from all citizens, irrespective of age or background. **Meera Patel | Ahmedabad**

NUTRITION FOR ORAL HEALTH

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Diet, Mint, Ginger Impact" published on April 29, this is my response. Maintaining oral health extends beyond brushing and flossing; it's about what we eat too. Sugary and starchy foods can

feed harmful mouth bacteria, leading to gum disease. A balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, protein, calcium-rich foods and whole grains not only supports a healthy body but also promotes a bright smile. Opting for natural foods over processed ones is key to oral and overall wellbeing. Remember, oral health impacts your entire body; bacteria from the mouth can spread, increasing the risk of various diseases. Mint and ginger offer natural remedies for oral care. Mint's antiseptic properties combat bacteria, freshen breath and prevent cavities. Meanwhile, ginger, with its gingerol compound, fights infections and inflammation, strengthening teeth. Incorporating these ingredients into a refreshing drink like Mint & Ginger Healthy Drink adds flavour and health benefits to your routine, promoting a radiant smile and robust health. **Arjun Reddy | Hyderabad**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Visual storytelling can promote sensitivity and empathy



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

A scared figure crouching in a corner, a large hand covering a mouth trying to muffle a scream, outstretched arms pleading for help, tattered clothes. More often than not, images like these accompany media reports of sexual violence against women. As a survivor of sexual harassment, Ankita Anand felt insulted looking at these images. She didn't want to be depicted this way.

What upset her most were drawings meant to represent the survivors and create awareness that served to titillate. She decided to take matters into her own hands. The activist-turned-journalist started a campaign with a Change Org petition and directed her attention to one of the major news channels to set an example by not using disrespectful images of women in sexual violence reporting. What was needed to transform the way society perceived women was images that were not about helplessness but about the rage that challenged the oppression. Pictures that showed that women are "doers," not always the "done upon-s." were shared by Anand in her piece about her innovative campaign for the Network of Women in Media, India.

While her 2018 petition garnered over 47,000 signatories and also helped to spotlight an earlier Redraw Misogyny campaign by Breakthrough, an organisation working to end violence against women, many media platforms continue to churn out images that strip the victim of agency and perpetuate shame and stigma attached with rape and sexual harassment, creating a biased perception of women who have experienced sexual violence.

But now Anand and the many survivors in India and the region, no longer have to be depicted in this disempowering way thanks to the just-launched free-to-use image bank reframing visual narratives around women and sexual violence in South Asian media.



Conceptualised by the Hri Institute for Southasian Research and Exchange, Kathmandu and developed with the help of a team of artists and photographers from India and Nepal, the image bank re-imagines visual depiction of women and sexual violence to address the wide spectrum of women's experiences. It is an outcome of a unique collaborative effort to explore the role images play in forming perceptions around sexual assault, women and gender equality. The project 'Challenging Visual Depiction of Women and Sexual Violence in Southeast Asia' led by Laxmi Murthy and Pawas Manandhar united researchers, activists, filmmakers, and artists to redefine visual portrayals of gender-based violence in cinema, media, and popular culture across Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The one-year project focused on challenging problematic imagery and promoting more meaningful depictions of violence and trauma. South Asian artists utilised textiles alongside illustrations and photos to narrate stories of injustices against women. It is an important artistic medium of expression, especially for those who have suffered violence, repression and discrimination as textiles are inextricably linked to the lives of people, particularly women. "I Never Ask For It," a campaign by Blank Noise, a Bengaluru-based volunteer-led project, has been working to generate awareness of gender-based violence and end victim shaming/blaming by building testimonies of clothing. Images from this campaign can also support survivors of violence to feel heard and believed.

A picture is worth a thousand words. It can transform the way sexual violence against women is framed in the media when used sensitively and appropriately. It just needs the will to do it.

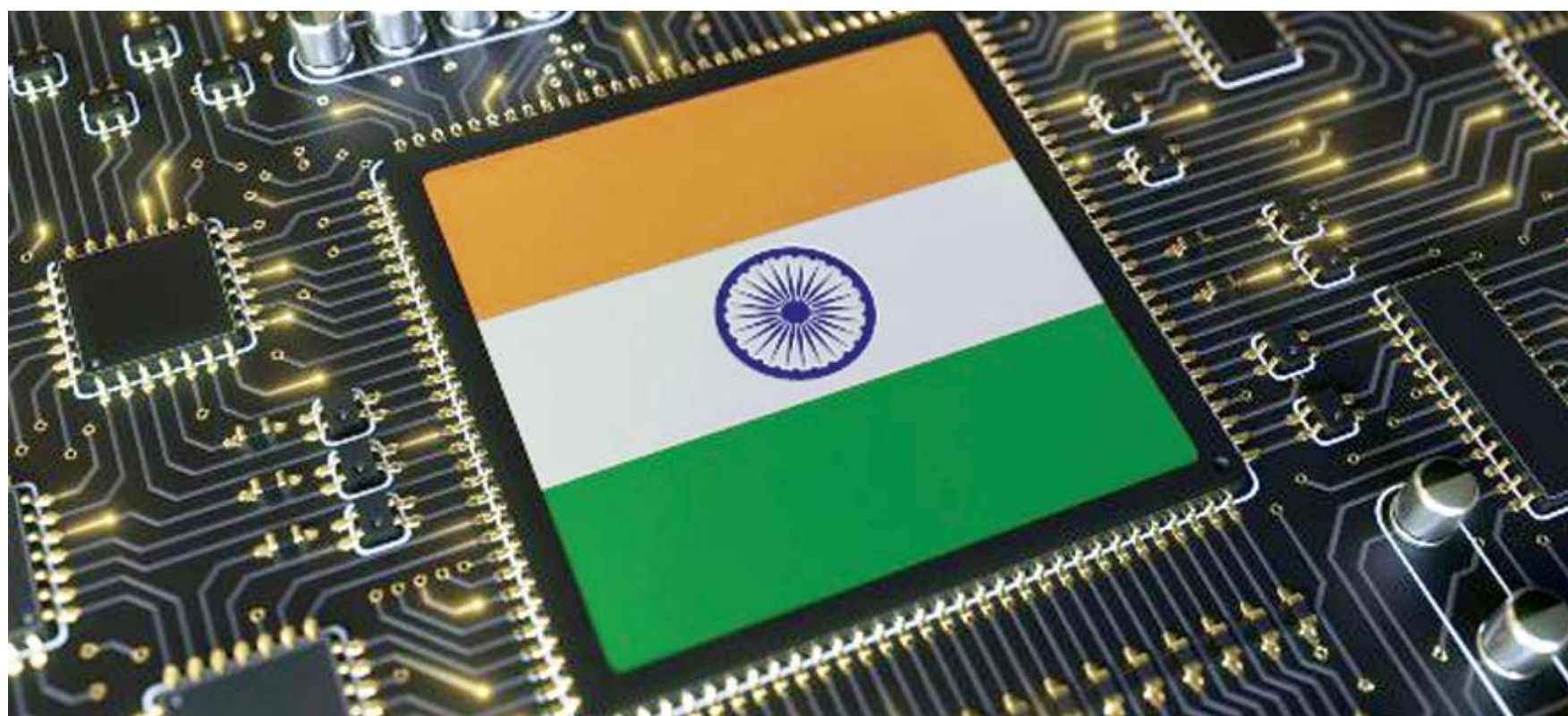
(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)

Semicon ecosystem: A revolution in India



A S MITTAL

India's talent, resources and infrastructure position it to excel in the semiconductor sector and becoming a global leader



As our lives become increasingly reliant on technology, semiconductors have become the essential foundation of society. These tiny chips are the powerhouses behind our electronic devices, communication systems and even the functioning of our agricultural implements, medical equipment and vehicles. India has recognised the enormous socio-economic potential and strategic importance of this silent revolution of technology and is taking the lead in building a robust semiconductor ecosystem and developing a talented workforce.

India's goal of becoming self-sufficient and a global leader in semiconductors is supported by the fact that the semiconductor industry is expected to generate over one million job opportunities for semiconductor design engineers, manufacturing engineers, R&D scientists, operators, technicians and skilled workers in chip design and semiconductor fabrication, packaging and sales facilities over the next five years. "Around 30 per cent of the new global capability centres established in India during the December quarter of last year were in the semiconductor space, indicating a growing interest in leveraging the local talent pool in areas such as front-end design, performance testing and post-silicon validation", according to the National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) and Zinnov latest report. The world's leading chip design companies, including Intel, Texas Instruments, AMD, Nvidia and Qualcomm, have design and R&D centres in India. AMD recently inaugurated its largest global design centre in Bengaluru. In March, an event - 'India's Techade: Chips for Viksit Bharat', witnessed the foundation stone of three semiconductor projects worth Rs 1.25 lakh crore.

Tata Electronics in partnership with Taiwan's Power Chip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC), set up the country's first semiconductor fab plant in Dholera (Gujrat) with an investment of Rs 91,000 crore and another plant in Morigaon (Assam) with investment of Rs 27,000 crore, with the first chips to



INDIA'S SEMICONDUCTOR MARKET IS VALUED AT AN ESTIMATED \$15 BILLION AND IS EXPECTED TO REACH \$55 BILLION BY 2026. SMARTPHONES AND WEARABLES, AUTOMOBILE COMPONENTS, COMPUTERS AND DATA STORAGE ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 60 PER CENT OF THE MARKET

begin coming off the production line in 2026. US-based semiconductor manufacturer Micron India plant with an investment of Rs 22,500 crore in Sanand (Gujarat), is expected to roll out the first "Made in India" memory chips by December. It is contributing its bit to the Chandrayaan-3 mission Semiconductor Corporation of India (SCL) proposed to update and expand its chip facility in the Mohali plant with an investment of Rs 20,000 crore, to enhance its contribution to ISRO and other space research organisations globally.

