

sunday pioneer

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'Canada incidents mostly due to their internal politics'

Government lifts BAN ON onion exports

Listening to tunes within for DANCING glory on stage

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Rythu Bandhu funds have to be given to four lakh farmers. It is my responsibility to give it to all remaining farmers by May 9. If someone proves that there are still arrears, I will rub my nose on the ground and apologise at the Martyrs' Statue. If he cannot prove that there are dues then KCR should apologise. The loans of Telangana farmers will be waived by August 15 and the witness for that is Bhadrachalam Ram. I will waive the loans of farmers by August 15 and clear my debt to them.

- A. Revanth Reddy, TG Chief Minister P4

DON'T MISS...

Naidu, Pawan have no culture...

Senior YSRCP leader, Adapa Seshu, has criticised Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena party chief Pawan Kalyan, labelling them as uncultured for their recent comments against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Addressing the media on Saturday, Seshu expressed his disappointment at the conduct of Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan, describing their rhetoric as particularly distasteful. He said that while political adversaries often engage in verbal...

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Malaria linked with genetic...

Malaria infection is linked with genetic changes, known to be brought about by ageing, according to a new study. Researchers extracted genetic material from blood samples of more than 1,800 adults from the African countries of Tanzania, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Cameroon, where malaria is known to be endemic, or constantly present. According to the 2023 World Health Organisation (WHO) Malaria report, published in 'The Lancet Microbe' journal, around 70 per cent of the global...

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'NCLT registers 43% jump in debt...

Amid several bottlenecks, the Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) declared 2023-24 as a landmark year, with the National Company Law Tribunal achieving a significant 43 per cent increase in resolutions, jumping from 189 cases last year to 270 this year. The IBBI is expected to submit a report to the government over the next 2-3 months for including "mediation" in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which is currently under discussion and scrutiny. The regulator is also working on prepackaged insolvency for...

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Yoga officially makes debut in...

After making global headlines, the ancient Indian physical, mental and spiritual practice of yoga has officially arrived in neighbouring Pakistan. According to the official Facebook page of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which is responsible for the upkeep of Islamabad, the Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad has launched "Free yoga classes in F-9 Park" in the capital. Recognising its universal appeal, the United Nations on 11 December 2014 proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. A draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. Yoga is normally linked with India and there are not many formal...

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LAND TITLING ACT

SUREFIRE SECURITY TO LAND

TDP, JSP target YSRCP as BJP moots the law

C PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

In crass politicisation of a major transformative initiative undertaken by the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena have been engaged in a continuous misinformation campaign about the Land Titling Act, sowing confusion and fear among the people.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and JSP president Pawan Kalyan have accused Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of planning to seize land through this Act, a claim baseless and unfounded. Interestingly, while the Central government has spearheaded the implementation of the Act and NITI Aayog formed a committee in 2019, the TDP and JSP have chosen to target the YSRCP instead of seeking clarification from their ally, the BJP.

UNDERSTANDING LAND TITLING ACT
This Act represents a step forward, aiming to resolve land disputes that often arise due to various discrepancies such as land extent, subdivision issues, outdated records, and lack of surveys. The Act seeks to empower individuals seeking to purchase land, ensuring clarity and transparency in land ownership. It aims to streamline the process, minimising the need for governmental intervention in land matters and providing a permanent solution through title insurance in case of future disputes.

SHIFTING TO CLEAR LAND TITLES
India embarked on the journey towards clear property titles on August 21, 2008, transitioning from the pre-

Heatwave continues to pose a challenge for campaigning

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With just a week remaining before the conclusion of campaigning, the heatwave in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is impacting canvassing.

Leaders from major political parties and their candidates are grappling with the arduous task of conducting campaigns, as temperatures soar past 47 degree Celsius in certain areas of Andhra Pradesh. The heatwave has already claimed several lives across both Telugu states. Meteorological forecasts offer little respite, indicating that the intense heatwave conditions will persist for at least another week.

Health authorities in both regions have issued advisories urging people to avoid sun exposure, particularly between 12 noon and 3 p.m. However, the scorching sun's effects are felt as early as 10 a.m., compelling many to remain indoors until around 5 p.m. Each passing day sets a new temperature record in Andhra Pradesh, with readings reaching a blistering 47.7 degree Celsius in parts of Nandyal district on Friday. Similarly, certain areas in Prakasam and YSR Kadapa districts have also experienced temperatures exceeding 47 degrees.

The blistering heat has severely limited the time available for candidates to conduct their campaigns.



NITI Aayog has finalised a model Act for Conclusive Land Titling to be adopted by all states, marking a major reform on the horizon

- The Act aims to ensure clarity in land ownership.
- Transition to clear land titles from presumptive titles.
- NITI Aayog plays a key role in formulating the Act.
- State govt engages in survey, updating land records.
- Complaint lodged against Oppn's false campaigning EC.
- The Act represents crucial reform for landowners.
- The current controversy calls for informed debate.

sumptive property titles to the Torrens system, akin to systems in other countries. This move requires the modernisation of land records management and property registration systems, a goal supported by the State governments and spearheaded by the Department of Land Resources under the Ministry of Rural Development.

ROLE OF NITI AAYOG

NITI Aayog has vital a pivotal role in formulating the Modern Act on Conclusive Land Titling. A committee comprising senior IAS officers

finalised a model Act for Conclusive Land Titling on November 25, 2019, after thorough consideration of available documents.

STATE GOVT'S EFFORTS

The State government is actively engaged in completing the statewide survey, with 15,000 surveyors deployed in village and ward secretariats. Boundary stones are being set, records updated, and subdivisions initiated to ensure farmers receive their rightful share of land.

Continued on Page 2



TDP govt's welfare budget was more than YSRCP's: Naidu

PNS ■ DARSIL

Affirming TDP's dedication to the welfare of the people, TDP chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu said on Saturday that during the party's tenure, a significant 19.15 per cent of the budget was allocated for welfare, contrasting with the current allocation of a mere 15.8 per cent by CM Jagan.

Naidu lauded the effectiveness of the Modi Guarantee nationwide and the steadfast support of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the State, expressing confidence in the NDA's ability to secure governance both at the national and State levels. "With the alliance of three political parties, the odds are stacked against any

opposition, ensuring the formation of a robust government both Centrally and in the State," he remarked.

Naidu also voiced concerns over the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, such as sand, citing an alarming increase from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per tractor-load under the current administration. He pledged to dismantle the sand mafia upon assuming power and to ensure the provision of free sand to the people. Furthermore, Naidu criticised the YSRCP leadership, accusing them of engaging in nefarious activities including political violence and illicit trafficking of substances like ganja and red sanders.

Continued on Page 2

EC orders CID probe into TDP's 'false' campaign

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission (EC) has ordered the Crime Investigation Department (CID) to investigate a complaint filed by YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu. The complaint alleges that the TDP has been running a campaign spreading false information via paid IVRS calls against the Land Titling Act. This Act has been opposed by the TDP and Jana Sena Party, who fear it could be misused by the ruling YSRCP government to take land from the underprivileged.

Despite assurances from Chief Minister Jagan that the Act won't lead to land seizures, the TDP and JSP continue to spread misinformation on social media. TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu has even pledged to repeal the Act if his party comes back to power. The complaint has been forwarded to the CID for necessary action. Vishnu reported that voters have received automated calls urging them to vote for Chandrababu Naidu instead of Jagan, citing false claims about the Land Titling Act leading to wealth loss and government seizure of land records.

The complaint suggests that this misinformation campaign is part of the opposition's political agenda.

Land-grabbers opposing Act: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State general secretary of the YSRCP, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has accused the TDP of disseminating false information about the Land Titling Act, potentially eroding public trust in the system.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Sajjala criticised the Opposition leader for resorting to derogatory language despite holding the position of Chief Minister for 14 years. He clarified that the Act, aimed at curbing irregularities, has yet to be enforced.

Sajjala said that the Act is intended to address land disputes and irregularities, heralding a revolutionary change. He lambasted the TDP for its history of land grabbing during its tenure, alleging that Chandrababu Naidu was involved in various land irregularities.

Sajjala accused Naidu of facilitating illegal land acquisitions and expressed confidence that the Land Titling Act would prevent such abuses.

The party's general secretary highlighted Chandrababu Naidu's resistance to the Act, suggesting that individuals accustomed to land grabbing oppose the reform.

Continued on Page 2



JAGAN'S CHALLENGE TO NAIDU

Question BJP's decision to cancel 4% quota for backward Muslims

CM asserts that he is a land-giver, not usurper

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has accused the TDP, led by Chandrababu Naidu, and JSP, led by Pawan Kalyan, of aligning with the BJP, which promises to cancel the 4% reservation for Muslims.

In a bold stand to safeguard minority rights, CM Jagan challenged Naidu's sincerity, labelling his gestures toward the minority community as mere political posturing.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said, "The 4% reservation for Muslims must remain untouched. This is my stance! Will Chandrababu Naidu have the audacity to confront Modi on this issue? Will he distance himself from the NDA coalition? What is the rationale behind this alliance? Why the charade of empathy? Why align with the NDA, which opposes Muslim reservation, while perpetuating deceit in your public addresses?"

Asserting that the 4% reservation for minority brethren is not based on religious grounds but rather on



backwardness, CM Jagan clarified, "These reservations do not apply to the upper castes among Muslims. This 4% reservation is solely for backward classes."

Further addressing the BJP and other opposition parties, CM Jagan criticised the politicisation of such reservations, emphasising the moral imperative to uphold constitutional provisions for Backward Classes across all religions. "We stand in solidarity with minorities on issues like 4% reservation, NRC, CAA, and any

PK paints 'bright' picture for alliance



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan asserted a prevailing discontent among the people towards the YSRCP administration and anticipated a sweeping victory for the TDP-JSP-BJP coalition.

Speaking at an electoral rally in Repalle on Saturday, he expressed concern over the proliferation of gambling establishments in the State. He highlighted a recent tragic incident where a 15-year-old lost his life in a fire, criticising the government's response of offering a mere Rs 10 lakh ex gratia, which he deemed indicative of their apathy and incompetence.

"The impending defeat of the YSRCP is palpable as disillusionment echoes across the State. Come May 13, the people are poised to reject the YSRCP decisively," he asserted. Pawan Kalyan introduced the coalition candidates, TDP's incumbent Repalle MLA Anagani Satya Prasad, and Bapatla MP Candidate T. Krishna Prasad, urging voters to support them.

The JSP leader condemned the Jagan Reddy administration for its failures in education, healthcare, water supply, and maintaining law and order. "Over 7,300 aided schools have been shuttered, depriving rural students of education. Delayed fee reimbursements have exacerbated challenges in pursuing higher education," he criticized.

Continued on Page 2

OBTUSE ANGLE



Heat intensity reduces in east, southern India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The intensity of the heat wave prevailing in east and parts of southern peninsular India came down slightly on Saturday, with the weather office predicting relief from the scorching conditions in these regions after two days.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions prevailed in parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Telangana, with maximum temperatures setting 3-5 degrees Celsius above normal in these regions.

The mercury settled above 44 degrees Celsius in at least 10 places

The IMD said the ongoing heatwave spell in east and south peninsular India will continue until May 5-6 and abate thereafter. Light to moderate rainfall and thunderstorms are predicted in Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand from May 5 to 9.



in these states. According to IMD data, 13 places on Friday and 17 on Thursday recorded maximum temperatures above 44 degrees Celsius.

Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh sizzled at 46 degrees Celsius and was the hottest place in the country for the third consecutive day on Saturday.

degrees in West Bengal's Kalaikunda. The IMD said the ongoing heatwave spell in east and south peninsular India will continue until May 5-6 and abate thereafter.

Light to moderate rainfall and thunderstorms are predicted in Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand from May 5 to 9. Scattered light to moderate rainfall is expected in east Uttar Pradesh, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh during this period.

Scattered light to moderate rainfall is also very likely in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Karnataka from May 6 to May 9.

Train made to wait by slumbering SM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Patna-Kota Express train waited for a green signal for about half an hour at Udi Mor Road station near Etawah in Uttar Pradesh on May 3 as the station master fell asleep on duty.

Taking serious note of the incident, the Agra Division, under which the station falls, has asked the station master to explain the reason for negligence which could have resulted in an untoward incident.

"We have issued a charge sheet to the station master and disciplinary action is being taken," Agra Railway Division PRO Prashasti Srivastava said.



TG CM not getting enough sleep

Workaholics too need stimulants to keep going, though what keeps them refreshed while they are at work differs from person to person. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy likes to mention in all his public meetings that he has been working 18 hours a day from the day he assumed office. Laying it on thick, he recently stated that he was becoming restless due to lack of sleep. One can understand his situation. For, unlike in his previous avatar as TPCC chief, Revanth Reddy, as Chief Minister, needs to work in a focused manner. In his previous role, power naps were OK during travel. Now, with many leaders within the Congress and in other parties eyeing his gaddi, he does not want to be caught napping. In a dicey situation, a 'power nap' can end in a 'power trip'. So, back-to-back meetings from 7:00 am to 12:00 am and more is never too much. Therefore, he is extremely tired; and, due to sheer exhaustion, does not get restful sleep. The 3-4 hours of shuteye he manages is not allowing him to cool down. They say, he is a tea addict.

REPORTERS' DIARY

KCR has changed, but not KTR

A typical karyakarta of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi blames the loss of the party in the Assembly elections on Twitter and Instagram influencers as well as curated interviews of party working president and former minister KT Rama Rao. KTR, as is his wont, did a podcast again recently, and, except for his coterie known for unthinking obedience, nobody seemed to like it. "It is very weird that KTR has not learnt any lessons", remarked a person in a prominent position on BRS hierarchy. As for KCR, there is a visible change. Remarkably soon after recovery from his hip fracture, he has been on the move, mingling with people at street-corner meetings, and, more importantly, doing marathon interviews. Going by the impact of KCR's recent interview to a news channel, the buzz in party circles on hindsight is that had he entertained press conferences before the elections and spoken his mind, BRS would not have been ousted so decisively.