95 Percent Import Dependency: Despite the upward trajectory of India's current semiconductor chip ecosystem, the country remains dependent on the US, Taiwan, China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea, with over 95 per cent of semiconductors imported from these countries.

To reduce this dependency on imports, India recognised the strategic importance of a robust domestic semiconductor industry. It unveiled the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) offering 50 per cent capital expenditure support to new entrants, production-linked incentive (PLI) and design-linked incentive (DLI) schemes with an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore, as well as state Government incentive support, international partnerships and a focus on talent development. The Electronic and IT Ministry plans to train over 85,000 engineers in chip design over the next five years to address the skill gap. Such focused efforts aim to steer the ecosystem through nurturing policymaking to develop a self-sufficient ecosystem.

Moreover, the geopolitical uncertainties involving the China-US trade war have compelled companies to seek alternative production bases or sourcing locations outside

China. Amid this relocation in the industry, India and Southeast Asian nations like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have been preferred for front-end manufacturing in the future. India's entry into this ecosystem is timely and strategically important for diversifying the global supply chain and positioning India as a global hub for semiconductor design, manufacturing and technology development, fostering the creation of employment opportunities for the nation's youth.

Present Landscape and Scope of Growth: Bengaluru and Hyderabad together host about two-thirds of India's semiconductor global capability centres (GCCs), which is over two-thirds of the total 55 semiconductor GCCs in the country. With more than 95 GCC units and a specialised workforce of 50,000, this demonstrates India's strong commitment to the semiconductor industry. Presently, India's semiconductor market is valued at an estimated \$15 billion and is expected to reach \$55 billion by 2026. Smartphones and wearables, automobile components, computers and data storage account for more than 60 per cent of the market.

Challenges: Semiconductor manufacturing is an extremely complex process that requires precision at the smallest level. Since the global chip world is closely connected, Indian companies need to collaborate with countries like Taiwan and South Korea to gain access to advanced technology that will enable them to support emerging applications with more chip content, such as autonomous machines, smart medical devices, futuristic communications at 6G onward and AI across electronics. **Bridge the skill gap:** India needs to bridge the skill gap, especially for advanced chip design and fabrication. The global semiconductor

manufacturing industry has a talent pool of 2.3 million, with nearly 25 per cent of senior talent being Indian.

To attract and retain this talent, Indian companies are holding roadshows in Taiwan's chip manufacturing centre of Hsinchu. Communications and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says, "The engineers who have decided to return to India from the US are younger, while those from Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia are generally over 45 years and with more experience. We expect many of them to come back to participate in India's high-tech manufacturing revolution."

Road Ahead: The future of the semiconductor industry in India holds immense promise. It will play a crucial role in shaping the country's advanced technological landscape, driving economic growth and positioning India as a global leader in innovation. The semiconductor industry will also generate opportunities for an entrant and Indian talent working in this sector globally, many of whom wish to return to their roots.

India's ambition to become a self-reliant and dominant player in the semiconductor industry is clear. With the talent, resources and infrastructure in place, India is poised to make significant strides in the semiconductor sector and establish itself as a global leader in the years to come.

-The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet Minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President, of Tractor and Mechanisation Association (TMA). Views expressed are personal

Driving innovation: Role of intellectual property in India

India can emulate Japan's post-Meiji transformation by harnessing innovation, embracing change and cultivating a risk-taking culture

In the 76th Independence Day speech on August 15, 2022, the Prime Minister called for innovation with a focus on indigenous innovations highlighting "Jai Anusandhan". Innovation is the key to India realising a self-reliant, competitive and USD 30 trillion economy by 2047. Innovation has the potential to unlock major productivity gains and will allow the nation to leapfrog towards higher value-added products and services across sectors.

In the last few years, globally we have witnessed a fundamental and rapid shift from a knowledge economy to an era of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtuality. During the same time, the unprecedented nature and



KRISHNA SARMA

scale of the pandemic affirmed the importance of having an innovation ecosystem for finding new cures — vaccines, medicines and diagnostics.

For a country with a legacy of scientific and technical knowledge base, the private sector in India has previously made modest investments in research and development (R&D). India has taken a different approach to innovation

to meet its unique challenges. The transformational digital public infrastructure, starting with the Aadhar platform, is a case in point.

Similarly, against the backdrop of concerns regarding public health, access and affordability of medicines and protecting the domestic industry, India's approach to innovation in the biopharmaceutical sector is primarily based on public-sector-led collaborative innovation, where the private sector has merely been 'encouraged' to invest in R&D in priority areas.

While in many cases, publicly supported research provides a wellspring of initial discovery, it is the private sector that must develop new technologies and bring them to the

market. To be a leader in a rapidly changing marketplace across sectors, private sector innovation is critical. How does one measure innovation? One way could be to determine how much a company spends on R&D as a percentage of its revenue annually. As patents secure exclusive rights to an invention, the innovative index of a company can be additionally judged by the number of granted patents, patent applications filed, whether the filings are in multiple countries, the quality of the patents and so forth. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce's 161st Report on IPR Regime in India (July 2021) expresses concern that the rate of increase in the number of

patents in India in the last four years has been very low compared to the US and China. It goes on to say that this is co-related to the microscopic spending on R&D which is a meagre 0.7 per cent of India's GDP. Globally, companies with the highest R&D spend are big tech US companies like Amazon, Meta, Alphabet, Microsoft, Intel Corp. and bio-pharmaceutical companies like Roche, J&J, Pfizer, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck & Co. This list also includes three companies from China — Huawei, Tencent Holdings and Alibaba; Samsung from S. Korea; and European automobile manufacturers like Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz.

Regarding the biopharmaceutical sector, the removal of product patent protection for drugs in 1970 allowed reverse engineering, which led to the exponential growth of the domestic generic industry and helped India be 'the pharmacy of the world'. At the same time, however, the lack of effective patent protection profoundly impacted corporate investment in R&D and the discovery of new molecules. Zydus Cadila's Saroglitazar, launched in 2013, remains so far, the only compound that was entirely indigenously discovered.

India has the potential to spur its innovative spirit by leveraging its strengths, embracing change and fostering a risk-taking culture.

Japan's transformation after the Meiji Restoration from being an importer and imitator of foreign technologies, to a global powerhouse in innovation that has defined the world's technological landscape exemplifies that necessity is the mother of invention.

There is no silver bullet for creating an enabling environment for innovation. Bryce Hoffman in his book Red Teaming shows how disruptive innovation requires critical and contrarian thinking. So, to inculcate the scientific temper and risk-taking and entrepreneurship spirit, there is a dire need to shift the emphasis of our education system from rote memorisation and conformity. Second, we must vigorously

pursue closer collaboration between academia and industry to commercialise innovation. It is a matter of great pride that Prof. Rahul Purwar, IIT Mumbai obtained marketing approval for the first indigenously developed cell and gene therapy for the treatment of cancer.

Last but not least, a robust, meaningful and predictable intellectual property rights system can most optimally provide economic incentives to inventors and investors to invest risk capital in inventive activity — a very high-risk undertaking.

(The author is Managing Partner, Corporate Law Group, a New Delhi-based law firm; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold slumps Rs 150; silver plunges Rs 750

Extending the losses for the second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday slumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the national capital amid a fall in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also plunged Rs 750 to Rs 83,750 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 84,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams, down Rs 150 taking bearish cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,320 per ounce, down US\$ 13 from the previous close. "Gold prices continued to weaken... as this sell-off was attributed to the anticipation of a hawkish stance from the US Federal Reserve in the upcoming interest rate policy announcement scheduled for May 1."



GMR Airports Infra to buy stake in WAISL for Rs 57 crore

GMR Airports Infrastructure on Tuesday announced acquiring an 8.4 per cent stake in WAISL, which provides digital infrastructure services at airports, as the company looks to strengthen its presence in airport-related businesses. The company has entered into an agreement to buy 4,60,000 shares or an 8.4 per cent stake of WAISL from Utthista Virat Fund for Rs 56.66 crore, according to a regulatory filing on Tuesday. Incorporated in 2009, WAISL is into the business of delivering digital infrastructure at airports and operates as an exclusive partner for IT services at airports. In the filing, GMR Airports Infrastructure said it has been "exploring opportunities of investing in entities engaged in airport adjacencies/ airport related businesses etc. to strengthen its presence in all aspects of airport related / airport adjacent businesses". GMR Airports Infrastructure operates through GMR Airports Ltd (GAL), which operates various airports, including at Delhi, Hyderabad, Goa and the Philippines. Shares of the company declined 2.75 per cent to Rs 85.19 apiece in late afternoon trade on the BSE.



UCO Bank aims to bring down govt stake to 75 per cent : MD

UCO Bank on Tuesday said it aims to reduce the government's stake in the bank from the current 95.39% to 75% in several tranches by fiscal 2024-25, to comply with the minimum public shareholding norms set by SEBI. The lender has time until August to comply with this but it hopes to receive a further extension, a top bank official said. Four other public sector banks have also laid out plans to pare down government holdings to meet SEBI regulations. "We don't need equity for growth as our capital adequacy is at 16.98%. However, we must reduce the government's stake to 75% to meet listing regulations, and we aim to do so within this fiscal year. The board has approved the issuance of 400 crore equity shares for this purpose. We will execute this in tranches," said UCO Bank MD & CEO Aswani Kumar. He said various options will be explored as issuance plans get firmer. "To comply, the issuance of 330-340 crore equity shares at Rs 10 each would have been sufficient, but we have allowed some additional headroom," he said at a post-earnings interaction. Speaking about the credit growth outlook, Kumar mentioned that the bank is targeting a growth of 12-14%, and corporate lending is expected to remain robust with a growth target of 3-4%.