Why Alleti's pressers are few and far between

Many scribes eagerly look forward to Bharatiya Janata Party Legislature Party (BJP LP) leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy's press conferences because he often ends

nobody, what about lesser mortals like us? Who will come for us?" One can understand BRS karyakartas' feelings. During the BRS regime, when Bharatiya Janata Party or Congress cadres were arrested, the leaders of the respective parties used to visit them, and later speak to the media as well. The Congress used to keep the issue alive by making its leaders visit prison. In BJP, the amrit vani among karyakartas is that Amit Shah himself will jump in directly should anything untoward happen to them.

his pressers with a rather suspenseful statement: "I will come with another 'blast' in a day or two against the Congress government". Yet, his conversations with media persons are few and far between. On May 2nd, when newshounds asked Maheshwar Reddy about the long gaps between his pressers, he said in a lighter vein that getting a time 'slot' to address the media at the State BJP office was the main impediment. A little bird told The Pioneer's correspondent that official spokesperson NV Subash determines the time 'slots' for party leaders desirous of addressing the media, after obtaining permission from BJP Telangana unit president G. Kishan Reddy. Maheshwar Reddy often seeks time one or two hours before scheduling his press meet. There lies the rub.

Down but not out

A Tamil proverb goes 'Kuppura vizhundhalum meesaiyil man ottavillai (transliteration); meaning, 'I fell flat on my face, but there is no dust on my mustache'. Likewise, in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister and YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, while fighting the TDP-JSP-BJP alliance with his back to the wall, is making the most of his detractors' missteps. Soon after the release of the alliance's manifesto, which carried the photographs of only Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan with that of Prime Minister Narendra Modi conspicuously missing, Jagan reasoned that it was so because the manifesto contained promises that cannot be implemented and hence disowned by alliance partner BJP. The manifesto of the alliance actually contained promises relating to schemes presently under implementation by the Jagan government but gift-wrapped with assurances of vastly increased benefits. The missing Modi photo came in handy for Jagan to hit back at the alliance.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateshwarlu and SNCN Acharyulu)

V'nagaram LS seat: YSRCP, TDP gear up for fierce fight

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The historic city of Vizianagaram, formerly a Princely State, braces itself for a fierce political showdown as the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP lock horns in the upcoming elections. YSRCP has nominated incumbent MP Bellana Chandrasekar to contest again for the prestigious Vizianagaram Lok Sabha segment, while TDP has pinned its hopes on Kaliseti Appalanaidu, former head of TDP's North Andhra internal training centre, renowned for his regional connections. Notably, both candidates hail from the influential Turpu Kapu community, holding considerable sway in the district. Chandrasekar, an advocate from Cheepurupalli, won the seat in 2019 by defeating TDP heavyweight Puspapati Ashok



Gajapati Raju. He remains confident in securing re-election, banking on his track record of utilizing MPLAD funds and state welfare schemes to benefit constituents. Appalanaidu, a former journalist and chairman of the Ponduru Market Committee, expressed surprise at his nomination for the Lok Sabha seat. Nevertheless, buoyed by TDP's solid vote bank across assembly constituencies within the

Lok Sabha segment and alliances with JSP and BJP, he is optimistic about his chances. With 1.563 million voters set to cast their ballots on May 13, the election stakes are high. Caste dynamics, particularly among Turpu Kapus, along with other influential communities like Koppula Velama, Yadava, Telaga, Brahmin, Arya Vysya, Muslims, and Christians, are expected to play pivotal roles. Despite its

proximity to Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram grapples with underdevelopment, marked by pending irrigation projects, factory closures, and employment woes, driving youth migration. However, hopes are pinned on the forthcoming Bhogapuram International Airport to spur economic growth through ancillary industries upon its completion. Mutyala Janardhan Rao, a Retired professor at Andhra University, highlights the neglect of Vizianagaram's development, attributing it to the electorate's leniency and leaders' failure to capitalise on the district's abundant resources. As accusations fly between major parties over the district's underdevelopment, the electorate eagerly awaits the outcome, recognizing the critical juncture this election represents for Vizianagaram's future.

Heatwave...

Continued from Page 1

They are observed touring their respective constituencies in the morning to engage with voters, often resorting to padayatras during the cooler morning or evening hours.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, spearheading the YSR Congress Party's campaign, undertakes a grueling schedule, covering 2-3 districts daily as part of his bus yatra. His campaign itinerary includes both road shows and public meetings.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu opts for helicopter travel to address public gatherings and conduct road shows across 2-3 districts each day. Nevertheless, it's the evening and nighttime public gatherings that witness significant turnouts, as campaigning cannot extend beyond 10 p.m., adhering to the model code of conduct. Leaders remain cautious not to violate these regulations during their campaign activities.

Botsa denounces Oppn's claims on Land Titling Act

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana strongly opposed the misleading information spreading by opposition parties regarding the Land Titling Act and offered perspectives on the government's position regarding land rights and legal processes. Speaking to media people on Saturday, Minister Botsa Satyanarayana challenged assertions suggesting that individuals' land rights were under threat due to the Landed Titling Act. He criticized those who spread false claims, particularly targeting political figures like Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan.

The Minister emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring full rights to landowners without the interference of brokers or litigation. He reiterated the intention behind the Landed Titling Act, aiming to eradicate corruption and streamline land ownership procedures. Addressing concerns about the Act's implementation, Minister



Botsa clarified that it is currently under judicial review and will only come into effect after due process, including public hearings and surveys, is completed. He highlighted the significance of public participation and transparent legal proceedings in shaping land policies. The Minister criticized opposition leaders, particularly Pawan Kalyan, questioning their understanding of the issue and accusing them of spreading misinformation for political gain. He urged the public to understand the motives behind such claims and emphasized the government's commitment to serving the people's interests. Highlighting the prevalence of

land disputes in India, Minister Botsa underscored the government's efforts to resolve such conflicts through proper legal channels. He outlined the procedures for resolving disputes at various levels of the judicial system, emphasizing the importance of fair and efficient resolution mechanisms.

The Minister dismissed the opposition's manifesto as insignificant, criticizing its lack of clarity and credibility. He questioned the legitimacy of their claims and affirmed the government's commitment to addressing public concerns, including electricity tariffs, responsibly. Minister Botsa Satyanarayana's address to the media provides valuable insights into the government's stance on land rights and its efforts to combat misinformation surrounding the Landed Titling Act. His passionate defence of government policies and critique of opposition rhetoric underscores the complexities of land governance in democratic systems.

PK paints 'bright...'

Continued from Page 1

Pawan Kalyan pledged prompt disbursement of fee reimbursements and the reopening of closed aided schools if the coalition assumes power. "Granting Jagan Mohan Reddy a chance has led to the devastation we witness today. A more considered vote in the past could have steered the state in a different direction," opined Pawan Kalyan.

He promised to initiate the Mega District Selection Commission (DSC) and generate 4 lakh employment opportunities annually if elected. Pawan Kalyan also addressed agricultural concerns, noting the neglect of canal maintenance affecting paddy cultivation in Repalle and the decline in paddy production across the state.

"Approximately 3,000 tenant farmers have tragically passed away, each leaving behind families supported with financial assistance. The government's failure to address drinking water scarcity further exacerbates the situation," he added.

AU holds voter awareness programme

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a fervent display of civic responsibility, the youth in the port city rallied together at the Siripuram intersection to demand meaningful voting rights under the provision in the Constitution. Led by the Andhra University National Service Scheme (NSS) and SVEEP, students organized a voter awareness program that captured the attention of residents and passersby alike. The event, inaugurated by Prof. M James Stephen, the Registrar of Andhra University, commenced with a solemn pledge taken by students to uphold the sanctity of the electoral process. The atmosphere was enthusiastic as participants engaged in various activities to highlight the importance of voting.

A specially arranged photo spot served as a focal point for the event, symbolizing the power of democracy captured through the lens. Additionally, students captivated audiences with a



thought-provoking short play, a spirited flash mob, and a poignant human chain demonstration, all emphasizing the intrinsic value of the vote. Distinguished personalities including Prof. A Narasimha Rao, T. Sobhasree, K. Seetha Manikyam, NSS Coordinator Acharya S. Haranath, Dr Pallavi, Prof. Rajyalakshmi, Prof. Nagabhushanam, and Prof. Chandrakala graced the occasion, lending their support to the noble cause. Their presence underscored the significance of youth engagement in shaping the democratic fabric of the

nation. The overwhelming participation of students and the keen interest shown by city residents reaffirmed the collective commitment to fostering a culture of informed and active citizenship. As the event concluded, echoing chants for meaningful voting rights reverberated through the streets, serving as a clarion call for inclusive democratic practices. Through initiatives like these, Andhra University continues to lead the charge in empowering the youth and advocating for a more equitable and participatory democracy.

Surefire security to...

Continued from Page 1

While the survey has been completed in 6,000 revenue villages, efforts are underway to cover all 17,000 villages shortly. Every farmer will have accurate records of their land, updated with full rights, ensuring their land rights are protected.

ADDRESSING FALSE CAMPAIGNING

Despite these efforts, the Opposition has resorted to spreading false information about the Land Titling Act. The YSRCP has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission of India regarding these misleading campaigns by the TDP, urging swift action by the law.

The Land Titling Act represents a crucial reform aimed at resolving land disputes and empowering landowners. Political discourse must focus on constructive dialogue and informed debate rather than misinformation and baseless allegations.

Land-grabbers opposing Act...

Continued from Page 1

Sajjala dismissed the opposition's allegations as baseless and pointed to the need for reform given India's low ranking in land dispute resolution.

Referring to past scandals under the TDP regime, Sajjala mentioned the Stamp Paper scams and defended the digitisation of land records, including featuring CM Jagan's photo on passbooks.

He called for accountability, stating that any attempt to revoke the Land Titling Act should be met with consequences. Sajjala clarified that the Act's implementation hinges on the completion of a comprehensive land survey, which may take several years.

Terming the TDP more perilous than the COVID-19 virus, Sajjala welcomed the Election Commission's actions against the party for spreading misinformation about the Land Titling Act. He urged the public to recognise the seriousness of obstructing the system, likening it to treason.

TDP gov't's welfare...

Continued from Page 1

He singled out CM Jagan for his association with individuals implicated in criminal activities, questioning the appropriateness of taking YS Avinash Reddy, accused of murdering his paternal uncle, to Parliament. "If Avinash needs schooling, let's provide him with education, not a platform in the legislature," Naidu quipped. Highlighting the NDA's comprehensive manifesto alongside the 'Super-Six' initiatives, Naidu assured the public of a progressive course for the State under NDA governance. Denouncing CM Jagan as untrustworthy, he urged the electorate to reject deceitful leaders. Naidu advocated for the utilisation of volunteer services for public welfare rather than political agendas. Addressing immediate concerns, Naidu announced the implementation of revised pension plans starting in April, condemning the current administration for allegedly deriving pleasure from the suffering of vulnerable elderly citizens. He promised government employees timely disbursement of their dues upon the formation of the TDP-allied NDA government, vowing to execute all proposed schemes outlined in the manifesto and 'Super-Six' agenda with precision and efficiency.

Question BJP's...

Continued from Page 1

Dismissing Naidu's falsehoods, CM Jagan reassured the public of his commitment to protecting their land rights.

"I am a provider of land, not a usurper. Beware of the falsehoods propagated by Chandrababu Naidu in his quest for power. The Land Titling Act, enacted by the Centre, ensures that farmers retain complete ownership of their lands. My government will ensure that your land remains secure and undisputed," declared CM Jagan. CM Jagan urged voters to recognise the significance of the upcoming elections, saying that the outcome would shape Andhra Pradesh's destiny for the next five years.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Dwadashi:	May 04 08:39 PM to May 05 05:42 PM
Trayodashi:	May 05 05:42 PM to May 06 02:40 PM
Nakshatram:	
Uttara Bhadrapada:	May 04 10:07 PM to May 05 07:57 PM
Revati:	May 05 07:57 PM to May 06 05:43 PM
Rahukalam:	4:58 PM to 6:34 PM
Yamaganadam:	12:12 PM to 1:48 PM
Variyam:	06:50 AM to 08:17 AM
Gulika:	3:23 PM to 4:58 PM
Amritakalam:	03:35 PM to 05:02 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:47 AM to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny
Temp: 43°
Humidity: 47%
Sunrise: 5:41 AM
Sunset: 6:28 PM

Updated: May 4 2024 5:00 PM

DIRECTORS DAY CELEBRATED



Free access to filming locations in AP assured

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu film directors are advocating for the advancement of the film industry in Andhra Pradesh, renowned for its stunning landscapes and extensive coastline. The Directors Day event convened at Tenali on Saturday witnessed the participation of leading movie directors and personalities. Organised by 'MA-AP', the Directors Day celebrated the invaluable contributions of movie directors to the film industry. Dilip Raja, the founder of 'MA-AP' and a prominent film director, emphasised the abundance of natural beauty across Andhra Pradesh, urging its utilization for film shoots. He highlighted the State's sprawling coastline, stretching nearly a thousand kilometers, as a particularly enticing asset for filmmakers.

the Andhra Pradesh Film Development Corporation, announced that the government will facilitate free access to filming locations within the state. He urged directors to ensure seamless filming experiences in Andhra Pradesh.

During the event, Dr. Kothamasu Shyam Sundar, a respected figure, presented the prestigious Darsaka Ratna Dasari Narayana Rao awards to acclaimed directors Ankuram, Maunam, Srikanth, and National Award winner C. Uma Maheswara Rao, along with Director Bharat Parepalli, known for his direction in 40 films.

In recognition of their contributions, Andhra Pradesh directors D Srinivas, Om Sai, B. Somasundaram, and Chalavadi Siva Prasad were honoured with awards from MA-AP on this auspicious occasion of Director's Day.

'YSRCP committed to progress of V'wada'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP's Vijayawada East candidate, Devineni Avinash, underscored his party's commitment to the progress and welfare of Vijayawada city.

Addressing a 'Meet-the-Press' session here on Saturday, Avinash highlighted the strides made in addressing 90% of the longstanding issues plaguing the Vijayawada East region over the past 58 months of governance.

The event, organised by APUWJ Krishna Urban and Vijayawada Press Club, provided a platform for Avinash to discuss the city's development and the pivotal role played by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration. Avinash particularly lauded

the construction of the Krishna River Retaining Wall, a monumental endeavour safeguarding the Krishna Lanka area from river floods, along with the sanctioning of another vital retaining wall from Padmavati Ghat to Kanaka Durga Varadhi.