Indian economy likely to grow over 7% : NCAER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy could grow more than 7 per cent during the current fiscal amid a benign global outlook and expected above-normal monsoon, economic think tank NCAER has said. In its April 2024 issue of Monthly Economic Review (MER), NCAER said a range of high-frequency indicators reveal the resilience of the domestic economy with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing at a 16-year high and UPI, the leading digital payments system, touching the highest volume since its inception in 2016.



"Projected acceleration in both global growth and trade volumes, as well as a forecast of an above-normal monsoon, indicate that the Indian economy can again attain growth rates higher than 7 per cent during the current fiscal year," said NCAER Director General Poonam Gupta.

said NCAER Director General Poonam Gupta.

March 2024, the highest since its introduction, registering a growth of 55.3 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

"These high-frequency indicators, coupled with a more benign global outlook projected by the IMF and WTO bode well for the Indian econ-

omy during the current year," Gupta added.

According to the report, Consumer Price Index (CPI) headline inflation was down to 4.9 per cent in March from 5.1 per cent in February, while core inflation came down to 3.2 per cent during the same period.

The report said employment indicators again showed mixed trends, with an increase in the number of net new subscribers under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on a year-on-year basis.

However, the overall online hiring activities, as per the Naukri JobSpeak Index, moderated year-on-year, it added.

While the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Fitch Ratings have estimated India's growth at 7 per cent, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), S&P Global Ratings and Morgan Stanley projected a 6.8 per cent growth rate for FY25.



Adani Total Gas net profit rises 59 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Total Gas Ltd, the city gas retailing joint venture of Adani group and TotalEnergies of France, on Tuesday reported a 59 per cent rise in March quarter net profit on the back of a surge in CNG sales volumes.

The company posted a net profit of Rs 165 crore in the January-March period as against Rs 104 crore in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement.

The firm, which retails CNG to automobiles and pipes natural gas to household kitchen for cooking purpose, saw a revenue increase of 5 per cent to Rs 1,257 crore while EBITDA surged 49 per cent to Rs 305 crore the quarter.

Sebi takes steps to curb unfair trades in mutual funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi board on Tuesday decided to amend norms governing mutual funds, whereby asset management companies (AMCs) need to put in place an "institutional mechanism" for identification and deterrence of potential market abuse, including front-running and fraudulent transactions in securities.

The mechanism should consist of enhanced surveillance systems, internal control procedures, and escalation processes to identify, monitor, and address specific types of misconduct, including front running, insider trading, and misuse of sensitive information.



tion, Sebi said in a statement issued after the conclusion of the board meeting.

Intending to address the issues faced by venture capital funds (VCFs) registered under the erstwhile VCF norms to their inability to fully liquidate the investments of their

schemes within the tenure of the scheme, the Sebi's board has approved a proposal to provide an option to such VCFs to migrate into AIF (Alternative Investment Fund) rules and avail the facilities available for AIFs to deal with unliquidated investments

Markets wipe out early gains on fag-end sell-off; Nifty slips

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday as a fag-end sell-off wiped out early gains, with IT and power stocks playing spoilsport amid a mixed trend in global markets.



74,482.78. During the day, it had jumped 440.11 points or 0.58 per cent to 75,111.39.

The NSE Nifty dipped 38.55 points or 0.17 per cent to finish

at 22,604.85. In the late afternoon trade, the benchmark hit its all-time peak of 22,783.35, up 139.95 points or 0.61%. From the Sensex basket, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the biggest laggards. Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank and Maruti were the major gainers.

India to grant full cost of Lanka northern port development

PNS ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Cabinet on Tuesday decided to implement the renovation of the Kankesanthurai Port in the Northern Province with India agreeing to grant US\$ 61.5 million—the entire cost of the project.

Situated in the northern region of Sri Lanka, the Kankesanthurai Port or the KKS Port, with an area of approximately 16 acres, is located at a

distance of 104 kilometres (66 nautical miles) from Karaikal Port in Pondicherry. The direct passenger ship service connecting Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu to Kankesanthurai port near Jaffna covers a distance of 111 kilometres (69 nautical miles) in approximately three and a half hours. "Considering the importance of the project, the Indian government has agreed to grant the entire estimated cost of the project," a statement said on Tuesday.

ED seizes Rs 90-cr funds kept in Binance, ZebPay, WazirX wallets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday said it has taken possession of funds worth Rs 90 crore, kept in cryptocurrency wallets of exchanges like Binance, ZebPay and WazirX, as part of a money laundering investigation linked to an online gaming app "scam".

"These crypto assets were subsequently taken into possession and transferred into the crypto wallet of the ED," the federal agency said in a statement.

The investigation pertains to an online gaming scam app "scam" called 'E-Nugget' that masqueraded as a gaming platform and "promised" users high returns on their investments.

An FIR filed at the Park Street Police Station of Kolkata became the basis of the ED case that was registered under the provisions of the

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The app offered a series of enticing games designed for real-money wagering promised users hefty commissions and painted a picture of a "golden investment" opportunity, the ED said. However, this facade quickly fell apart once investments were made with the app going dark and leaving investors stranded without a way to reclaim their funds, it said.

The ED said it exposed the alleged illegal activities of the app in 2022 and found that a part of the ill-gotten gains was invested in

digital assets. About 2,500 mule or dummy bank accounts were identified, it said.

The agency said it sought details of crypto wallets involved in this case and held with cryptocurrency exchanges like Binance, ZebPay and WazirX.



India will become leader in offshore mining: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will become the leader in offshore mining as not many countries have done much in this area, a government official said on Tuesday. Offshore mining is the process of retrieving mineral deposits from the deep seabed, at a depth of more than 200 metres.

Speaking at the Critical Minerals Summit here, Joint Secretary in Ministry of Mines, Veena Kumari D said the government has amended the offshore mining legislation. "We have done amendment to the Act for offshore

mining and we are working on the rules for that and India will be the leader in offshore mining because not many countries have done much of offshore mining and we were working on it since August 2023," she added.

Mines Secretary V L Kantha Rao in his address on Monday had said that the auction of offshore mines will begin in three months' time. The Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 has been amended to provide an auction route for awarding production leases for offshore minerals.

Wipro bags multi million dollar deal to transform Nokia's digital workplace services

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT services company Wipro Ltd on Tuesday announced that it has been selected by Nokia to overhaul its employee service desk and offer real-time IT support to a global network of employees, in a multi-million dollar deal.

Wipro team will build a bespoke AI-powered, cloud-based solution for Nokia's workforce comprising around 86,700 users globally in 130 countries of operations.

The solution aims to enhance the employee experience by providing modular, secure, and automated services, Wipro said in a release. The release said Wipro has



clinched a multi-million-dollar deal to transform Nokia's digital workplace services.

Designit, a Wipro company that specialises in user experience strategy and implementation, will conduct user research to ensure personalised assistance is offered to employees at the right time.

The project will result in the creation of an experience-driven, omni-channel, and always-on global service desk, which

will provide employees with flexible and secure services to empower them to effectively navigate a hybrid work environment, the release added.

"Generative AI is fast becoming a critical component of Digital Workplace services. We are proud to work with Nokia on building an IT support solution that will improve the employee experience," Vinay Firake, Senior Vice President and Managing Director

Nordics of Wipro, said.

Marije van Donk, Vice President, Head of User Experience at Nokia, said, "At Nokia, we are increasing our efforts to elevate and secure user experiences with our IT Services".

A key pillar is a modernised remote support concept that uses the latest technologies to provide seamless, secure, and efficient support, regardless of location, device, or network.

"Implementing this concept will empower our users to self-serve their issues, give intelligent and contextual guidance, and connect users with experts. We have chosen Wipro as our partner in this transformation journey," Donk said

SAIL staff settles case with Sebi; pays Rs 45.50 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A SAIL employee on Tuesday settled with markets regulator Sebi a case of the alleged violations of insider trading activities in the company's shares by paying Rs 45.50 lakh towards the settlement charges.

The terms of the settlement also included the disgorgement of alleged unlawful gain of Rs 40.09 lakh (which includes interest of 12 per cent per annum).

In the revised settlement terms (RST), the applicant (Arun Verma) proposed to voluntarily abstain from the securities market for a year. The order came after the

applicant filed an application with Sebi, proposing to settle the pending proceedings through a settlement order without admitting or denying the findings of fact and conclusions of law.

"...it is hereby ordered that the instant proceedings initiated against the applicant (Arun Verma) vide show cause notice dated October 10, 2023, are disposed of," Sebi's Chief General Manager G Ramar said in the order.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) conducted an investigation into the scrip of Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) based on the internal alert.



TO ACHIEVE NET-ZERO CARBON EMISSION

Aluminum industry requires additional Rs 2.2 L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian aluminium industry would require an additional capital expenditure of nearly Rs 2.2 lakh crore (USD 29 billion) to achieve net-zero carbon emission, according to a new study.

The study by independent think-tank Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) said renewable energy power sources could abate 49 per cent of the total emissions from the industry.

However, fully switching to renewable energy is not feasi-



ble right now because it is not always available. So a backup plan is needed, it added.

India has committed to achieving net-zero emissions (a balance between greenhouse

gases emitted and removed from the atmosphere) by 2070 and 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

Aluminum is widely used, especially in the power sector, and it is one of India's fastest-growing industries. But achieving net-zero emissions could make it 61 per cent more expensive, with a yearly operational cost of about Rs 26,049 crore (USD 3.5 billion).

Even though India does not use a lot of aluminum per person (2.5 kilogrammes) compared to the global average (11 kilogrammes), the industry emitted a whopping 77 million tonnes of CO2 in 2019-20. Most of this comes

from electricity used by the plants.