Avinash admonished TDP leaders for attempting to take credit for projects initiated by their party, labelling such actions as disgraceful. He lamented the neglect suffered by Vijayawada City and the Vijayawada-East constituency during the TDP's tenure, contrasting it with the infrastructure improvements witnessed under YSRCP governance, including enhancements to drinking water access, drainage

systems, and road networks.

While acknowledging significant progress, Avinash assured the people that pending issues, such as house site registrations in Krishna Lanka Karakatta and Hill areas, would receive due attention under YSRCP's continued leadership. He called out sitting TDP MLA Gadde Rama Mohan Rao for alleged inaction and involvement in illicit activities, urging voters to opt for YSRCP for a second term to facilitate comprehensive development.

APUWJ State general secretary Chandu Janardhan, Vijayawada Urban president Chava Ravi, and Press Club officials K Jaya Raju and Dasari Naga Raju attended.

'YSRCP, TDP dancing to BJP tunes'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ch Babu Rao, Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) candidate for the Vijayawada Central Assembly constituency, backed by the INDIA Bloc, has unveiled an ambitious plan for the development of Vijayawada city, aligning it with other urban centres across the country. Rao emphasised the need for the CPI, CPM, and Congress to have a voice in the State Legislative Assembly to champion the concerns of the people and drive progress.

Addressing the media during the 'Meet The Press' event organized by the APUWJ Vijayawada Urban and Press Club on Saturday, Babu Rao criticised both the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP for what he perceives as their subservience to the BJP-led NDA. He called upon the electorate to thwart the YSRCP and the TDP-JSP-BJP coalition in the upcoming general elections.

Expressing disappointment over the lack of development in Vijayawada over the past



decade, Rao highlighted the city's strides during the tenures of Left Parties from 1981 to 1986 and 1995 to 2000, during which the Ajith Singh Nagar flyover was erected.

Rao lamented the escalating traffic woes in Vijayawada and Ajith Singh Nagar, attributing the lack of attention to the construction of a second flyover during the Communist Party's tenure. He criticized the incumbent legislators for neglecting public concerns, resulting in the city's stagnation.

The candidate underscored the failure of both the TDP and YSRCP administrations to bolster Vijayawada's economic growth. He cited neglect in vital sectors such as Auto Nagar, Building and other Workers, Commercial, and Service industries. Rao also denounced the governments' inability to address the city's

traffic issues and complete the West Bypass project.

Rao accused the TDP and YSRCP of aligning with the BJP-led NDA at the centre, warning that supporting these parties would only bolster the BJP's influence, which he claimed is non-existent in Andhra Pradesh. He urged the electorate to vote for the INDIA bloc to safeguard Vijayawada's interests.

In conclusion, Rao demanded accountability from the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their alleged failures in fulfilling promises made over the past decade. He called for clarity on issues such as the sale of Visakha Steel Plant, sanctioning of Special Category Status for the state, development funds for Capital Amaravati, and Backward Districts development funds before Modi visits the State.

Postal ballot voting begins NTR, Krishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Postal ballot voting for government employees and staff deployed for election polling, holding Form-12, began in NTR and Krishna districts on Saturday. Elaborate arrangements were made by both district administrations across all 14 Assembly constituencies, including the district headquarters in Vijayawada and Machilipatnam, to facilitate the casting of postal ballots.

Dr S Dilli Rao, Collector of NTR district, and DK Balaji, Collector of Krishna district, oversaw the postal ballot voting process. They guided employees waiting in queue lines to cast their postal votes. Employees assigned for election duty can obtain their postal ballots at their respective assembly constituencies from May 4 to 6, between 9 am and 5 pm.

Employees working in NTR and Krishna districts but registered to vote in other districts



can collect their postal ballots at designated Facilitation Centres. These centres are set up at the Vijayawada Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium and Pandu Ranga Municipal High School, Chilakalapati in Machilipatnam for Krishna district employees.

In line with the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, training sessions for Presiding Officers (PO) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APO) will be conducted in the NTR district on May 4 and 6,

and in the Krishna district on May 5 and 6. Both collectors confirmed that postal ballots could be used at the training venues.

Dr S Dilli Rao stated that approximately 23,000 employees and staff would be availing their postal ballots, with arrangements made to ensure a smooth process. He attended training programmes for POs and APOs at PB Siddhartha Arts and Science

Colleges in Vijayawada, emphasising the importance of meticulous mock polling.

Balaji, Collector of Krishna district, visited various postal ballot Facilitation Centres across all seven assembly constituencies. He emphasised the proper utilisation of postal ballots and stressed their validity, instructing employees to handle them with care to avoid invalidation.

Supervisors Dilli Rao and DK Balaji ensure smooth process

Karat to campaign in three districts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CMP politburo member Prakash Karat is gearing up for an election campaign across Krishna, NTR, and Guntur districts from May 8 to 10.

According to sources within the party, Karat's itinerary includes a visit to Gannavaram Airport from New Delhi on May 8. Upon arrival, he is slated to address a public gathering at Gannavaram in support of Kallam Venkateswara Rao, the CPM candidate for the Gannavaram Assembly constituency, and Gollu Krishna, the Congress party's contender for the Machilipatnam MP seat. The event is scheduled to take place at the TDP's former office premises in Gannavaram, at 5 pm on May 8.

Following this, Karat will proceed to another public rally in endorsement of Jonna Siva Sankar, the CPM nominee for Mangalagiri, and Jangala Ajay



Kumar, the CPI candidate for the Guntur MP seat. However, on May 9, Karat is expected to address a hall meeting in Guntur, as per party sources.

Shifting focus, Karat will lead a public address at the Gymbkhana Grounds in Vijayawada on May 10, advocating for the INDIA Bloc

candidates contesting in the Vijayawada Lok Sabha and Vijayawada assembly constituencies. A collaborative effort from the left parties, Congress, and Aam Admi parties is anticipated to draw significant attendance.

In the electoral fray, CPM's Ch Babu Rao vies for the

Vijayawada Central segment, while CPI's G Koteswara Rao seeks support in Vijayawada West. Additionally, the Congress party fields B Nancharaiah for Vijayawada East and Valluru Bhargava for the Vijayawada Parliamentary Constituency.

The INDIA Bloc, comprising CPI, CPM, and Congress, is fervently contesting this election, aiming to secure representation in both the Legislative Assembly and Parliament. Since the state's division, these parties have been absent from Andhra Pradesh's political landscape, hence their concerted effort to make their voices heard in the respective legislative bodies.

The INDIA Bloc's campaign narrative centres on highlighting the perceived shortcomings of the BJP-led NDA at the national level and the YSRCP in the state, underlining their vision for progressive governance.

CM's convoy gives way to ambulance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the sixth day of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's election campaign trail, the CM's convoy gave way to an ambulance en route to Gannavaram Airport. The Chief Minister is scheduled to address the campaign rally in Hindupur, Sri Sathya Sai District.



Steps for Modi's visit to Krishna dist reviewed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji and Superintendent of Police (SP) Adnan Nayeem Asmi, on Saturday, reviewed the arrangements for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tour of the district on May 8. Firstly, Collector Balaji and SP Asmi visited the Gannavaram Airport and enquired about the security arrangements.

Later, they discussed the Modi road show route. After that, they visited the roadway of the Prime Minister's travel from the Airport to Vijayawada. Meanwhile, they instructed officials concerned to make all necessary arrangements to succeed Modi's tour in the district.



The officials visited the Community Health Centre and Pinnamaneni Siddhartha Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) at Chinavutapalli and requested the management to take the necessary steps to make the necessary emergency medical facilities on May 8 on the day of the PM visit to the district.

'Brahmotsavams' at Delhi TTD temple from May 21

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The annual 'Brahmotsavams' will be held from May 21 to 29 at Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in New Delhi with 'Ankurarpanam' on May 20.

Before the 'Brahmotsavams', 'Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam' (traditional Temple Cleaning ritual) is performed on May 14. On May 21, between 10.45 am to 11.30 am, the flag hoisting ceremony will be held in 'Karkataka Lagnam'.

During 'Brahmotsavams', 'Vahana Sevas' will be conducted between 8 am to 9 am and again between 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm. 'Pushpayagam' will be performed on May 30 from 6 pm to 8 pm.

Important days include 'Dhwajarohanam' on May 21, 'Kalyanotsavam', 'Garuda Vahanam' on May 25, 'Radhotsavam' on May 28, 'Chakra Snamam' on May 29.

Naidu, Pawan have no culture: YSRC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Baby girl dies in roof collapse

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

In a freak incident, a three-month-old baby girl was killed when a portion of a roof fell on her at Velagavada village in Palakonda mandal on Saturday. According to family members, the three-month-old Ooha Rani was asleep in the house. In the wee hours, a small chunk of slab peeled off and fell on her. The infant baby girl suffered a bleeding injury on her head. She was shifted to the GGH where she died.

Senior YSRC leader, Adapa Seshu, has criticised Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena party chief Pawan Kalyan, labelling them as uncultured for their recent comments against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Seshu expressed his disappointment at the conduct of Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan, describing their rhetoric as particularly distasteful. He emphasised that while political adversaries often engage in verbal sparring during election campaigns, how Naidu and Pawan conducted themselves is unacceptable. Seshu remarked that their language resembles that of individuals lacking basic

etiquette, failing to accord respect to the Chief Minister, who commands the admiration of the people of the state. He suggested that Naidu and Pawan could benefit from learning decorum from Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Seshu highlighted the YSRC's inclusivity by pointing out that in the 2024 elections, Chief Minister Jagan nominated 31 leaders from the Kapu community as YSRC candidates, including six for MP seats. However, he expressed dismay that Pawan Kalyan has

been actively campaigning against these Kapu candidates in their respective constituencies.

Directing his comments towards Pawan Kalyan, Seshu questioned the legitimacy of his criticism against Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, who, according to him, has provided effective governance for the past five years. Seshu cautioned that political gains are unlikely for those who persist in levelling baseless allegations against the Chief Minister, such as Naidu has done. He asserted that Jagan Mohan Reddy is dedicated to uplifting the living standards of the poor and middle-class citizens, contrasting this with what he sees as Pawan Kalyan's alignment with the interests of the affluent, effectively working as a mouthpiece for Naidu's agenda.

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)	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

Sharmila launches a scathing attack on Jagan

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a scathing attack on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, APCC president YS Sharmila has questioned his mental acuity. At a press conference held on Saturday, she provocatively asked whether he could even recognise his reflection in a mirror and whether he saw former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's image when he looked at himself.

Sharmila vehemently denied allegations of collusion with Chandrababu Naidu and challenged Jagan Mohan Reddy to provide any evidence supporting such claims. She dismissed his assertions as baseless illusions.

Setting the record straight, Sharmila clarified that her interaction with Chandrababu Naidu was limited to a single occasion when she presented him with her son's wedding invitation. She emphasised that this gesture mirrored her father YS Rajasekhara Reddy's similar invitation to Naidu for her own wedding. Any insin-



uations beyond this, she asserted, were unfounded.

The APCC president further defended her actions, pointing out her independent initiatives such as the 3,200 km padayatra undertaken during Jagan Reddy's incarceration, which she asserted had no association with Chandrababu Naidu.

Regarding the murder of YS Vivekananda Reddy, Sharmila challenged why there should be any apprehension about an investigation if neither YS Avinash Reddy nor Jagan Reddy were implicated.

She also raised concerns about the inclusion of YSR's name in the CBI's FIR, suggesting ulterior motives behind it. Sharmila accused Ponnabolu Sudhakar Reddy of manipulating the legal system for personal gain, insinuating a quid pro quo arrangement with Jagan Reddy's administration.

Sharmila clarified that her understanding of the situation evolved after discussions with senior leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and former MP Undavalli Arun Kumar, who echoed similar sentiments regarding the politicisation of YSR's name in the FIR.

In summary, Sharmila's assertions underscored her commitment to dispel misconceptions and defend her integrity against unwarranted attacks.

Drugs seized, 3 arrested

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The SEB officials arrested three persons and seized METH drugs from them near Tadepalli bypass road in Mangalagiri on Saturday. SEB Additional Commissioner M Venkateswara Rao told the media that on a tip-off, a SEB team led by CI Lakshmi Prasanna and SI Rajendra conducted a checking of vehicles on the highway.

They found 88 grams of drugs called METH, worth Rs 5.50 lakh when being taken to Vijayawada. The METH drug was purchased in Bangalore by the three-member gang and taken to Vijayawada to sell there.



FAILURE TO GRANT SPL STATUS TO AP

Cong objects to Modi's roadshow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vice-president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), Kolanukonda Sivaji, has expressed strong objection to the upcoming roadshow by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Vijayawada, citing the BJP-led Central government's failure to grant Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing the media here on Saturday, Sivaji questioned the legitimacy of Modi's participation in the event, given the unresolved issue of SCS. He demanded accountability from the BJP, urging them to explain the lack of progress in Andhra Pradesh during the past decade under Modi's leadership.

In light of Modi's planned roadshow on May 8, spanning from IGMC Stadium to Benz Circle, Sivaji proposed that the event should instead take place in Amaravati to showcase the repercussions of Chief



Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's policies.

Drawing attention to recent amendments in criminal laws passed by Parliament, the Congress leader criticised the Modi government's failure to address the provisions of the AP Reorganisation Act 2014, which could have facilitated SCS for Andhra Pradesh. Sivaji said that had these provisions been implemented, the State would have witnessed much development.

Furthermore, Sivaji questioned whether Modi was aware of Chief Minister Jagan

Mohan Reddy's proposal to establish three capital cities. He lamented the halt in developmental works in Amaravati under the current administration, highlighting the plight of farmers who have protested against the relocation of the capital to Visakhapatnam.

The APCC vice-president faulted Prime Minister Modi for his support of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration, accusing Modi of leveraging the YSRCP to pass bills in the Rajya Sabha. He also criticised Modi's political manoeuvring in aligning with the TDP-JSP alliance for electoral gains, calling for transparency regarding Modi's stance on their manifesto.