The study suggests that improving energy efficiency in aluminum production and using waste heat recovery can help cut emissions without making aluminum more expensive. However, most other ways to cut emissions, like using more renewable energy or capturing carbon, will make aluminum production more costly.

CEEW also launched a study on what it would take for the fertiliser industry to achieve net-zero emissions.

'NH construction to decline by 7-10 pc to 31 km/day'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Apr 30 (PTI) The pace of National Highways construction in India is estimated to slow down by 7-10 per cent to around 31 km/day in the current fiscal due to heightened execution challenges, CareEdge Ratings said on Tuesday.

The pace of National Highways construction in India during FY24 registered a healthy uptick of 20 per cent



to 34 km/day. "CareEdge Ratings expects National Highways Construction to slow down from 12,350 km in FY24 to 11,100-11,500 km in

FY25," it said. However, according to the rating agency, despite the uptick, the pace of construction fared lower than 37 km per day reported in FY21 due to execution woes and an increasingly competitive landscape.

It said BOT (build, operate and transfer)-HAM remained the preferred mode of award, constituting around 55 per cent of the total projects awarded during FY21-24.

'PREMCHAND'S HUMANISM SPEAKS A LANGUAGE THAT ANYONE CAN UNDERSTAND'



Having observed the amount of time and passion his parents, Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, have invested in the theater group 'Motley Productions', Vivan Shah is no stranger to the rigors and discipline that staging a play requires. He also grew up with a deep appreciation for literature and says, "Because of my parents, who staged the stories by Ismat Chughtai, Manto, and many others, I am familiar with the riches of Indian literature. Premchand is my personal favourite and his story *Gull-i Danda* is one of the gentlest and most moving stories I've ever read. Being a part of *Koi Baat Chale* directed by Seema Pahwa was an absolute joy. Premchand's humanism speaks a language that anyone can understand, and I am glad that this story has now been translated into Telugu," says Vivan.

The challenge of narrating a classic story with the right intonations and playing multiple characters without many props was challenging, but Vivan particularly enjoyed bringing out the subtext of *Gull-i Danda*. He says, "Premchand very subtly reveals class divides and social inequities that we tend to overlook. Seema Ji helped me to bring it forth and to do justice to the nuances and details of the characters and the prose."

Vivan believes this experience has enriched him as an actor. "Narrating a story really sharpens your instincts as an actor, and with a director like Seema Pahwa, I was able to communicate the essence of this short story, which is not just about friendship but the way it is impacted by socioeconomic barriers."

He hopes the audience will imbibe what Premchand was trying to communicate. He says, "This story shows that humanity and empathy are the defining qualities of us humans, not how much money or status we have. This story also offers a glimpse into how rich and varied Indian literature really is, and it would be wonderful if more people went on to explore it through *Koi Baat Chale*."

Travis Kelce is becoming the highest-paid tight end NFL player!

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce continue to demonstrate why they are among the most incredible power couples of our time. Both of them are excelling in their own fields, and Kelce has just closed a huge financial deal. These days, Kelce's fame extends beyond the realm of sports because of his connection with international celebrity Taylor.

Before calling it quits on their romance last year, Taylor had been dating actor Joe Alwyn for around six years. Swift was then connected to Matty Healy, the frontman of *The 1975*, but that relationship too ended quickly. Once Swift and Kelce were connected, there was no going back. With their cute PDAs, they openly declared their love for each other. They have set some goals for each other, including date nights and mutual support.

The Chiefs and Travis Kelce's longtime agent, Mike Simon, reportedly negotiated a contract that made Kelce the highest-paid NFL player in his position category, according to a report by NFL journalist Tom Pelissero. The story states that he has landed a \$34 million contract! According to the writer, Kelce now has guaranteed funding through 2024, with more funding vesting annually. He is contracted until 2027, when he will turn 38.

With a \$17 million pay each year, Darren Walker of the New York Giants was the highest-paid tight end in the NFL prior to this. Travis Kelce's \$14.3 million annual contract placed him in fourth place on the list of highest paid athletes. "We signed the greatest tight end ever to a new contract," the Kansas City Chiefs said on social media to announce the news.

"Feels great to be in Kansas City," commented Travis Kelce in the meantime. "Man, I recall visiting this place twelve years ago. I'm honoured and delighted to be involved, and I'm eager to work hard over the next two years. Getting excited about the new year. Hey, baby, we're back at it. Chiefs indefinitely!"

Taylor Swift is having a tremendous year as well because she became a billionaire this year. Her last studio album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, was also released, and it quickly became popular.



what's brewing?

Rajnesh Duggall on playing an oncologist in his international debut

Actor Rajnesh Duggall recently announced his international debut with the highly anticipated Indo-Nigerian series, *Postcards*, set to release on May 3rd. The actor also reveals that he will play the role of 'Doctor' in the series. Speaking about what went into preparing for his role, Rajnesh shared, "In preparing for the role, my focus was primarily on studying the character of a doctor, particularly an oncologist. This involved understanding the knowledge and experiences required in that field, as well as observing the body language typical of doctors. Additionally, I delved into a wide range of emotions

portrayed in the script, internalising them to bring authenticity to the character." He further explained, "When developing a character, I aim to navigate through these emotions, ensuring that the portrayal remains grounded in reality, albeit adapted to the cinematic context of the film. Doctor Sidharth embodies a charming young husband and doctor, longing to start a family despite feeling a sense of incompleteness in his personal life, despite the happiness in his professional career". Directed by Ahuja, whose previous work includes the Netflix hit movie *Namaste Wahala*, *Postcards* is poised to be a poignant exploration of human experiences.



James knew about Henry Cavill's ousting

Fans of Henry Cavill are bitter over his departure from the DC Universe when James Gunn and Peter Safran took charge. A notion had it that in 2021, while Gunn was promoting his DC film *The Suicide Squad*, he was aware of Cavill's recasting. Nathan Fillion, who plays Guy Gardener in the upcoming *Superman* film, is to blame for that.

Soon after taking over the DC Studios in 2022, Gunn and Safran began implementing the adjustments. The biggest surprise for the fans was undoubtedly not having Henry return! Gunn and Safran received a great deal of criticism for it.

According to a report, Nathan Fillion—who also starred in James Gunn's *Suicide Squad* and *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*—told that he was told by James about his Guy Gardener role during the premiere party of *The Suicide Squad* in 2021 for his upcoming *Superman* film.

James, however, claimed that when attending a party for his MCU film, he discussed the *Green Lantern* with Nathan. It gave rise to rumours that James was aware of Henry Cavill's dismissal and his new position as



DC co-head. The director was even dubbed a liar by some.

James Gunn has finally confirmed the situation on his social media account on Threads after a fan questioned him with the rumour that, upon being hired by WB, he intended to rebuild the DCEU and direct his own *Superman* film, which also meant he would not be casting Henry Cavill as Clark Kent.

"I don't quite understand how that fits," remarked James Gunn. "It was always meant and pitched as a new *Superman* narrative, aside from the fact that I had no interest in heading DC until Peter decided to do it with me so he could handle the executive stuff and I could concentrate on creative when I was recruited to write *Superman*."

"So why would I lie about not planning that at the *Squad* premiere, which ultimately would have been the same thing?" he asked. "What is the logic behind this specific conspiracy theory?"

In the meantime, 2025 is when James Gunn's *Superman* film, starring David Corenswet, is anticipated to hit theaters.

Sooraj Pancholi is all set to star in an action-entertainer next, a biopic on a warrior



Actor Sooraj Pancholi is gearing up for his most awaited comeback in Bollywood. Recently, the actor was spotted at *Heeramandi's* premiere with his co-star, Akanksha Sharma. His latest spotting at created lots of curiosity around his upcoming project. As per reports, Sooraj is all set to star in an action-thriller. Talking about his comeback film, Sooraj says, "I am glad to be back on set. The film is a biopic of one of the bravest Indian warriors who fought and defended the Somnath temple. I play a warrior in it."

Sooraj also added, "I am in no rush or race. I want to play different characters in every film. I just want to grow as a performer and do my best every time."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



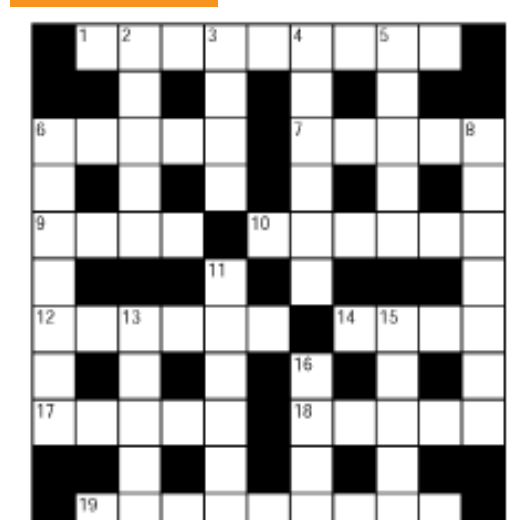
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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- 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

- Not sure
- Grape plants
- Get to
- Utters
- Choose
- A passenger's document
- Accompanying
- Less wet
- Finished
- A big, important church
- Called in on
- Emerges from an egg
- Look everywhere for
- Porcelain
- New Delhi is the capital of this country
- No longer alive

DOWN

- A nursemaid for children
- A compass direction
- This has a bull's-eye
- Mirror reflection



FROM WATCHING ON-SCREEN TO STARRING ALONGSIDE

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

SHIV JYOTI'S DREAM COMES TRUE WITH FATEH

Shiv Jyoti Rajput has become a well-known figure in the entertainment industry thanks to her exceptional performance in the OTT field and her noticeable presence in commercials. She is well-known for her captivating roles in films such as *Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story*, where her talent and adaptability enthralled viewers! She is now ready to make her mark on the big screen. She will star with renowned actor Sonu Sood in the eagerly awaited movie *Fateh*. She's also getting ready for her part in the next film, *JNU: Jahangir National University*, in which she plays Shehla Rashid, a renowned activist.