Sivaji expressed confidence in the INDIA bloc's prospects and predicted Rahul Gandhi's ascension to the position of Prime Minister, reflecting the Congress party's aspirations for a change in leadership.

YSRCP kicks off 'Jagan Kosam Siddham'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YCP) kicked off its ambitious campaign, titled "Jagan Kosam Siddham" (Ready for Jagan) on Saturday, signalling a strategic move to secure voter support ahead of the impending elections. The initiative aims to directly engage with beneficiaries of government schemes, highlighting the assistance received and rallying support for Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's re-election bid.

According to party sources, YCP workers are poised to spearhead this initiative across the state, leveraging the strength of approximately 9 lakh activists and campaigners on the first day alone. These campaigners, many of whom have directly benefited from various government schemes, have been enlisted as star campaigners to bridge the gap between policy implementation and grassroots voters. In a multifaceted approach, YCP is deploying activists to canvas door-to-door in all 47 thousand booths, highlighting the transformative impact of government welfare programs over the past five years. By



engaging with voters on a personal level, the party aims to underscore the tangible benefits of re-electing Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, framing the election as a choice for continued prosperity.

Crucially, YCP's campaign strategy hinges on leveraging the voices of those who have experienced firsthand the positive outcomes of government initiatives. The party asserts that countless individuals have registered to campaign on its behalf, heralding a unique approach in Indian political history where votes are sought based on the demonstrable benefits of party policies. As YCP activists and sympathizers embark on this grassroots outreach, discussions will centre on the party's manifesto, Navratna Plus, showcasing its vision for the future and con-

trasting it with opposition rhetoric. Notably, comparisons between manifestos from previous elections will be drawn, emphasising the evolution of YCP's policies under Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership.

While YCP mounted a formidable campaign to consolidate support, the opposition contends that electoral promises may not be feasible. However, YCP remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering on its pledges and securing another term to continue its developmental agenda. With the "Jagan Kosam Siddham" campaign in full swing, the political landscape in Andhra Pradesh braces for intensified campaigning and heightened voter engagement as the countdown to the elections begins.

18,000 employees to vote through postal ballot

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Collector and RO J Nivas has said that a total of 18,715 employees, who will be on poll duty in the district, will exercise their franchise through the postal ballot system.

Talking to the media after inspecting the Postal Ballot facilitation centre set up at the APSP Zilla Parishad High School in Rayudupalem on the city outskirts, Nivas said the polling staff could avail the postal ballot system for five days till May 8 and then facilitation centres were arranged in all the seven Assembly constituencies.

Moreover, for the employees who have voting rights in other districts but working in the Kakinada district a special facilitation centre was arranged at the PR Government degree college here enabling them to use the postal ballot.

In addition to the postal ballot system, a Home voting facility was also started for elderly citizens in the district. A total of 621 voters would be utilising the home voting facility' the Collector added.

'We will bring past glory to R'mundry city'

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

YSRCP candidate Margani Bharat Ram, who is contesting to the Assembly from Rajahmundry city constituency, assured of bringing the past glory to Rajahmundry city and developing it as a beautiful city.

Bharat Ram conducted an extensive election campaign in the city on Saturday. He also conducted a house-to-house contract programme meeting several voters. He interacted with them listened to their woes and assured them of resolving them. He was accorded a warm welcome in various localities by a large number of people.

Speaking on the occasion, Bharat Ram explained the development which was carried out during his tenure as an MP. He recalled that the then TDP MP



Murali Mohan had failed to develop the region despite the TDP being part of the NDA. Murali Mohan failed as an MP to bring funds from the Centre

for the development of the constituency. He alleged that the sitting TDP MLA Adireddy Bhavani has failed on all fronts to develop the city and provide

basic amenities in many localities.

When he was bringing funds from Centre to develop the region the TDP leaders were making baseless allegations against him, he alleged. "The Morampudi flyover bridge was constructed, railway stations were modernized, the airport is functioning and many such development programmes have been carried out during my tenure as an MP," Bharat Ram claimed.

He said that the Glow Garden India was established in Rajahmundry and it is the second such project after Gujarat. "If am given a chance to work as an MLA, I will develop the city in a big way and make it a beautiful city," he promised and wooed voters to elect him in the forthcoming elections.

ELECTION VISITORS' PROGRAMME

Delegates from 23 nations to witness

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a testament to its unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards in general elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced its initiative to host the Election Visitors' Programme (EVP) during the ongoing Lok Sabha Elections 2024, welcoming representatives from global Election Management Bodies (EMBs) to witness firsthand the democratic excellence India strives for.

Anuj Chandak, Joint Director at the ECI, expressed this sentiment in a press release issued on Saturday.

This EVP marks a significant milestone, boasting unprecedented participation from 23 countries, with 75 delegates representing various EMBs and

Among the participating nations are Bhutan, Mongolia, Australia, Madagascar, Fiji, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Moldova, Tunisia, Seychelles, Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Chile, Uzbekistan, the Maldives, Papua New Guinea, and Namibia.

organisations. Among the participating nations are Bhutan, Mongolia, Australia, Madagascar, Fiji, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Moldova, Tunisia, Seychelles, Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Chile, Uzbekistan, the Maldives, Papua New Guinea, and Namibia. Additionally, members from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and media teams from Bhutan and Israel will also be in attendance.

Scheduled to commence on

May 4th, the program aims to acquaint foreign EMBs with the intricacies of India's electoral framework and to showcase the best practices adopted by the largest democracy in the world. The esteemed Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar, along with Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar and Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, will address the delegates on May 5th, 2024.

Following these inaugural sessions, the delegates will embark on visits to six states—Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh—in small groups, where they will observe polling processes and assess preparedness in various constituencies. The programme will draw to a close on May 9th, 2024.

Counselling centre opened

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr G Samaram, a prominent medical expert in Vijayawada and organising Vasavya Nursing Home at Benz Circle, inaugurated Spark Psychological Counselling Centre in the city on Saturday. Also, Acharya Nagarjuna University Psychology Professor TD Vimala opened the counselling room.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Vimala appreciated Spark Psychological Council Centre organisers Ramesh and Kishore for establishing the centre in Vijayawada. Psychologists Association APA India National President B Krishna Bharat, Treasurer Teja, AP High Court Advocate Dr A Pratap Reddy and others attended.

Live surgical workshop concludes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The two-day session on Live Surgical Workshop Hernia concluded successfully organized by Manipal Hospitals, in the Association of World-Renowned Surgeons Consortium (AWRSC) here on Saturday. This workshop, dedicated to exploring the latest advancements in hernia repair surgeries, attracted a diverse array of medical professionals and enthusiasts eager to deepen their expertise in this dynamic field.

Dr Surendra Jasti, Gastrointestinal Surgeon at Manipal Hospitals, reflected on the success of the workshop, stating, "With over 200 delegates and 23 faculty members participating, including national and local experts, the workshop showcased nearly 18 live surgeries (open, laparoscopic, and robotic) and



numerous presentations by esteemed faculty. With Manipal Hospitals leading the charge, we're not just imparting technical skills; we're fostering a culture of hope and healing, empowering practitioners to make a difference in their communities."

Dr Sudhakar Kantipudi, Cluster Director at Manipal Hospitals, reiterated the significance of the event, stating, "This workshop provided a unique platform for participants to witness firsthand the latest innovations in hernia surgery and engage with industry leaders. The success of the workshop underscores

the dedication of Manipal Hospitals in advancing medical education and innovation. We are proud to have facilitated meaningful discussions and knowledge-sharing that will undoubtedly benefit patient care in the region and beyond."

Supported by associations such as the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Association of Surgeons of India (ASI), and Andhra Pradesh Medical Council (APMC), the workshop attracted a diverse gathering from across the nation, further emphasizing its significance in advancing medical education and innovation.

I will apologise if Rythu Bharosa dues remain pending by May 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Taking exception to BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao's statement that the farmers' investment scheme Rythu Bharosa has been scrapped after the BRS stepped down from office, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he would apologise if any dues under the scheme are pending to any farmer by May 9.

He said that KCR is spreading the lie that the Rythu Bharosa scheme has been scrapped. The Chief Minister said that he will silence BRS MLA T. Harish Rao by waiving the loans of farmers by August 15.

Addressing the Kothagudem Jana Jataru public meeting for the Congress's Khammam Lok Sabha candidate, Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy, on Saturday, the CM said that KCR should be ready to apologise if any dues under the scheme are pending to any farmer by May 9 and if not KCR should rub his nose on the ground.

"Rythu Bharosa has to be given to four lakh farmers more. It is my responsibility to give Rythu Bharosa to all the remaining farmers by May 9. If someone proves that there are still arrears, I will rub my nose on the ground and apologise at the Martyrs Statue. If he cannot prove that there are dues then

KCR should apologise. The loans of Telangana farmers will be waived by August 15 and the witness for that is Bhadrachalam Ram. I will implement the loan waiver scheme by August 15 and clear my debt to farmers," the CM said.

Reiterating his allegation that the BJP would amend the Constitution and scrap reservations, he claimed that BJP General Secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam spoke about amending the Constitution and its preamble.

Revanth said that the BJP and the BRS have an 'internal understanding' and are conspiring to defeat the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls.

Revanth, who is also the TPCC President, referred to BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao's comments that a coalition government would take over at the Centre and that the BRS candidate contesting in Khammam, Nama Nageswara Rao, would become a Union Minister.

Pointing out that Congress workers would not allow any truck between the Congress and the BRS, he said that the BJP is the only option left for the BRS to ally with for forming a government at the Centre.

"You (KCR) are going to join hands with the BJP. That is what we have been saying and you have been doing," he said.

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: Magbool B S, Door No. 9-160-4, Madanapalli Road, Kadiri, Sri Sathya Sai District, Andhra Pradesh - 515 591.					
Name of political party : Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)					
Name of Election : General Elections HOP/APLA - 2024					
Name of Constituency: 161 - Kadiri Assembly Constituency					
I Magbool B S (name of candidate) a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:					
Sl. No.	Pending Criminal cases			Details about cases conviction for criminal offences	
	Name of Court	Case No and Status of Case	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)	Name of court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed
1	Not applicable	Cr.No. 344/2023 of Kadiri Town Police Station	Sec.188, 341 r/w 34 IPC and Sec.3 of Public Property Damage Act; (1) Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant; (2) Wrongful restraint; (3) Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention; (4) Mischief of causing damage to public property.	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: (i) Details should be given separately for each in separate rows. (ii) The matter in newspapers should be in font size of atleast 12.					
Sd/- Magbool B S					

CJI calls for global collaboration to combat juvenile cybercrimes

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Saturday said juvenile justice systems must adapt by enhancing international cooperation and sharing best practices to tackle growing transnational digital crimes involving minors, amidst the rapid evolution of technology.

Chandrachud is here on a three-day official visit to Nepal at the invitation of Chief Justice of Nepal Bishwombar Prasad Shrestha.

Delivering a keynote address at the National Symposium on Juvenile Justice, the Chief Justice shed light on the intricate relationship between children and the complex societal systems they navigate.

Children enter the world with a clean slate, yet their fragility and vulnerability render them susceptible to a myri-

ad of factors that can lead them astray, such as economic hardship, parental negligence, and peer pressure, he pointed out.

"When discussing juvenile justice, we have to recognise the vulnerabilities and unique needs of children embroiled in legal conflicts and ensure that our justice systems respond with empathy, rehabilitation, and opportunities for reintegration into society," Chandrachud said.

It is crucial to grasp the multifaceted nature of juvenile justice and its intersections with various dimensions of the societies, he said.

Chandrachud said with technology evolving rapidly, juveniles are diving into cybercrimes like hacking, cyberbullying, online fraud, and digital harassment. The anonymity and accessibility of digital plat-



forms lower barriers to entry, luring young individuals into illicit activities.

He cited the "Momo Challenge" as an example. The 'Momo Challenge' was a viral hoax that spread through social media platforms in 2019, targeting children and adolescents. This hoax purported a series of escalating dares, including self-harm or sui-

cide, although it was later debunked.

"Its rapid dissemination highlights the susceptibility of juveniles to online dangers. There is a need for proactive measures to educate and safeguard young individuals in the digital age, emphasising digital literacy, responsible online behaviour, and effective parental guidance as crucial

components in mitigating cyber-related risks," Chandrachud said.

The juvenile justice systems, he said, "must thus adapt by enhancing international cooperation mechanisms and sharing best practices to address the transnational nature of digital crimes involving juveniles".

"This includes establishing protocols for extradition and repatriation, as well as facilitating information sharing and cooperation between law enforcement agencies," the Chief Justice said.

At the domestic level, he said, specific training in child protection rules is essential to ensure that all stakeholders involved in the juvenile justice system have the necessary knowledge and skills to safeguard the rights and well-being of children.

'Canada incidents mostly due to their internal politics'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said what is happening in poll-bound Canada over the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar is mostly due to their internal politics and nothing to do with India.

Jaishankar said this while replying to a question on why Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is criticizing India.

While interacting with senior journalists during a visit here, he also said the country needs a strong and active Prime Minister like Narendra Modi in order to bring further reforms in various sectors to make a "Viksit Bharat (developed India)".

"India's image globally is now actually much higher than it had been ever... Canada is an exception. You see the different country heads are praising Bharat and its



Prime Minister," the external affairs minister said.

He said a section of pro-Khalistan people are using Canada's democracy, creating a lobby and have become a vote bank.

The ruling party in Canada has no majority in Parliament and some parties depend on pro-Khalistan leaders, he said.

"We have convinced them several times not to give visa, legitimacy or political space to such people which is causing problems for them (Canada), for us and also for our relationship," Jaishankar said.

But the Canadian government has not done anything,

Jaishankar said, adding that India sought the extradition of 25 people, most of whom are pro-Khalistan, but they did not pay any heed.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. India has dismissed Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated."

"Canada did not give any proof. They do not share any evidence with us in certain cases, police agencies also do not cooperate with us. It is their political compulsion in Canada to blame India. As election is coming in Canada, they indulge in vote bank politics," the external affairs minister said.

He said the Indian Prime Minister is regarded highly by many country heads.