The dynamics of the filmmaking industry change along with it. She explains, saying, "It was all going great, barely any changes at all, until I realised that filmmaking has changed into a whole new world. The amount of money spent on movies these days is staggering, especially when compared to the amount of money spent on OTT shows. But since it was announced that I would be making my debut with other younger stars, the scene has changed dramatically and has come under intense scrutiny. The sudden limelight took me entirely by surprise."

Shehla Rashid, a well-known activist and former JNU student leader, takes over. She discloses the following about the character: "She's far from ordinary, navigating life's challenges effortlessly. Her steadfast faith in the great power of kindness is what makes her unique. She exudes a unique goodness that makes an impression on everyone she encounters with her unwavering warmth and contagious happiness. She has had an incredible impact on everyone who had the good fortune to know her."

Occasionally, we find ourselves approached for the most unexpected roles in the chaos of auditions and opportunities. For the actress expatriates, this was the situation. "Hehe! It's funny how the role came to me with little effort on my part. I

did, in fact, try it out, but I promptly forgot about it. Admittedly, I don't have the knowledge to perform a thorough SWOT analysis to determine whether or not to accept it. However, I reasoned, my parents would be proud if I began my career with this movie. Given the traditional nature of Rajput families, it seems likely that they would be among the first to watch it."

It was her desire to work alongside Sonu Sood and Jacqueline Fernandez too. She reveals, saying, "Living the dream! It was one thing to see them on TV on the big screen, but I get so much excitement from working with them and spending time with Sonu, sir? It seemed unreal! His enthusiasm for imparting anecdotes, films, and life experiences was incredibly motivating. He had music I could listen to for hours on end. However, as they say, "Jack is a dull boy if he works all the time and plays none at all." I therefore liked to playfully rile him up or break into song to make him grin and brighten the mood. The team always had a good laugh as a result."

Every endeavour had its share of difficulties, and she overcame them all. "Even though I had health issues, I decided to join *Fateh* a few days after getting over a viral infection. I was often feeling cold in Amritsar because of the unexpectedly low temperatures. I have to say, though, that this film was the most comfortable I've done thus far." She talks about her pre-role rituals. "I would be more than happy to divulge my secret to you! Let's hold off until I'm positive that I left a posi-

tive impact on the audience. When I'm satisfied that they're having fun with the movie, I'll be pleased to share it. Keep checking back!"

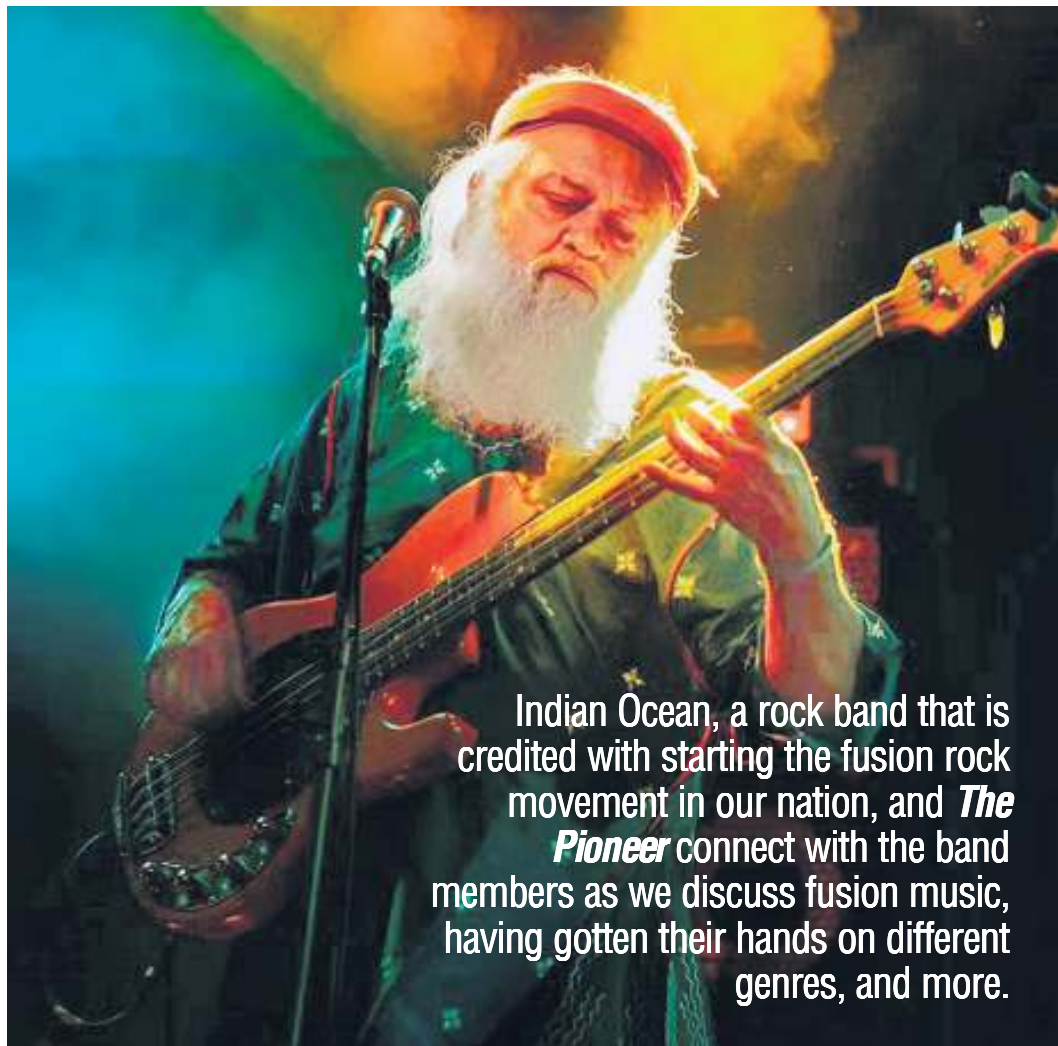
"Everyone's journey and mindset are unique, so I'm not in the habit of giving advice," is her advice to young people who want to be actors. "But I can tell you this: never waver from your convictions and never feel the need to apologise. You can succeed in this." She says that she is passionate about a variety of topics outside of acting, including exploring new areas of study. "I'm really good at athletics; I can sketch; and I have a passion for cooking."

Get ready to enter a world where performances are soul-stirring and beyond the ordinary. An experience unlike any other is promised by her extraordinary ability to incorporate magic into her work. She says, "I have a very special ability to use magic in my performances. The delight, joy, and empathy they inspire in your heart will make you laugh. I can guarantee that you will have an incredible experience that will bring tears of pure delight to your eyes."



Actress Shiv Jyoti Rajput, who will soon be seen in the Sonu Sood-starrer *Fateh*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing the dynamics of filmmaking, portraying Shehla Rashid in *JNU*, and more.

Jamming through jazz-laced rhythms and tunes



Indian Ocean, a rock band that is credited with starting the fusion rock movement in our nation, and *The Pioneer* connect with the band members as we discuss fusion music, having gotten their hands on different genres, and more.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

We had an exclusive interview with Indian Ocean, a rock band that was founded in 1990 and is largely credited with starting the fusion rock movement in our nation. Before Asheem Chakravarty passed away on December 25, 2009, the band's members included Susmit Sen, Rahul Ram, Amit Kilam, and Himanshu Joshi. Tuheen Chakravarty and Joshi were formally admitted into the band as Chakravarty's heirs. Rahul Ram is the only original member who was featured on the band's debut album, *Indian Ocean*, since Susmit Sen left in 2013!

Fusion has advanced significantly, as the band members asserted in a recent interview with *The Pioneer*. "People are singing and performing linguistic fusion with confidence these days. Agam is a fantastic band that performs fusion Carnatic music. Bollywood is now incorporating fusion rock into some of its films, which is a big thing. We have performed fusion rock in a few movies." Jazz fusion is the most appropriate genre to describe the band's sound.

But, we were told, "We really don't set out to do some specific instruments. We get together and jam, and the various genres of music we grew up with have become a part of who we are. Additionally, as the band has developed over time, new members have added character-



istics of their own. For instance, Himanshu is well-versed in ancient Punjabi and Uttarakhandi folklore, as well as Ghazal and Urdu poetry. Former heavy metal guitarist Nitin Rao is now interested in jazz and Carnatic music. You will have to sit with us and experience the music for yourself to gain any further insight into how we truly came up with it."

The band has been defying record labels' policies since 2010. Their most recent album, *16/330 Khajoor Road*, was made available for free online. This decision was mostly motivated by unhappiness with contract negotiations with record labels and legal disputes around copyright! The band members don't seem to be phased, though, and go on, "We didn't want to engage with music companies because of how terrible their con-

tracts operate. We therefore made the decision to record the music ourselves and only grant them distribution rights following Black Friday. These businesses are no longer relevant; their primary role now is to distribute your music across several channels. However, other factions have taken control of even that. Since music firms have been exploiting musicians for so long, it's about time they realise that's not the way to make money, so it's not a bad thing that they are slowly but surely becoming obsolete."

Instead of playing to record labels, they are now making money through concerts and sponsorships. Johnnie Walker briefly provided sponsorship for them!

"After Asheem's death and Susmit's retirement, the current line is devoid of any members from the 1990s. In 1991, I became a member. However, Nikhil Rao has had a fantastic impact. He is humorous and full of life, but more significantly, he is interested in a wide range of genres, which has greatly increased the band's diversity. In terms of both creativity and interpersonal dynamics, the band is in fantastic shape. The solos are incredible. Ultimately, Susmit's leaving is beneficial for both him and the band," said band member Rahul Ram.