Modi a 'shahanshaah', cut off from public: Priyanka

PNS ■ LAKHANI (GUJ)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'shahanshaah' (king of kings) who lives in a palace but is cut off from the public, responding to the PM's 'shehzada' jibe for her brother Rahul Gandhi.

Addressing a public rally at Lakhani in Gujarat's Banaskantha Lok Sabha constituency to canvass for her party candidate Geniben Thakor, she also accused Modi of using the people of Gujarat for power and then forgetting them.

"He calls my brother 'shehzada'. I would like to tell him that this shehzada walked for 4,000 kilometres from Kanyakumari to Kashmir to listen to your (people's) problems, met my brothers and sisters, farmers and labourers and asked how we can resolve their problems," she said.

Addressing a rally in Gujarat on Thursday, PM Modi had targeted Congress MP Rahul

Gandhi, saying Pakistan was eager to make the 'shehzada' of the grand old party India's next PM as the country's enemies want a weak government at the helm.

"On the other hand is your 'shahanshaah', Narendra Modiji. He lives in a palace. Have you ever seen him on TV? Clean clothes with not a single speck of dust, not a single stray hair strand. How will he ever understand your hard work, your farming? How will he understand your problems, that you are overburdened with inflation?" she said.

She said several BJP leaders have said on record that their government will change the Constitution if it returns to power.

"When they say they want to change the Constitution, it means they want to reduce and weaken all the rights given to you in the Constitution. If you understand politics today, the biggest thing that Modi has done in the last 10 years is to weaken the rights of the public," she said.

UNGA President invokes Gandhi to call for protection of journalists

PNS ■ UNITED NATIONS

Invoking global peace icon Mahatma Gandhi's message on freedom of the press, UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis called on member states to reaffirm their commitment to protecting journalists and media workers worldwide.

In a post on X on World Press Freedom Day, marked on May 3, Francis said attacks on press freedom

undermine democracy. In the face of misinformation, disinformation, and the environmental crisis, society needs the independence, expertise, and integrity of a free media more than ever.

"In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'freedom of the press is a precious privilege that no country can forego.' On #WorldPressFreedomDay, let's reaffirm our commitment to protecting journalists and media workers

worldwide," he said.

In his message, Francis, the President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, said press freedom – a core component of the right to freedom of expression – recognises the right of journalists and media organisations to operate independently and to report the news impartially without censorship or intimidation. He noted with concern that journalists and media workers across the

globe are increasingly under threat – from kidnapping and torture to arbitrary detention, and losing their lives at alarming rates, whether as casualties of war or as deliberate targets of state authority.

"As we honour those who have fallen in our service on this day, let us all commit to protecting journalists and media workers – as a paramount obligation for promoting inclusive

media coverage, to inform and educate society including on current environmental issues," he said.

Francis called upon member states to prioritise upholding and honouring freedom of expression, protecting journalists as well as media workers – and ending impunity. "Ensuring accountability for attacks against and harassment of journalists and media workers is crucial to upholding democratic values, globally," he said.

K'taka govt sat on evidence against Revanna: Nirmala Sitharaman

PNS ■ PUNE

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday claimed that the Congress government in Karnataka did not take action against JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna, accused of sexually abusing women, for about a year despite being aware of the matter.

The Congress was afraid that it might lose Vokkaliga votes and therefore stayed silent until the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections got over, she said, speaking at a meeting with select journalists here.

"The Union home minister (Amit Shah) has made it very clear that we will not tolerate the matters that go against women and on that we stand united. Though the (BJP's) alliance partner has this issue, we have made it clear that it was not acceptable, and let it be investigated," Sitharaman said,



when asked if the scandal will have an impact on her party's performance in Karnataka in the ongoing elections.

It was being claimed that a driver gave a pen drive (allegedly containing evidence of Revanna's acts) to the Congress party and state home minister but they were sitting on this evidence for about a year, and "now the BJP is made to answer because the JD(S) is in alliance with us," she said.

The ministers of the

Congress government knew what was in the pen drive but they did not think that safety of women should be their priority, Sitharaman alleged.

"They thought the Vokkaliga votes might go from their hands and decided to remain silent till the time the first phase of Lok Sabha got over. Now they are making it a big issue and pushing it which is typical of Congress and it shows their hypocrisy," the BJP leader further said, asking why probe was delayed for one year.

The Karnataka government was now writing to the prime minister about the case, asking him to issue look-out notices against Prajwal Revanna and bring him back from abroad, but the Union home minister had clearly said that the Karnataka government can take all the action it wants to take, she said.

Asked about BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's son

Karan Singh getting ticket from the party for Kaiserganj constituency in Uttar Pradesh, Sitharaman said the allegations against the MP had not been proved yet.

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is accused of sexually harassing women wrestlers.

"Nothing is proven against Brij Bhushan...even if he is convicted, I would say you want to carry the blame to the son. Even convicted people's children have been entertained by so many parties," the Union minister said.

The BJP was still confident after two phases of the Lok Sabha elections of winning 370 seats on its own and 400 seats along with its NDA allies, she said.

Asked if the BJP was in defence mode and responding to the opposition's narrative instead of setting its own, Sitharaman said this was not the case.

Shah calls AAP an 'urban Naxal party'

Says win for candidate backed by it will bring Maoist menace

PNS ■ VANSDA (GUJ)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday called AAP an 'urban Naxal party' and said Maoist menace would raise its head in the region if the opposition candidate wins from Valsad Lok Sabha seat.

The Aam Aadmi Party is fighting the Gujarat polls in alliance with the Congress, which has fielded its Vansda (ST) MLA Anant Patel from Valsad.

Addressing a rally in support of BJP candidate Dhaval Patel in Vansda, Shah said, "The Congress and urban Naxal party AAP have come together to disturb the peace



of this tribal region. Do you want extortion to start in Valsad? Will you allow Naxalism to raise its head in our forest areas?"

"Naxalism and urban naxalism will begin here if their

candidate wins," Shah asserted.

Shah claimed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'misinformation' about the vaccination drive during the coronavirus pandemic led to the death of many tribals.

"Rahul asked tribals not to take the vaccine and termed it as Modi vaccine. However, both brother and sister (Priyanka Gandhi) secretly took the vaccine in the night. They were not ashamed of playing politics during the times of COVID-19," he alleged.

"Several tribal youths who believed in the misinformation spread by Rahul lost their

lives (as they did not take the vaccine)," claimed Shah.

He said the Congress-led INDI alliance wanted to snatch quotas of SC, STs and OBCs and give it to Muslims, like it did in Telangana and Karnataka.

The BJP will end this Muslim quota and give back its benefits to Dalits, STs and OBCs, he asserted.

Taking a jibe at the Congress leader for contesting from Wayanad and Raebareli Lok Sabha seats, Shah said, unlike Chandrayaan that landed successfully on the south pole of the moon, 'Rahul Yaan' had failed to launch 20 times in the past.

Oppn parties spreading lies, shedding crocodile tears: Patnaik

PNS ■ KORAPUT/NABARANGPUR

Odisha Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Saturday alleged that the opposition parties are spreading lies and shedding crocodile tears.

Addressing election rallies in tribal dominated Koraput and Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituencies Patnaik asked the people whether they are happy with his government.

Patnaik also asked the people whether Naveen Patnaik is a good person and whether welfare schemes beneficial for the poor and tribal people of

the region are reaching them. The people responded by saying 'Yes' and shouted Naveen Patnaik Zindabad slogans.

"If Naveen Patnaik is good, then bless him and vote in conch symbol," Patnaik told the gathering.

The opposition parties are spreading lies and shedding crocodile tears for the people," Patnaik said.

Patnaik's close aide V K Pandian, BJD's Nabarangpur Lok Sabha candidate Pradeep Majhi, Koraput LS candidate Kausalya Hikaka and nominees of different assembly seats were present at the meeting.

Malaria linked with genetic changes: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Malaria infection is linked with genetic changes, known to be brought about by ageing, according to a new study.

Researchers extracted genetic material from blood samples of more than 1,800 adults from the African countries of Tanzania, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Cameroon, where malaria is known to be endemic, or constantly present.

According to the 2023 World Health Organisation (WHO) Malaria report, published in 'The Lancet Microbe' journal,

around 70 per cent of the global burden of the mosquito-borne disease is concentrated in 11 countries, including India and 10 African countries.

The team, including researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, US, analysed the DNA in white blood cells – crucial to immunity and fighting infections – and measured the lengths of telomeres present at the ends of chromosomes, which carry the genes.

Telomeres protect the chromosome ends from sticking to each other or getting frayed.



They are known to shorten with age and can also help predict an individual's risk of getting affected by ageing-related

diseases and death. "We highlight the contributions of genetic and environmental factors influencing

telomere length in leukocytes (white blood cells), and we have uncovered a potential role of malaria in shortening of telomere length across sub-Saharan Africa," said Sarah Tishkoff of the University of Pennsylvania, a co-senior author on the study published in 'The American Journal of Human Genetics'.

The researchers found shorter telomere lengths in the white blood cells of adults indigenous to regions where malaria is highly endemic, compared to those in adults indigenous to regions with low

malaria endemicity. Malarial infection is known to cause massive destruction of white blood cells. The authors said that this process, coupled with that making new cells to restore this loss, could be a possible mechanism through which the disease shortens the length of telomeres.

They also found that the extent to which malaria was endemic to a region had a greater impact on telomere lengths, compared to environmental factors previously identified and known to impact telomere lengths.

INDIA CORNER

Death of newborn child: Court remands mother to custody



A local court here on Saturday remanded the 23-year-old mother accused of killing her newborn child and throwing it on a street to 14 days judicial custody. Ernakulam Additional Chief Magistrate went to the hospital where she is undergoing treatment and remanded her to judicial custody till May 18, police said. They added that the custody application will be moved only after considering the medical report from the doctors. Earlier in the day, the police had said that as per the post-mortem report, the newborn, found dead on a street in Kochi after being allegedly thrown there by its mother post delivery, was strangulated. City Police Commissioner S Syamsundar said the arrest of the 23-year-old woman was recorded on Friday and police were verifying her statements regarding a Thriassur friend.

Kareena appointed UNICEF India National Ambassador



UNICEF India on Saturday announced Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan as its new National Ambassador. The 'Crew' star, who has been associated with UNICEF India since 2014, will support the not-for-profit organisation in furthering every child's right to early childhood development, health,

education and gender equality, a press release said. Kareena had earlier served as a Celebrity Advocate for UNICEF India. "There are few things as important as the rights of children, the future generation of this world. I am honoured to continue my association with UNICEF India as India's National Ambassador," the 43-year-old actor said in a statement. "I will strive to use my voice and influence for vulnerable children and their rights, especially around early childhood, education and gender equality. For every child deserves a childhood, a fair chance, a future," she added. Besides Kareena, UNICEF India has also appointed its first-ever Youth Advocates, who are peer leaders and champions on issues like climate action, mental health, innovations and Girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

The four advocates are Gauranshi Sharma from Madhya Pradesh on right to play and disability inclusion; Kartik Verma from Uttar Pradesh on climate action and child rights advocacy; singer Nahid Afrin from Assam on mental health and early childhood development; and Vinisha Umashankar from Tamil Nadu is a budding innovator and STEM pioneer.

Woman throws acid on boyfriend in Nagpur; booked



A case has been registered against a woman for allegedly throwing acid on her 29-year-old boyfriend and injuring him after a fight in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, police said on Saturday. Based on a complaint, the police on Friday registered a case against the accused woman and two others involved in the attack that took place on April 25, an official from Kalamna police station said. The victim, Ganesh Laxman Bhojer (29), sustained severe injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital, he said. Bhojer was in a live-in relationship with the accused woman. But the relationship turned sour due to the victim's alcohol addiction and disagreements about the woman's friends visiting their place, the official said.

Government lifts ban on onion exports

Imposes minimum export price of US\$ 550/tonne

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday lifted the ban on onion exports subject to a minimum export price of US\$ 550 per tonne, a decision that can help boost income of a large section of farmers and comes ahead of the Lok Sabha polls in key producing regions including Maharashtra.

The government has imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of US\$ 550 per tonne (around Rs 46 per kg) as well as 40 per cent export duty. Taking duty into account, the shipments will not be allowed below US\$ 770 per tonne (around Rs 64 per kg). On December 8 last year, the Centre had banned onion exports in early December to control retail prices amid concerns over likely fall in production. During the last 4-5 years, the country annually exported between 17 lakh and 25 lakh tonnes of onions.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said the lifting of the ban would not lead to any

Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said the lifting of the ban would not lead to any price rise in retail markets. "Prices will remain stable. If at all there is any increase, it should be very marginal," she said, while asserting that the government is committed to protect the interests of both consumers and farmers.



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torate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a notification that "the export policy of onions is amended from prohibited to free subject to MEP of US\$ 550 per metric tonne with immediate effect and until further orders."

istry imposed a 40 per cent export duty.

The decision assumes importance as it comes before the crucial Lok Sabha polls in key onion belts like Nashik, Ahmednagar and Solapur in Maharashtra. Farmers of this region have been demanding a lifting of the ban so that they can get a better price for their produce.

Explaining the rationale behind the decision, Khare said the "ban on onion exports has been removed from today (Saturday) because the supply situation is comfortable and prices are stable in both mandies as well as retail markets." The modal price at Lasalgaon mandi in Nashik was Rs 15 per kg in April.



Earlier in the day, the direc-

Last night, the finance min-

India raises issue of pharma pricing control in Australia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has raised the issue of pharmaceutical pricing control in Australia, particularly on generic medicines, during a recent bilateral meeting between the officials of the two countries.

The two sides have decided to work closely on timely resolution of market access issues, deepen people-to-people contacts, and create an institutional mechanism for sharing of preferential import data, the commerce ministry said on Saturday.

The bilateral trade between the countries declined 7.7 per cent to USD 24 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 26 billion in 2022-23.

These issues among others were discussed during the first Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) in Canberra under India-Australia Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA).

"Both the sides while acknowledging the smooth implementation of the ECTA, briefly elaborated on ECTA implementation issues including MRAs (mutual recognition agreements) on organic products, market access issues related to products like okra, pomegranate, grapes, cottage cheese...pharmaceutical pricing control in Australia particularly on generics, progress made by the working group on whisky and wine," the ministry said.