As one of the five featured artists, they are also members of the world's first music personalisation initiative, called *DRP*. "Every song, with the exception of the title tune, revolves around the environmental problem. *Jadu Maya* and *Iss Tan Dhan's* music, for example, speaks to resisting materialism. A major element of revolution or protest music is there aside from that. Actually, Asheem contributed to a few of the tracks on *16/330*. And the incomplete work we made with Asheem is the second CD of *16/330*, which most people have never heard of. Asheem had left by the time it was released, but he was still very much a part of it. After Asheem and Susmit parted ways, the album *Tandanu* was released. We had moved on at that point, and a lot of time had passed. We speak lovingly and affectionately about Asheem and miss him every single day. We tell everyone about him, and we cherish our memories of him. We were fortunate to have spent nearly two decades with him."

Sen's father proposed the name Indian Ocean back in 1990. As the new drummer, Shaleen Sharma was joined by bassists Anirban Roy and Indrajit Dutta. Sen sold his electric guitar to help the band acquire the necessary funds, and together they recorded a demo. The seven tracks on the 45-minute recording were all recorded in a single day. The demo tape was recorded in a hurry, but its quality pleased HMV, and they were offered an album deal. It has been a major pleasure working with lyricist Sanjeev Sharma for the whole band. Could you give more details on the band's collaborations with the lyricist? Well, one of the team members says, "It was at a music rehearsal for a play that we truly first got together. He told us, when we sat down with him, that lyrics are not poetry, and it's true that he's created so many lovely songs for us. Every chance we have, we attempt to collaborate with him. We begin with the music and then turn it over to the lyricist after providing a quick synopsis of the song. The song came together over a few conversations and jazz sharing. The focus is on giving the lyrics significance, as evidenced by other Indian Ocean tunes."

A song's creation for *Masaan*, starring Vicky Kaushal, involved the input of multiple parties, including the director, producer, and lyricist he chose. In addition, there are time constraints, such as the length of songs for motion pictures, which place a strong emphasis on the words and less emphasis on the music, which is typically the focus of the Indian Ocean. But in spite of all of these difficulties and limitations, they managed to produce a respectable quantity of work that is really engaging!

SUMMER HYDRATION: Keeping your kidneys healthy with ample water intake

In the heat of the summer, it may be difficult to think about how important drinking more water is. While you might think that adequate water intake is related to your kidneys, it is in fact essential for ensuring their health. These active organs are the key to eliminating most excess water from your body, and just imagine the added workload of the summer heat.

A lack of water intake leads to the accumulation of waste products in the blood, which in turn puts extra pressure on the kidneys, making them work harder. Eventually, this straining of the kidney will lead to the formation of stones, the development of urinary tract infections, and other forms of chronic kidney disease.

But fear not! It is a very simple and outstanding way to keep your kidneys healthy by drinking a sufficient amount of water. That is probably how they have this good state with so much water inside the body. Extensive fluid intake in this case assists in the removal of toxins and the dilution of waste products, guaranteeing that this is achieved by the optimal functioning of the kidneys.

Maybe at this point you are asking, "How many water glasses will be enough?" The answer would be a minimum of eight, but preferably two liters. Similarly, in the scorching summer months, when the increased sweat loss is experienced, you may have to drink more fluids to compensate for the high water loss.

Making sure you're keeping yourself hydrated easier, include these simple ideas into your everyday routine:

Carry a reusable water bottle: The fact that you can see the water and its constant presence will be a helpful and touchable

indicator. Just refill your water bottle from time to time; instead of buying soda or juice, you'll end up with plenty of water in your cup, which will help you a lot with your daily water intake limit.

Infuse your water: If you think that plain water is not appealing enough, give it a change by adding fresh slices of fruits, herbs, or vegetables. A combination of cucumber, lemon, and mint dilutions will turn water into a fruit-fresh alternative.

Embrace hydrating foods: When it comes to thirst quenching, water is a perfect liquid, but many other items, such as fruits and vegetables, are able to assist you in keeping your hydration number high. Feast on luscious watermelon, crispy cucumbers, or urgeable grapes to replenish the lost fluids.

Don't forget to set reminders: The daily grind of life rushes by, and the intake of water is one of the things that slips the mind. Probably, set an alarm on your phone or wearable, and be mindful that taking a break from hydration every hour or so will make it better for you.

Don't forget to appreciate your kidneys, the silent protectors whose function includes maintaining your health and well-being. When you let them indicate their lack of hydration on the hottest days of the summer, you are helping them perform their task better and, as a result, preventing other, more general health problems. Hence, raise a glass or a water bottle to your kidneys and embark on a journey for the rejuvenating power of proper water intake!

(The author, Dr. Sujit Chatterjee, is the CEO of Dr. L.H Hiranandani Hospital.)





CSK EYE ALL ROUND STABILITY AGAINST UNPREDICTABLE PBKS

PTI ■ CHENNAI

An inconsistent Chennai Super Kings will have to display all-round solidity when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. The Super Kings have 10 points from nine matches, similar figures as that of Lucknow Super Giants, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals, and the defending champions would certainly like to breakaway from that mid-table gridlock with a win. However, the defending champions will be a worried lot as Punjab Kings, who have six points from nine games, are coming to this match after scaling down 262 against Kolkata Knight Riders, the highest chase in the history of T20 cricket. But the Chempauk deck is a different beast, offering a semblance of assistance to the bowlers and it was evident in CSK's impressive 78-run win over SRH in their previous match. There was no dew in Chennai on that night, and the CSK bowlers defanged SRH's potent batting unit with their

accuracy and variations after their batters put on board a 200-plus total. They need an encore against Punjab, and all eyes will be on skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is on a hot streak. Gaikwad has registered scores of 108 and 98 in his last two innings and New Zealand man Daryl Mitchell too seemed to have regained his touch at just the right time with a 32-ball 52 against Hyderabad. However, the real storm-force in the CSK line-up is Shivam Dube, who has pulverised the opposition bowlers while coming as an Impact Sub. While Dube has always been a spin-basher, the left-hander has now added another angle to his batting with his effective tackling of pacers. Dube so far has made 350 runs, second highest for CSK behind Gaikwad's 447, and those runs came at a strike-rate of 172.41, second only to MS Dhoni's 259.45. However, the CSK opening combination continues to be a bit iffy. Gaikwad has been a solid presence but both now-dropped Rachin Ravindra and Ajinkya Rahane have not been able to play the support role to



their skipper. Rahane's last four outings as opener produced scores of 5, 36, 1, 9, and those numbers don't reflect his experience or skill-level. However, CSK in all likelihood will continue to back him. Batting coach Michael Hussey had remarked that the 35-year-old was close to getting a big knock under his belt. On the other hand, PBKS will be desperate to carry the momentum after that record chase and climb up the ladder from the current eighth place. For that, their batters need to fire in unison once again and the onus is on Jonny Bairstow, who made a hundred against KKR, Shashank Singh and Prabhshimran Singh. But they will eye a more impact outing from wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma. However, PBKS' bowling department looks a bit shaky despite having experienced campaigners such as Kagiso Rabada, Harshal Patel, Arshdeep Singh and Sam Curran in their ranks. The visitors will also require a much-improved effort from their spinners — Harpreet Brar and Rahul Chahar - as they

have scalped just seven wickets among them this season. **TEAMS (FROM):** CSK: Rituraj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Aravelly Avanish, Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi. **PBKS:** Shikhar Dhawan (c), Matthew Short, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Prabhshimran Singh (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajan, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.



This IPL is different, need to mentally accept challenge, says Varun Chakravarthy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy said the teams have understood the concept of Impact Player better in this iteration of IPL and now bowlers will have to find ways to counter the ultra-aggressive approach of batsmen to make an impact on the game. Chakravarthy's spell of three for 16 played a vital role in KKR's thumping seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals on Monday. "The Impact Player rule was there last year also. The teams have now understood how to use the impact player rule better. So, they know that there is extra batting and they want to charge from the first ball. That's how it's going," Chakravarthy said in the post-match press meet. "However much the bowlers cry, that's how it is. We've to accept that this IPL is different and mentally accept that challenge. You can't change the side of the ground or you can't change anything." Chakravarthy also said the Eden Gardens pitch offered a good amount of help to the bowlers against Delhi. "The last two matches before this, we didn't defend that well because the wickets have become very placid in the second innings. But this pitch was a little bit more turning." "That was the difference. The length is basically the same for all the matches. It's just how the wicket behaves." Chakravarthy said the KKR players and management went into a huddle to find solutions after Punjab Kings managed to chase a record 262 in their previous match. "Definitely, the last match (vs PBKS) was a very hard pill to swallow. We had many conversations with the management, everyone chipped in. We spoke with the coaches Carl Crowe, Bharat Arun sir, (Gautam) Gambhir, Chandrakant (Pandit) sir, Abhishek Nair." The 32-year-old said even the KKR owner Shah Rukh Khan pepped them up with a quick motivational talk. "Even Shah Rukh bhai, he came up to us yesterday and

spoke to me a lot he said 'don't take it personally, whatever is happening this IPL is just going at a crazy rate, just don't self-doubt yourself.'" **DC OPTIMISTIC TO MAKE PLAYOFFS:** After their defeat against KKR, Delhi have slipped to sixth with three just matches left for them, and bowling coach James Hopes said they are optimistic of making the playoffs. Delhi next face Rajasthan Royals at home on May 7, before travelling to Bengaluru (May 12). Their last fixture in the league is against Lucknow Super Giants at home on May 14. "We have a week off now. Our destiny is still in our own hands, you might say," Hopes said. "If we can win three games and get to 16 points, that should be good enough. But we do have a week off now where we can readjust and see if we need to think a little different about anything." "Yeah, tonight was a missed opportunity, and we won't hide behind any excuses there," he said. Hopes said they could have recalibrated the target on a slow pitch. "This has been a high-scoring venue, and even though we'd lost three wickets in the power play, we had no reason to really think it wasn't going to be anything other than that." "We were still going 11 and half an over. So, we were still thinking 200-220. But I think once the spinners started to grip the ball, we saw it in Sunil (Narine) first over, it gripped a bit for him in the sixth over." "He is a lot more complete in terms of what he is trying to do, understanding his game, and that comes from experience," Fleming said ahead of their match against Punjab Kings. "We have worked hard on areas he wasn't so strong, but also continuing to develop his strength. So, if that form continues, he is going to be an impactful player for India (at the World Cup)." Dube has 350 runs in nine outings at a strike rate of 172.41, including three half-centuries. "He has been fantastic. He has proven this year that there is a lot more to him than just playing spin (better)," said the former Kiwi skipper. CSK skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is their leading scorer with 447 runs including one century and three fifties, missed out in the squad.