The aim was to address regulatory challenges and promote trade of these products, it said adding setting up of disease-free zones for shrimps and prawns in India was also discussed.

It added that the JCM meeting addressed certain critical services issues, including the consideration of India's request for facilitation of cross border e-payments and MRAs in professions like nursing and dentistry.



MONEY MATTERS

JK Bank reports highest-ever annual profit of Rs 1,767 cr



Jammu and Kashmir Bank on Saturday reported its highest-ever annual profit at Rs 1,767 crore for 2023-24. Its Managing Director and CEO Baldev Prakash said the net profit surged 48 per cent compared to the previous fiscal.

"Beating its own highest-ever record of profits achieved only last year, the net profit surged in fiscal 2023-24 by 48 per cent to achieve its record profit figure of Rs 1,767 crore," Prakash told PTI after the bank's annual results for FY 2023-24 were released bank here. He said the bank will be sharing the historic profits with its shareholders by making the highest dividend payment of around Rs 236.75 crore this year. The bank witnessed a 10 per cent increase in its total income to Rs 6,029.17 crore from Rs 5,502.09 crore. It had posted a profit of Rs 1,197 crore last fiscal, which was the highest profit till last year. Prakash said the bank's asset quality has improved by bringing the gross non-performing assets to a decadal low of 4.08 per cent, while the net non-performing assets to 0.79 per cent.

Volkswagen strengthens retail footprint in TN



German automaker Volkswagen has inaugurated a new store in the city under its expansion drive in the state, strengthening its retail presence in the country. With the setting up of a new outlet at Ambattur in the city, the total network for the automobile major stands at 26 sales and 20 service facilities in Tamil Nadu. "The Chennai

Metropolitan area is one of the key markets for Volkswagen in India. In 2023, our Virtus was one of the highest-selling sedans in this market. With this inauguration of our newest touchpoint in Chennai, we are emphasising our commitment to the rising need for premium, safe, and reliable vehicles throughout India." Volkswagen Passenger Cars India Brand Director Ashish Gupta said in a company statement on Saturday. The new store 'KUN Capital Motors' is headed by Director Arun Uppuswami and has a five-car display and 25 service bays, among others. "Our longstanding partnership with Volkswagen has driven a highly successful mobility revolution in Tamil Nadu. With class-leading products on offer, we are once again glad to make the safest portfolio of Volkswagen Taigun, Tiguan, and Virtus, even more accessible to customers through the new city store," Uppuswami said. With the latest facility, Volkswagen has 208 sales and 142 service touchpoints across 155 cities in India.

IDBI Bank net profit jumps 44 pc to Rs 1,628 cr



Private sector lender IDBI Bank on Saturday reported a 44 per cent jump in net profit at Rs 1,628 crore in the March quarter of financial year 2023-24. In comparison, the bank had posted a net profit of Rs 1,133 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to Rs 7,887

crore in the period under review, from Rs 7,014 crore in the January-March period of fiscal year 2022-23. For the 2023-24 fiscal, net profit grew 55 per cent to an all-time high of Rs 5,634 crore. In 2022-23, the profit was at Rs 3,645 crore. Total income for fiscal year 2023-24 was at Rs 30,037 crore, up from Rs 24,942 crore in financial year 2022-23. Net Interest Income improved by 12 per cent in the March quarter to Rs 3,688 crore, as against Rs 3,280 crore in the fourth quarter of 2022-23. Net non-performing assets (NPA) ratio improved to 0.34 per cent as on March 31, 2024, as against 0.92 per cent as on March 31, 2023. The board of IDBI Bank has proposed a dividend of 15 per cent subject to shareholders' approval.

Air India reduces cabin baggage allowance to 15 kg

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Loss-making Air India has reduced the free cabin baggage allowance to 15 kilogram from 20 kilogram for the lowest economy fare segment on domestic flights.

The changes have been made in the menu-based pricing model fare families that were introduced by the Tata Group-owned Air India last August, with the airline saying that a one-size-fits-all approach is no longer ideal.

There are three fare families -- Comfort, Comfort Plus and Flex -- that offer different levels

of benefits and fare restrictions at various price points, an airline spokesperson said on Saturday.

With effect from May 2, the free cabin baggage allowance for the 'Comfort' and 'Comfort

sengers on Air India's domestic flights were allowed to carry 25 kilograms of cabin baggage free of any additional charge.

"On domestic routes in Economy Class, both 'Comfort' and 'Comfort Plus' fare families now provide 15 kg baggage allowance, while 'Flex' provides 25 kg allowance.

"The Business Class baggage allowance on domestic routes ranges from 25 kg to 35 kg. The free baggage allowance on international flights varies from market to market," the spokesperson said.



Plus' categories has been reduced to 15 kg from 20 kg and 25 kg, respectively.

Prior to the introduction of the fare families concept, pas-

PAPER INDUSTRY TO GOVT

Allot degraded land for pulpwood plantation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian paper industry has urged the government to provide degraded land on a long-term lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation to address raw material shortage and boost rural employment.

The industry has highlighted that a large chunk of degraded land is available in the country, and even if a small fraction of that is allotted on lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation, it can be a game changer for industry growth and greening of India.

The paper industry has faced shortage of wood, the key raw



material, and it is the biggest concern for mills in India, the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) said in a statement on Saturday.

While the paper industry is continuing with agro forestry efforts, pulpwood plantations need to be enhanced rapidly to meet the requirements of domestic industry, the IPMA stated.

Avenue Supermarts net profit rises to Rs 563 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Avenue Supermarts Ltd, which owns and operates D-Mart stores, on Saturday reported a 22.39 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 563 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 460 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, Avenue Supermarts said in a regulatory filing.

Its consolidated total revenue for the quarter stood at Rs 12,727 crore compared to Rs 10,594 crore a year ago, it added.

For the fiscal ended March 2024, the company said its consolidated net profit stood at Rs 2,536 crore against Rs 2,378 crore in FY23.

The company's consolidated total revenue for FY24 was Rs 50,789 crore compared to Rs 42,840 crore in FY23.

Avenue Supermart CEO & Managing Director Neville Noronha said D-Mart, the brick-and-mortar business, ended



the year with growth across key financial parameters of revenue, EBITDA and PAT.

The company opened 41 new stores during the year, and its total store count stands at 365.

"Q4 FY2024 saw a continued uptick in the contribution from general merchandise and apparel," Noronha said.

D-Mart Ready, the e-commerce business, commenced operations in one new city (Gurugram) during the year while continuing to deepen its presence in existing cities.

"We are now present across 23 cities in India," Noronha said

RBI action to have limited fin impact: Kotak

Says more worried about reputational damage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kotak Mahindra Bank is expecting business restrictions imposed by the Reserve Bank to have a "relatively small" financial impact but is more concerned about the reputational damage, a top official said on Saturday.

Hinting that it expects the restrictions to last for a "couple of months", its managing director and chief executive Ashok Vaswani told reporters that it will have a limited impact on liability growth.

Late last month, the RBI

barred Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and issuing fresh credit cards with immediate effect as the lender was found deficient in its IT risk management.

Vaswani, who took over office only in January this year, said it is redoubling its efforts on the tech front, and winning back trust is the "top priority" for the lender now.

He admitted that the order will have an impact on the credit card business and its digital banking-focused 811 busi-

nesses as they are unable to do their work.

"I am more worried about the reputational impact than the financial impact. The financial impact will be relatively small," Vaswani told reporters.

Its deputy managing director Shanti Ekambaram said the bank will focus on doing more business with its existing customers and deepening relationships through more cross-selling.

She also added that the order does not prohibit the bank from adding new cus-



tomers at the branches or in digitally-assisted journeys.

Its group chief financial officer Devang Gheewalla said the bank spent 10 per cent of its operating expenses on the tech front in FY24, and added that the order may lead to an acceleration of the spending.

TPRE signs pact with SJVN for clean energy project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL) on Saturday said it has signed an agreement with state-owned SJVN Ltd to set up a 460 MW Firm and Dispatchable Renewable Energy (FDRE) project.

An FDRE plant enables round-the-clock power supply,

assisting power distribution companies (discoms) in fulfilling their Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs) and Energy Storage Obligations (ESOs).

"The plant, designed to meet the 460 MW FDRE requirement, integrates solar, wind, and battery storage technologies to ensure efficient energy dispatch during peak hours, there-

by stabilizing the grid," it said.

The plant is expected to generate nearly 3,000 million units (MUs) of power and offset 2,200 million kgs of CO2 emissions annually, TPREL said in a statement.

"This partnership with SJVN Ltd will witness the deployment of sustainable energy solutions from TPREL.

'NCLT registers 43% jump in debt resolution cases'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid several bottlenecks, the Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) declared 2023-24 as a landmark year, with the National Company Law Tribunal achieving a significant 43 per cent increase in resolutions, jumping from 189 cases last year to 270 this year.

The IBBI is expected to submit a report to the government over the next 2-3 months for including "mediation" in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which is currently under discussion and scrutiny.

The regulator is also working on prepackaged insolvency for large corporate cases, which is only allowed in MSME cases as of now.

For the first time in a year, the number of outputs has increased from the number of inputs, reducing the pendency across India, said Sudhaker Shukla, an IBBI whole-time member, while addressing the CII organised 7th Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code conclave.

He said that despite bottlenecks in the last seven years, resolution of 3.5 lakh crore was achieved, and 27,000 applications worth Rs 10 lakh crore



were withdrawn, making the IBC a powerful tool for debt resolution in the country.

Shukla stated that the law has evolved over time and that the interventions to improve it

have been remarkable.

"In 2023-24, around 12 amendments and 86 interventions have been made in the IBBI within a single year. This portrays that we are responding to market requirements to bridge the gaps," he said. He further added that a sectoral approach has been adopted to address unique problems for a speedy resolution, like in real estate.

"We are trying to follow the sandbox approach. The recent amendments were made on real estate where project-wise resolution was made, keeping the allotted houses from liquidation was a big step forward

in a sectoral approach," Shukla said.

Speaking about the demand for mediation and prepacks for insolvency for large accounts, Shukla said it was currently under scrutiny and in the next 2-3 months, it will be submitted to the government.

He further said prepacks for large accounts were also under consideration as they aim for speedy resolution.

Prepackaged insolvency involves negotiating and agreeing on a resolution plan between the debtor and its creditors before going into formal bankruptcy.

Japan insists Lanka should sign MoUs early for debt restructuring

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Japan on Saturday said it expected cash-strapped Sri Lanka to sign early MoUs with the official creditors to reach a "transparent and comparable" debt restructuring agreement with all the creditors as Colombo said it expects the debt restructuring process to conclude in time for the next tranche of the IMF process.

Japan is leading the international discussions on Sri Lanka's debt restructuring as co-chair of the Official Creditors' Committee after the island nation, in April 2022, declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. The unprecedented financial crisis led President Ranil Wickremesinghe's predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit office in 2022.

In March, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it has reached a staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka for the

next phase that would enable it access to US\$ 337 million from the nearly US\$ 3 billion bailout approved in 2023 for the country.

Two tranches of US\$ 330 million each were released in March and December 2023 even as the global lender has praised Colombo for its

committee and Sri Lanka said, "This stressed the importance of reaching a debt restructuring agreement with all the creditors in a transparent and comparable manner."

"The restoration of stability and economic development of Sri Lanka, which is at the strategic location in the Indian Ocean, is essential for the stability and prosperity of the entire Indo-Pacific region. Japan, as a friend, continues to support Sri Lanka. This is exactly what I came to Sri Lanka today to convey," Kamikawa told a media briefing alongside her Sri Lankan counterpart, Ali Sabry here.

Further, conveying Japan's intention to further support Sri Lanka's development by swiftly resuming existing yen loan projects, Kamikawa said, "Once the MOU on debt restructuring is signed and Sri Lanka's government's intention to swiftly conclude it, a bilateral agreement is confirmed."

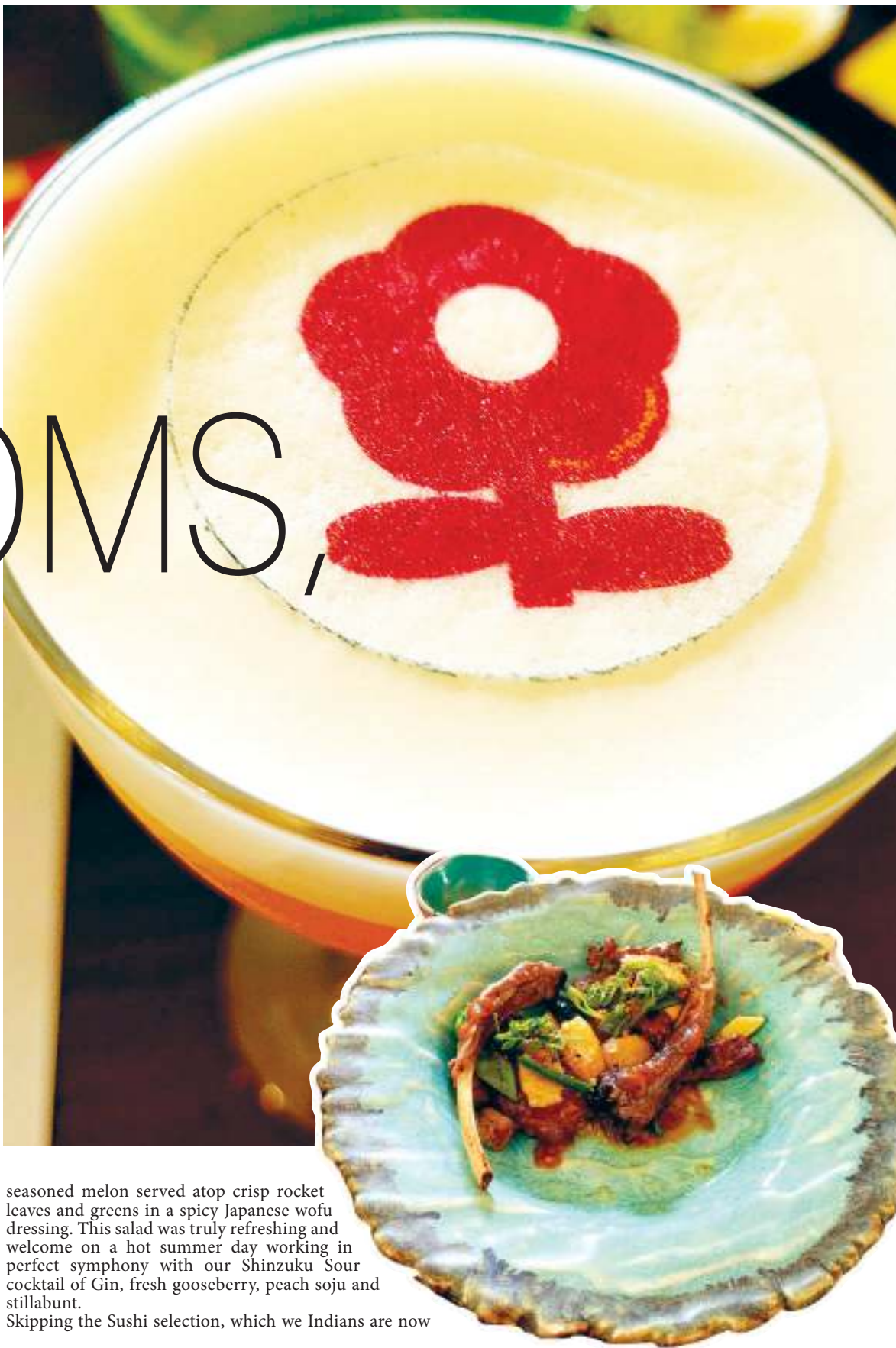


macroeconomic policy reforms, which it said, "are starting to bear fruit."