MI camp divided, they are not performing as a team, says Clarke

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Winning major tournaments hinges on teamwork rather than individual brilliance, according to former Australia captain Michael Clarke, who reckons the Mumbai Indians camp is divided into groups, hindering players from functioning cohesively. After the sudden pre-season change in captaincy when Rohit Sharma was unceremoniously replaced by Hardik Pandya, the five-time champions are in descension. They need to win all their remaining five matches to even have a shot at qualifying for the playoffs. "Yeah, I don't know (they will make it

to the playoffs). I think it's wishful thinking for Mumbai this entire IPL." "I think there's a lot more going on than what we are seeing on the outside and you can't have that many good players and perform this inconsistently. "So, I think there are different groups inside that changing room and something is not working, they are not gelling together, they are not playing as a team," Clarke said on Star Sports Cricket Live. Despite having proven match winners like Rohit, Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya, Tim David and Jasprit Bumrah, MI have found it difficult to find victories this season, slumping to six losses from nine outings. Their three wins can be attributed to



the individual brilliance of pacer Bumrah and the big-hitting Romario Shepherd. "Individual brilliance can get them over the line, if Rohit Sharma comes in and gets another hundred or Hardik does something with the bat or Bumrah bowls like a genius again, you never know," Clarke said. "I think to win big tournaments you need to be a team and not just have individual performances and unfortunately they haven't played well as a team so I hope they turn it around, but I can't see them winning this game," he added. MI, who occupy the penultimate spot on the points table, take on Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday in Lucknow.

T20 WC bound England players to leave IPL in time to play series against Pakistan: ECB

PTI ■ LONDON

The upcoming T20 World Cup-bound England players who are currently fulfilling their IPL commitments will "return in time" for a preceding four-match T20I series against Pakistan, the country's cricket board said on Tuesday. England on Tuesday named a 15-member squad for the T20 showpiece, which will be held across June in the USA and the West Indies, with Jofra Archer returning to international cricket after a hiatus of more than 14 months. The same squad has been selected for the T20I series against Pakistan, which will commence on May 22 in



Headingley. "Selected players, currently playing in the Indian Premier League, will return in time for the series against Pakistan, which gets underway at Headingley on Wednesday 22 May 2024; the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement after naming the T20 World Cup squad. Some of the prominent English players who would have to leave the IPL before the start of the Pakistan series are: Jos Buttler (Rajasthan Royals), Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders), Will Jacks and Reece Topley (Royal Challengers

Bengaluru), Moeen Ali (Chennai Super Kings), Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow and Liam Livingstone (Punjab Kings). The most affected teams will be Royals and Knight Riders as they are poised to make the playoffs at this stage of the tournament. The English stars' departure though may not hamper teams such as Punjab Kings and RCB as they are unlikely to qualify for the playoffs. The league matches of the IPL conclude on May 19. The England World Cup squad will fly to the Caribbean on May 31 ahead of England's opening group match against Scotland at the Kensington Oval, Barbados, on June 4.



Dube lot more complete player, will make an impact in T20I World Cup: Stephen Fleming

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Shivam Dube's enhanced game understanding and completeness have impressed Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming who is confident in the left-handed allrounder's ability to make an "impact" in the upcoming World Cup. The 30-year-old, who is the second leading run-scorer for the defending champions in the ongoing IPL, made the cut to the 15-member Indian squad for the T20 global showpiece in the USA and West Indies beginning on June 1. "He is a lot more complete in terms of what he is trying to do, understanding his game, and that comes from experience," Fleming said ahead of their match against Punjab Kings. "We have worked hard on areas he wasn't so strong, but also continuing to develop his strength. So, if that form continues, he is going to be an impactful player for India (at the World Cup)." Dube has 350 runs in nine outings at a strike rate of 172.41, including three half-centuries. "He has been fantastic. He has proven this year that there is a lot more to him than just playing spin (better)," said the former Kiwi skipper. CSK skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is their leading scorer with 447 runs including one century and three fifties, missed out in the squad.



Asked if it was harsh to Gaikwad, Hussey said: "No... I understand the quality of players India have to try and select, (it) is very difficult. Rituraj has done what he can, and he must be close," he said. "We hold him in the highest regard. I love the craft that he shows, and his (last) two performances have been quite majestic. "It's not just wham-bham, but he has displayed the mastery of batting. And the form that he is right now and the control that he has, it's quite outstanding. "It's not now, but there will be another

change for him. If he continues his form and keeps playing well throughout the year, I will be very surprised if he is not called in." Commenting further on his batting and leadership, Fleming said: "His batting has continued from what it was. He has been spectacular the last few years. "As for captaincy, he has taken it up in his stride as he has also led his domestic team. He is very much in the mould of CSK. Very understated, lowkey and incredibly calm." The Impact Player rule continues to be a topic of debate in this IPL, with some experts expressing their apprehensions about it, remarking that it could affect team selections. Asked if the overseas T20 league also should embrace it, he said: "No, I wouldn't (take it overseas)." "I like the challenge of picking all-rounders to get a bit more balance in your team across departments. The way I see it now, you could hardly bowl a team out as the batters just keep coming. "The challenge here is entertainment. If you want fours and sixes, it's (Impact Player rule) a tick. But, from the purest cricketing point of view, it's shifted the balance too far in favour of batting. "It also hides selection issues, rather than having the subtle challenge of getting your selections right and nurturing all-rounders, who are an important part of the game," he concluded.

Rana suspended for one match, fined 100 per cent match fees

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders seamer Harshit Rana was on Tuesday fined 100 per cent of his match fees and suspended for one match for breaching IPL Code of Conduct during their seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals here. Rana, who was fined 60 per cent of his match fees for giving a flying-kiss send off to Sunrisers Hyderabad batter Mayank Agarwal in an earlier match, almost repeated the same offence when he knocked over Abhishek Porel in their game against Delhi on Monday. Rana was seen pointing his hand towards Porel, indicating him to go back to pavilion and was about to give another flying kiss before he stopped short of doing that. He was also seen appealing excessively after hitting Rasikh Salam high on his pads. "Rana committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and

accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," the IPL said in a statement. "The player was earlier penalised under the same level and article of the IPL Code of Conduct," it added. Rana will now miss KKR's next match against Mumbai Indians in an away game on Friday. Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct addresses offences related to "Using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from another player in the match." In KKR's IPL opener against SRH on March 23, Rana committed two Level 1 offences under Article 2.5 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He was fined 10 per cent and 50 per cent of his match fees for the two respective offences. Rana is KKR's joint leading wicket-taker with the spin duo of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy. The trio have 11 wickets each.

'Darling is the best script I have heard so far'

EXCLUSIVE

K. RAMYA SREE

Actress Nabha Natesh is gearing up to make a striking comeback to Tollywood with not one but two intriguing projects, each offering a distinct narrative and character arc. While one film, *Swayambhu*, sees her portraying a princess alongside actors Nikhil and Samyuktha Menon, the other, *Darling*, pairs her with Priyadarshi in a role that holds special significance for the actress.

The unveiling of Nabha's first-look poster from *Swayambhu* has already created waves, with the actress exuding elegance and charm. These projects hold a special place in Nabha's heart as they offer her

roles that she has never explored before in her career, with *Darling* holding particular importance.

In conversation with *The Pioneer*, Nabha spoke candidly about her decision to take on these projects, emphasising her desire for diversity and novelty in her roles. She shared, "I have been on a hunt for the right kind of film for me for a long time. When I decided to come back and start making movies, I was 100 percent sure that I didn't want to do the same stuff I had already done. I want to do something new because, first of all, I'll be bored with myself. If I am not enjoying it, I am pretty sure that I can't expect the audience to feel something really good about it."

Regarding her choice to sign *Darling* first, Nabha expressed her enthusiasm for the script and her character, highlighting the extensive preparation she underwent to embody the role fully. "I signed *Darling*, because it has the best script I have heard," she revealed, adding, "Writing for the girl in this movie, for me, is the best writing ever. I did a workshop for about a month, which helped me get into the character. Even release-wise, I think *Darling* will be coming first."

As for *Swayambhu*, Nabha emphasised the allure of exploring a period film and portraying an extremely classical character, a departure from her previous roles. "My character has had a great journey. There is a part of transformation in my role in the film. I think both movies will have two different strong dimensions. It is going to show a facet of me as an actor," she expressed.

Moreover, Nikhil learned martial arts,

Samyuktha learned horseback riding for *Swayambhu*, and Nabha plays a classical dancer in the film, and it gets even easier for her and more efficient for the movie because the actress is already a trained classical dancer and is also perfect with horseback riding.

Reflecting on her growth as an artist, Nabha expressed her commitment to delivering her best performance yet. "In the last two years, with the training I have done and the content I have watched, I am coming with the best possible foot I can," she affirmed.