On Saturday, according to news portal NewsFirst.lk, visiting Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoko Kamikawa while conveying her country's expectation for the early signing of the MOU between the official creditors

The Japanese celebrate the Hanami, the festival of Spring, with as much gusto as we Indians do. **SHOBORI GANGULI** participates in the gastronomical delights accompanying this ancient ritual at Guppy right here in Delhi

CHERRY BLOSSOMS, CHEER AND CAMARADERIE



seasoned melon served atop crisp rocket leaves and greens in a spicy Japanese wofu dressing. This salad was truly refreshing and welcome on a hot summer day working in perfect symphony with our Shinzuku Sour cocktail of Gin, fresh gooseberry, peach soju and stillabunt. Skipping the Sushi selection, which we Indians are now

quite familiar with, we opted for the translucent Tobanjan-spiced Chicken Steamed Dumplings, the filling a burst of minced chicken in a Japanese spicy tobanjan chili paste served with a ponzu dip. Perhaps it is me and my changed taste buds over the years or a conscious attempt by Japanese kitchens based out of India, the element of spiciness has notched up a bit from what was often termed as a "bland" taste emanating from traditional kitchens, which may suit the Japanese palate even today, in Japan and elsewhere in the world, but were not embraced with the same degree of enthusiasm one has watched with Italian, Spanish, Chinese, West Asian and Mediterranean spreads across continents.

The fact that Guppy was brimming with people, almost all tables occupied, on a busy working week day, is perhaps testimony to the fact that Japanese cuisine has certainly found an innovative way to work around the Indian palate and its natural inclination for well-spiced food.

From their Small Plates offering we went past the vegetarian Stuffed Tofu Katsu to the Crisp Chicken Parcel, an oven-baked phyllo parcel with ginger flavoured chicken accompanied by soy apple salsa and a yuzu miso sauce.

For the Mains, while my friend settled for the undoubtedly healthy and delicious Grilled Yuzu Khoso Fish, marinated in Jaanese yuzu khoso and herb salsa, grilled and served with lemon butter soy, I ventured into the now universally forbidden territory of red meat. The Grilled Marinated Lamb Chop came with seasonal vegetables and was served with red wine miso. I must admit that while the flavours of the grill settled rather smoothly on my palate, the meat itself was on the rare side and a tad stringy. Red meat requires adequate time to be rested in its marination for it to step delicately away from the bone. In my opinion, the Lamb Chop needed some more attention.

That said, the experience was a rather cheerful one, given that the Japanese dedicate as much time to the aesthetics of the inanimate as to the animate. Guppy is that cheerful, pretty, comfortable Japanese place one would like to hang around at, with friends or family. Here's wishing everyone a happy Hanami, the Japanese spring festival so similar to our own spring festival of Basant Panchami.



This week I had the great fortune to partake of the Hanami festival at one of Delhi's finest Japanese restaurants Guppy (part of the Olive Chain). This is cherry blossom season of spring in Japan, a time to mark the Hanami festival — a unique cultural tradition of viewing flowers in full bloom, an ancient ritual which serves as a Japanese reminder of the transience of nature, the blossoms a metaphor for life, draped in the immortal philosophy of hope and renewal.

And no festival in the world is complete without its attendant share of feasts and festivities. Guppy, in an earnest attempt to keep this old Japanese heritage alive and robust in a faraway land from Japan, in the very heart of India in Delhi, laid out a sumptuous fare of what would typically be a part of a Hanami dining spread.

Among the salads on offer — Artichoke & Melon, Avocado, Beet & Edamame and Chicken, Avocado & Greens — my friend and I

settled for the first one which was a refreshing mix of marinated artichoke, grapes, and

Gurugram's latest Culinary Contender



BY **PAWAN SONI**

Nestled between two established dining spots at Two Horizon, Marieta emerges as Gurugram's newest culinary contender, overtaking the space vacated by well-regarded Italian eatery Artusi. Although the name "Marieta" which is a popular female name hails from Greece, the restaurant's global menu lacks prominent Greek offerings.

The start was a bit of a let down. Not being served a hard copy of the menu and asking diner to scan a barcode for the digital menu at a fine-dine restaurant with an excuse that they are new doesn't go well with me. May be I am an old timer who doesn't like reading the menu on mobile's small screen. The manager quickly improv-

vised and offered to share a b&w printed menu with which I was okay but it never came. However he later shared his laptop with me to read the menu. For a classy looking restaurant they can easily do with few laptops if even after a month of their opening they are finding it difficult to get the printed menu. I am here with my wife and like most men opt for 'The Second Date'. Don't get me wrong, it is a tequila and sake based cocktail with a bit of lychee and Jasmine tea. Its delightful aroma and soothing taste set a pleasant tone for the evening. As I perused the drinks menu, I noticed a variety of tequila and mezcals cocktails, signaling an interesting trend. Just as gin has surpassed vodka in popularity for cocktails, it seems tequila-based cocktails might be the next big trend.

While the food initially took some time to arrive, once it did, the dishes came out in quick succession. Most of the dishes we ordered were impressive. The Mushroom and Cream Cheese (Rs495), encased in crispy kataifi on a cauliflower sauce base, was particularly exciting. Similarly, the Habanero Butter Shrimp (Rs750), served with airy sourdough bread, was noteworthy, although I expected a bit more heat from the habanero, making the dish's name somewhat misleading.

The Avocado Cream Cheese Uramaki (Rs750) sushi roll was



FACT SHEET
Sector 43, Gurgaon
Phone: 8800186953
Cuisine: Global with focus on Mexican
RATINGS
Food: 3.5/5
Drinks: 4.0/5
Service: 3.75/5
Ambience: 3.5/5
Overall: 3.5/5

enjoyable, with the added crunch of fried sweet potato crisps on top. However, the Spicy Sweet Potato Soft Shell Taco lacked the necessary spiciness to balance the sweetness of the potato. Adding a bit of spicy sauce on the side made it more enjoyable for me.

The only disappointment was the Neapolitan Margherita pizza, which fell short on the dough, kneading, and rolling. The edges didn't rise properly, the center wasn't thin enough, and the sauce was mediocre. However, the chef acknowledged the issue without making excuses, which in my view was commendable. Since we had no room for a main course, we opted for desserts directly. The Vanilla Bean Panna Cotta (Rs595) was exceptional, perfectly set and delicious. Topped with figs and caramel sauce, this dessert, an Artusi recipe, is reason enough to visit Marieta.

We arrived early for a Monday dinner and found the music to be too loud for an empty restaurant. However, as more guests arrived, the sound was absorbed, creating a more enjoyable ambience. The tables in alfresco settings are a bit small for four people; fitting more than two people would be a challenge. Despite minor initial hiccups, the service was good and well-informed. Overall, Marieta is worth a try, especially for the panna cotta.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

"Disease is an experience of a so-called mortal mind. It is fear made manifest on the body"
— Mary Baker Eddy



Amid mounting concerns regarding Covishield's safety and the acknowledgment of potential adverse effects by its maker UK giant AstraZeneca, public unease is on the rise, with calls for accountability, says **ARCHANA JYOTI**

COVISHIELD'S SHIELD IN QUESTION

My CT scan result showed that they (doctors) had never seen anything like this before. Numerous blood clots were removed through surgery from my legs and lower abdomen. Alex Mitchell, a key litigant in the legal proceedings in the UK against British pharma giant AstraZeneca told a news channel in India about the side effects that he suffered after receiving the COVID vaccine.

Mitchell is not the only one who has been reeling under the side effects due to the COVID jab and taken up a legal battle against AstraZeneca over allegations linking its vaccine to fatalities and severe adverse effects. The firm is facing at least 51 such cases and has recently conceded that its vaccine could, albeit exceedingly rarely, induce Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), a medical condition characterized by abnormally low levels of platelets and the formation of blood clots. With this admission by the UK pharma giant, in India, the Serum Institute of India (SII), headquartered in Pune, which was a licensee to AstraZeneca's vaccine formula may too find itself mired in potential legal ramifications with the parents of a young woman who died purportedly due to complications arising ten days post her inoculation with the vaccine in 2021 said that they are contemplating legal action against both SII and AstraZeneca.

Though a section of legal experts say that

Symptoms of TTS

A rare condition associated with Covishield, include severe headaches, abdominal pain, leg swelling, or shortness of breath, usually appearing two weeks post-vaccination. Timely identification and intervention are crucial in mitigating severe consequences.



SII may get clean chit in the case given it was a mere manufacturer of the jab, Venugopalan Govindan, bereaved father of the deceased Karunya has expressed profound dissatisfaction with AstraZeneca's belated admission, lamenting its timing vis-à-vis the lives already lost. He also castigated SII for its failure to suspend vaccine distribution following the restriction imposed by 15 European nations due to reported incidents of blood clot-related fatalities in March 2021.

Govindan has also implicated governmental agencies, regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders in the unfortunate demise of his daughter and numerous others post-vaccination. His sentiments have reverberated across social media platforms following AstraZeneca's acknowledgment of its COVID jab's potential to precipitate blood clotting.

Govindan spearheaded a petition titled 'Post-vaccination side effects - Blood clots, MIS-A, etc. Awareness was required' shortly after his daughter's tragic demise in 2021. As the petition gained traction, it served as a platform for individuals to share their own experiences, concerns, and opinions regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

For instance, one Shikha Bhalla, a netizen, has given her account of losing vision in her left eye due to a rare side effect underscoring the importance of thorough



BIG NUMBER

India's vaccination campaign began on January 13, 2021, administering Covaxin and Covishield. Covishield received approval for use in 49 other countries. As of April 29, 2024, India has administered 1,749,417,978 doses of Covishield, making it the world's largest vaccination program. India's vaccine arsenal during the pandemic included Covaxin, Covishield, Sputnik-V, Covovax, Corbevax, and ZyCoV-D, among others. Worldwide, 13.5 billion COVID-19 vaccines have been administered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to science research organization Our World in Data. Around 71% of the world's population has received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine.

GLOBAL INSIGHT

According to global data on TTS available in the public domain, as of January 5, 2024, Canada had reported 89 cases of TTS, of which 56 cases were reported following vaccination with AstraZeneca's Vaxzevria/Covishield COVID-19 vaccine, and 24 cases were reported following vaccination with Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine. Eight cases were also reported following vaccination with Moderna's Spikevax COVID-19 vaccine. In the U.K., 122 instances of TTS following the administration of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been reported as of November 2023.

OPP MAKES A GIBE

Where is the Thank You Modi ji banner now? Why are the PM and Health Ministry silent? Is this the reason why deaths due to heart attack at young age occur? Was this the reason why BJP took electoral bonds worth Rs 50 crore from Serum Institute? This issue is not a matter of politics but of safeguarding people's lives," Srinivas Bhadravathi Venkata, the National President of the Indian Youth Congress in a post on X.

monitoring and reporting of adverse events. Another netizen Parikshit Suri has emphasized on the rigorous testing and transparency in vaccine development and echoed widespread calls for accountability and scrutiny in the approval process.

Dr. A Rajkumar Sreenivasan's plea for informed consent highlighted the ethical dimensions of healthcare decision-making, emphasizing the need for individuals to have agency and autonomy in vaccination choices. Michelle Zeh's skepticism about vaccine necessity and safety shed light on broader concerns surrounding pharmaceutical influence and the importance of evidence-based decision-making.

Manish Kumar's observation of increased heart attacks post-vaccination prompted calls for comprehensive investigation and surveillance to ensure the ongoing safety and efficacy of vaccination programs. While many doctors have said that benefits outweighs the downsides Dr Sankha Shubhra Chakrabarti, Head-Geriatrics, IMS-BHU posted on X, @these genius Indian doctors who are self consoling by saying it occurs within few weeks and cannot after 3 years probably do not know how the AdenoV delivery system is designed to work.

Amidst these concerns and controversy over the safety aspects of the Covishield vaccine, the matter has now reached the Supreme Court on May 1, 2024, with a petition led by advocate Vishal Tiwari adding a layer of complexity and urgency to the discourse. Tiwari has sought the constitution of an expert medical panel to study the risk factors.

"More than 175 crore doses of Covishield have been administered in India. After Covid 19 there has been an increase in deaths due to heart attacks and sudden collapse of persons. There have been several cases of heart attack even in youngsters. Now after the document filed in UK court by the developer of Covishield, we are compelled to think on the risk and hazardous consequences of Covishield vaccine which have been administered to the citizens at a large number," the petition filed by advocate Tiwari says.

The plea points out that AstraZeneca, the company that developed the vaccine, has said that its AZD1222 vaccine against Covid-19, which was made under license in India as Covishield, could cause low platelet counts and the formation of blood clots in rare cases.