Offers have always knocked on Nabha's door, even when she was injured and was at home for two years. "I am only about 8 movies old in Telugu; I always had characters, and movies had the potential to impress the audience. But now I want *Darling* to release before I take up other projects. Because even for the audience and for filmmakers who haven't seen me in movies for a long time, I want them to know what I can do and offer me the kind of potential work I can do justice to. As you grow, your ideas and approach to any art form will grow; it can only be shown. It can't be spoken."

How could we not ask about the viral video where Nabha gets offended by what Priyadarshi says during the promotional event of *Darling*? Nabha chose to take it in stride, focusing on the positive aspects of her collaboration with co-star Priyadarshi. She shared, "He is one of the finest artists the Telugu industry has seen so far. He is a very giving actor and a supporting artist. It has always been intense for me on the sets. It has been so comforting with him, and he was very accommodating to understand what I had to do in the film."

Teaser release date announced for Hari Hara Veera Mallu

The highly anticipated film *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* has been generating buzz ever since its announcement.

Directed by Krish Jagarlamudi, the film stars Power Star Pawan Kalyan in his first pan-India venture. Adding to the excitement, the makers have unveiled a new update: the teaser of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* will be released on May 2nd at 9:00 AM.

Accompanying the announcement is an intriguing image from the film, teasing "The Battle for Dharma." This glimpse into the movie's world promises an epic tale of valor and righteousness.

Starring Nidhi Agerwal as the female lead and Bollywood actor Bobby Deol as the antagonist, *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* transports viewers to the 17th century, offering a fresh perspective on historical drama.

Pawan Kalyan is set to rejoin the sets of the movie soon, bringing his charismatic presence to the screen in a new avatar. Bankrolled by A Dayakar Rao and presented by AM Rathnam under Mega Surya Production, *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* boasts music by MM Keeravani and will be released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi. With its teaser launch imminent, anticipation for this epic saga is at an all-time high.



Actress Nabha Natesh, who is gearing up to make a striking comeback to Tollywood, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, as she speaks of her decision to take on these upcoming projects, emphasising her desire for diversity and novelty in her roles.

THUG LIFE WILL SEE Silambarasan TR in a key role

Excitement is building up as the highly anticipated film *Thug Life* gears up for its next big reveal. A new promotional teaser is set to drop this week, promising to enthrall audiences with the mesmerising background music of none other than the legendary AR Rahman.

Adding to the anticipation is the imminent confirmation of actor Silambarasan TR's involvement in the project, according to sources. While details of his role remain undisclosed, his potential inclusion has sparked speculation and heightened curiosity among fans eager to see him in action. Currently, the film's production is in full swing, with shooting underway in Delhi. The bustling capital city sets the stage for captivating scenes featuring an ensemble cast, including the dynamic duo of Kamal Haasan and Trisha, alongside Silambarasan TR.

For Silambarasan, *Thug Life* marks a significant milestone as it becomes his 49th venture in the film industry. With each project, the versatile actor continues to push boundaries and redefine his craft, leaving audiences eager to witness his latest performance unfold on the silver screen.

As anticipation mounts and excitement reaches fever pitch, *Thug Life* promises to deliver a cinematic experience like no other. Stay tuned for the latest updates as this enthralling journey unfolds, promising thrills, drama, and the unmatched magic of AR Rahman's music.



Hombale Films, Rishab Shetty, to recreate divine magic of Kantara with huge set

Hombale Films, the powerhouse production house behind cinematic blockbusters like *KGF Chapter 2* and *Kantara: A Legend*, is once again set to captivate audiences with their upcoming project, *Kantara: Chapter 1*. Teaming up with acclaimed director Rishab Shetty, the film promises to deliver an unparalleled cinematic experience, reminiscent of its predecessor's divine allure.

As prolepsis mounts for this highly anticipated film, an exciting update has emerged, shedding light on the meticulous preparation underway. Set to commence this week, the full-fledged shooting schedule will span 20 days, with the production team gearing up to film pivotal scenes amidst the lush forests and scenic coastal backdrop of Kundapura.

To authentically recreate the enchanting setting of Kundapura, a colossal set spanning 200x200 feet has been meticulously crafted, employing the expertise of 600 carpenters from Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. This elaborate endeavour, coupled with intensive training sessions for the cast, underscores the dedication and commitment invested in bringing the film's

vision to life. Directed by the versatile Rishab Shetty, who also assumes the lead role, and featuring mesmerising music by Ajaneesh Loknath and cinematography by Aravind Kashyap, *Kantara: Chapter 1* promises to transport audiences to a realm of divine enchantment.

The first installment in the franchise, *Kantara: A Legend*, left an indelible impression on audiences, earning accolades for its immersive storytelling and visual splendour. With the announcement of *Kantara: Chapter 1*, expectations have soared, with cinephiles eagerly awaiting another transcendent theatrical experience.

In addition to *Kantara: Chapter 1*, Hombale Films has an exciting slate of projects in store, including the much-anticipated *Salaar Part 2: Shouryanga Parvam*, ensuring a thrilling cinematic journey ahead for audiences.

As the stage is set for the grand unveiling of *Kantara: Chapter 1*, fans can brace themselves for an epic tale of divine proportions, crafted with precision and passion by the formidable duo of Hombale Films and Rishab Shetty.

Kousalya Tanaya Raghava gearing up for release

Amidst the bustling landscape of contemporary cinema comes *Kousalya Tanaya Raghava*, an upcoming film poised to capture the hearts of audiences with its timeless portrayal of love and family values.

Starring Rajesh Konchada and Shravani Shetty in the lead roles, this story unfolds against the picturesque backdrop of rural life in the 1980s. Produced by AR Movie Makers and helmed by the visionary director Swamy Patnaik, the film promises to deliver a cinematic experience that transcends generations, offering a poignant blend of nostalgia and heartfelt storytelling.

Billed to be a feel-good entertainer, according to makers, the viewers will be transported on a journey of love, laughter, and

emotional resonance, making it a perfect watch for the entire family.

The makers announced on Tuesday that the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon. On the technical front, cinematographer Yogi Reddy captures the rustic beauty of Palakonda, lending authenticity to the film's narrative tapestry. Meanwhile, the editor, Mr. Krishna Prasad, meticulously crafts each frame.

As the film nears its much-anticipated release, expectation among cinephiles continues to soar. With the final stages of post-production underway, audiences can expect an announcement regarding the release date in the coming days, setting the stage for a cinematic celebration of love, values, and the enduring spirit of storytelling.



Director Trinadha Rao Nakkina mourns his father's death

Trinadha Rao Nakkina, the acclaimed director behind numerous Tollywood hits, including *Cinema Choopista Mava* and *Menu Local*, is currently grappling with a personal loss. On April 29, tragedy struck the director's family as his father, aged 72, passed away in the city. He succumbed to an age-related illness. The unexpected loss has undoubtedly cast a pall of grief over the filmmaker and his loved ones. As the industry mourns alongside Trinadha Rao Nakkina and his family, fans and colleagues alike extend their heartfelt condolences during this period of mourning. Trinadha Rao Nakkina's contributions to Telugu cinema extend beyond his directorial ventures; he has also made a mark as a prolific writer, earning acclaim from audiences and critics alike. Additionally, reports suggest that the filmmaker is gearing up to launch his production house, further expanding his creative endeavours to offer fresh and engaging content to audiences.



FAMILY STAR FINDS SUCCESS ON OTT

As has been the case with Vijay Deverakonda's films in the recent past, his latest theatrical outing, *Family Star*, was also affected by extensive and targeted negative propaganda. There was a clear attempt to choke down the film right from the outset by a group of negative propagandists.

But Vijay's connections with the masses and families helped *Family Star* register relatively good revenues in spite of all the negativity that was spun around it.

As of now, there's a clear positive vibe surrounding the Vijay Deverakonda starrer. There are multiple social media posts where individuals are saying they indeed enjoyed watching *Family Star* on OTT and are unable to comprehend the negativity that was seen during the time of the theatrical release. The common opinion is that *Family Star* has its flaws, but at the heart of it, the Vijay starrer is a summer entertainer that can be enjoyed with families.

This trend is prevalent not just domestically but also in the USA, as we are hearing cases of the audience enjoying the film on Amazon Prime and later commenting that they were tricked by the negative press during the time of theatrical release; otherwise, they could've enjoyed the film on big screens along with their families.

This, in a way, could work very well for Vijay's future films, as the audience who realised *Family Star*'s actual content and realised that they got sucked into a negative narrative will disregard the negativity batch's propaganda for Vijay's upcoming films and make it a point to watch them in theaters regardless of the negative press.



Rashmika Mandanna's intense workout regimen amidst busy schedule

Actress Rashmika Mandanna, known for her dedication to fitness, recently gave her followers a glimpse into her rigorous workout routine. Despite her packed schedule with back-to-back shoots for her upcoming films, including *Pushpa 2: The Rule* and *Kubera*, Rashmika remains committed to her fitness journey.

Taking to her Instagram Stories, Rashmika shared a video showcasing her impressive strength as she successfully completed a 100 kg deadlift. The actress, who described the experience as feeling like a "powerful beast," emphasised the importance of maintaining her fitness amidst her demanding work commitments. In a candid message to her fans, Rashmika detailed her hectic shooting schedule, revealing how she juggles late-night shoots and early morning workouts. Despite the challenges, she expressed her enthusiasm for her projects, particularly her collaboration with Dhanush in *Kubera*, which she describes as "so much fun".

Known for her versatility on screen, Rashmika has a slew of exciting projects lined up, including *The Girlfriend*, *Chhaava*, *Rainbow*, and *Animal Park*, among others. With her unwavering dedication to both her craft and fitness, Rashmika continues to inspire her fans with her relentless pursuit of excellence.