The petition says the medical panel should

be headed by an expert from AIIMS and supervised by a retired Supreme Court judge.

Tiwari has further sought directions to the Centre to establish a 'Vaccine Damage Payment System' for citizens or families who have suffered debilitating health setbacks or even deaths after taking the vaccine.

The plea has also called for strict action against the circulation of spurious Covishield, an offshoot of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, which underwent extensive administration across India. However, SII, conspicuously headquartered in Pune, has remained reticent in response to the looming specter of legal action. Equally intriguing is the silence maintained by the Union Health Ministry, notwithstanding mounting apprehensions and criticisms voiced by recipients of Covishield on various social media platforms.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has already raised the Centre's attention to these links, saying that it should work to urgently address the alleged side-effects of the Covidshield vaccine as millions of people in India were administered the shot during the Covid pandemic. Bharadwaj expressed concern over the alleged link between the vaccine's side effects and a series of sudden deaths in India, claiming that Covidshield was banned in several European countries, including Germany, France, Spain, Finland, Norway, and Denmark.

Despite the government's formation of a national committee to probe such occurrences, the determination of insufficient evidence linking her demise to the vaccine underscores the intricate challenge of establishing causality in rare adverse events. However, the narrative shared by individuals such as Govindan underscores the exigency for robust surveillance, reporting mechanisms, and support infrastructure to address post-vaccination complications comprehensively.

Against the backdrop of Covishield's legal conundrum, SII's competitor Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, has underscored the efficacy of its jab, Covaxin, saying that it was meticulously evaluated and efficacy trials were held within India.

DOCTORS SPEAK

TTS is a very rare condition resulting from an abnormal immune response. While it has several causes, it has also been linked with adenovirus vector vaccines. The WHO has deemed the vaccine safe and effective for all individuals aged 18 and above. ... We are yet to fully understand the impact of coronavirus on people, also called long Covid. The



difficulty is to distinguish between the complications that are caused by Covid itself or the vaccine. That remains debatable. People who are vaccinated have an overall lower risk of complications such as post-Covid heart attacks and strokes among others.

— DR RAVI WANKHEDEKAR, Former national president of the IMA

"Like many things in medicine, the exact mechanism for this is also unknown. It is an unusual immune reaction to a particular vaccine genre which is called as adenovirus vector vaccine. Adenovirus vectors are not disease-causing viruses but these are artificially fitted with the spike of the virus that our immune system



needs to fight. In the case of AstraZeneca's adenovirus vector vaccine, a chimpanzee adenovirus - ChAdOx1 - has been modified to enable it to carry the Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) spike protein injected into the muscles of humans."

— DR RAJEEV JAYADEVAN, Co-Chairman, IMA Covid-19 task force



Study confirms higher risk of very rare clot with AstraZeneca Jab

The Global Covid Vaccine Safety Project conducted an extensive analysis of adverse events associated with COVID-19 vaccines across multiple regions, including Argentina, Australia (New South Wales and Victoria), Canada (British Columbia and Ontario), Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, and Scotland. They employed a method called observed versus expected (OE) ratios to compare the number of adverse events reported with the expected baseline rates.

In simple words, this means first healthcare providers have a baseline 'expectation' of how many adverse events are likely given a certain number of vaccinated people, and compare it with the number of events reported to health systems. Expectations are formed based on experience with the rates of vaccination, and reactions observed historically. However, COVID-19 vaccination was an outlier event that saw billions of vaccines administered over a relatively short span.

OE ratios greater than 1.5, indicating 50% more adverse reactions than expected, were identified as potential safety signals requiring thorough investigation. Notable findings included elevated OE ratios for Guillain-Barré syndrome and cerebral venous sinus thrombosis following the first dose of the ChAdOx1 vaccine. Additionally, acute disseminated encephalomyelitis showed a high OE ratio following the first dose of the mRNA-1273 vaccine. Increased OE ratios for myocarditis and pericarditis were also observed following vaccination with BNT162b2 (Pfizer/BioNTech), mRNA-1273 (Moderna), and ChAdOx1 (AstraZeneca/Serum Institute of India) vaccines.

In India, as of December 6, 2022, a total of 92,003 Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) were reported, accounting for approximately 0.009% of the population vaccinated against COVID-19. However, it's essential to note that the strength of adverse event reporting systems can vary



"There have been studies that show the baseline rate in European states (adverse events related to COVID-19 vaccines) is higher than Asia. This is a combination of both a better reporting system as well as physiological factors. Studies done in one country may not easily translate to another."

— CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA
Physician and health policy expert

significantly between countries, influencing reported incidence rates. The study also highlighted differences in adverse event reporting rates between regions. For example, the affidavit submitted by the Indian government to the Supreme Court cited higher AEFI rates in the United States (0.2%) and the United Kingdom (0.7%) compared to India. These variations may be influenced by reporting system robustness and physiological factors.

Despite confirming previously identified rare safety signals associated with COVID-19 vaccination, the study emphasized the need for further investigation to confirm associations and evaluate clinical significance. An affidavit by the government to the Supreme Court claimed that compared with India, nearly 0.2% of the people in the United States who received COVID-19 vaccines showed AEFI, as did 0.7% in the U.K.

"These ratios are, however, significantly influenced by the strength of the adverse event reporting system in countries. This can significantly vary among countries. "While our study confirmed previously identified rare safety signals following COVID-19 vaccination and contributed evidence on several other important outcomes, further investigation is warranted to confirm associations and assess clinical significance," the study by the Global Covid Vaccine Safety Project said.

A NIGHT IN OSTELLO BELL SHARED STORIES, SHARED SPACES



BY PAWAN SONI

After watching Kangana Ranaut's film, *Queen* which includes a scene where she stays in a hostel, I was intrigued and mentally noted to experience it at least once. This opportunity arose when I was traveling alone for work in Milan for a few days. Since my wife is not keen on such experiences, I could only do it while traveling solo. I myself was a bit hesitant and booked the hostel room for only one night post which I booked a luxury hotel room.

Staying in a hostel room with bunk beds shared by eight tourists from different countries and continents was an eye-opening experience. As someone accustomed to the privacy of hotels, the idea of sharing a room with strangers was initially daunting. However, the warmth and friendliness of my fellow travelers quickly put me at ease. Additionally, in India, we would never think of sharing a room with both guys and girls. Here, we were six guys and two girls sharing the dormitory room.

One of the most memorable aspects of my stay was the interactions with my roommates. Despite our diverse backgrounds, we found common ground in our love for travel and adventure. Each person had a unique story to share, from their reasons for travelling to their favourite destinations. I learned about different



cultures, traditions, and ways of life, broadening my perspective and igniting my curiosity about the world.

The hostel's facilities played a significant role in fostering a sense of community among guests. The small locked storage below the beds ensured that our belongings were safe, while the charging points were necessary for



the phone charging, individual reading lights provided convenience without disturbing others. The common bathroom, although shared, was always clean and well-maintained, a testament to the hostel staff's commitment to guest comfort and roommates ensuring to leave the washroom with the same hygiene level

they expected from others. The common kitchen was a hub of activity, with guests preparing meals and sharing recipes from their home countries. It was a delightful experience to taste dishes from around the world, each one infused with the flavours and spices of a different culture. The complimentary



fruits and groceries added a thoughtful touch, making us feel at home in this foreign environment.

Beyond the practical amenities, the hostel's vibrant atmosphere made it a memorable stay. It served as a meeting point for young travellers, where friendships were formed over shared meals and late-night conversations. The hostel also organised social events, such as pub crawls and city tours, allowing guests to explore the city together and create lasting memories.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

EXPERIENCING CULTURE ONE COURSE AT A TIME POP-UP DINNERS

The industry's evolving nature is fostering a culture of shared knowledge, with chefs and restaurants collaborating more than ever. While the permanence of specific formats, like pop-ups, remains uncertain, the spirit of collaboration is undoubtedly a mainstay. It's a dynamic era where working together isn't just a trend; it's a fundamental shift shaping the future of the culinary landscape.

BY RUPALI DEAN

Pop-up restaurants are like culinary jazz performances, where chefs create impromptu meals in unconventional settings, such as dining rooms or even courtyards. These temporary dining experiences allow chefs to experiment freely with their cooking skills within a confined timeframe and for a select audience. For example, Chef Vladimir Mukhin recently hosted famous Chef Joan Roca from El Celler De Can Roca at Krasota restaurant in Dubai. They worked together to create a unique culinary experience, exploring the deep stories behind well-known dishes. By combining different textures, ingredients, and flavours, they presented a special event in Dubai that highlighted the perfect blend of artistry in both appearance and taste. Roca's *Memories of a Neighbourhood Bar* paired with Deyneka's *The Light of The Past* set the scene. This dish, from El Celler de Can Roca's cookbook, honours the family's legacy. The three brothers learned cooking early at Can Roca, perfecting their skills. Inspired by Roerich's *Himalayas*, Mukhin's *Artichoke Curry* and *Coconut Rice* reflect the painting's colours. The *Black Cod with Plum and Fig* drew from Aivazovsky's art, symbolizing a shipwreck survival. Five Senses Bon Bons by Jordi Roca at Casa Cacao concluded the feast magically, blurring reality and fantasy.

THE WORLD IS GETTING SMALLER AND MORE INCLUSIVE

Engaging in pop-up events presents chefs with a valuable chance to acquire new skills and engage in the exchange of culinary knowledge amongst peers in the industry. "Pop-ups are a great platform of exchanging ideas and sharing our cooking philosophies and techniques. It's a true example of how the world is getting smaller and more inclusive. It's a sense of pride when I get an opportunity to cook Indian food for an audience that may not be well educated about Indian Cuisine, or when Chefs of the most renowned restaurants around the world join us at Trésind Studio to share their cooking philosophy with our guests. In the end it's a celebration of culture and creating new friendships. The ideas and brainstorming during pop ups sometimes create dishes that eventually become



CHEF JOAN ROCA WITH CHEF VLADIMIR MUKHIN AND HIS TEAM AT KRASOTA, DUBAI



CHEF JOAN ROCA AND VLADIMIR AT A POP UP COLLABORATION IN KRASOTA, DUBAI



CHEF HIMANSHU SAINI AND CHEF JITIN JOSHI

part of our menu", says Chef Himanshu Saini of Trésind Studio (1 Michelin star), Dubai. Traditionally, pop-ups served as a stepping stone for aspiring restaurateurs to showcase their cooking prowess and test new concepts. However, nowadays, some chefs view pop-ups as standalone ventures, using them to delve into and share their cultural culinary heritage. "I myself have been doing pop up around the globe as a guest chef and this year I would be hosting a guest chef every month in our Private room at the Crossing Dubai. I think it is a great way to show a different and unique style of food philosophy with another chef in the same kitchen. It's not only a great showcase of talent, but also a great learning for the team. I don't think this trend will pass soon and personally would like to see more chefs collaborating and coming together", adds Jitin Joshi Director of Culinary, Lemon Butter, Dubai, U.A.E.

THE LEARNING MUST NEVER STOP

These gatherings often feel like a blend of educational sessions and personal memoirs, weaving intimate tales through cherished recipes and unique ingredients. "As a chef, it's important to never stop learning. We love inviting chefs from various backgrounds into our

spaces for 4-Hands collaboration events. It's an excellent way for us to learn from each other and discover new possibilities. We've been fortunate to have the opportunity to travel overseas and meet fantastic people, learning and experiencing entirely new cultures, cuisines and ingredients. I always try to bring a few of my team with me on these trips, I believe that travel helps to widen one's perspective and encourage accelerated growth. It's fulfilling for me to groom and provide opportunities for my team to learn", says Julien Royer Chef Owner- Odette (3 Michelin stars), Singapore. These modern chefs charge for their dinners, yet none are earning vast fortunes from them. They often promote their events on Instagram and sell tickets digitally. Regardless of the practical details, pop-up dining enables them to innovate and test ideas with a small group of guests, fostering a fleeting sense of community. In a time where personal narratives hold greater significance in art and conversations, pop-ups provide chefs with a platform to express, through cuisine, "This is my heritage. This is my identity."





"Carbon dioxide removal (CDR) methods have a small but vital role to play in achieving net zero (target) and limiting the impacts of climate change," said Naomi Vaughan of the University of East Anglia, UK, and co-author of the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Current carbon removal plans will fall short of meeting Paris goals: study

The current carbon removal plans of countries around the world will fall short in limiting the warming of the planet to 1.5 degrees Celsius, set out under the Paris Agreement, new research has suggested.

The researchers pointed out that climate policy regarding removal of carbon dioxide (CO2), the most important greenhouse gas, from the atmosphere "needs more ambition".

However, if the global energy demand could "significantly" reduce, the current carbon removal plans might be closer to achieving net-zero emissions, they found.

"Carbon dioxide removal (CDR) methods have a small but vital role to play in achieving net zero (target) and limiting the impacts of climate change," said Naomi Vaughan of the University of East Anglia, UK, and co-author of the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

"Our analysis shows that countries need more awareness, ambition and action on scaling up CDR methods together with deep emissions reductions to achieve the aspirations of the Paris Agreement," said Vaughan.

The international team, led by Mercator Research

Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC), Germany, analysed reports of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) taking yearly measurements since 2010 of the emissions gap -- the difference between what countries pledge versus what is needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The researchers found that if national targets were fully implemented, the yearly amount of carbon removed by humans could increase by 0.5 gigatonnes (a gigatonne is a billion tonnes) of CO2 by 2030, and by 1.9 gigatonnes by 2050.

This, however, contrasts with the 5.1 gigatonne increase in the amount of carbon required to be removed in a 'focus scenario', according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report, the researchers said.

The 'focus scenario' is when CO2 emissions are severely cut down to meet net-zero goals by or after 2050, achieving the

temperature targets of arresting global warming to within 1.5 degrees Celsius, as laid out in the Paris Agreement, or at least below 2 degrees Celsius.

Therefore, the emissions gap for the year 2050 is at least 3.2 gigatonnes of CO2, according to the researchers.

They also assessed an alternative 'focus scenario' which assumes a significant reduction in global energy demand. Also derived from the IPCC, the reduced demand is considered to be driven by politically-initiated behavioural changes as the core of climate protection strategy.

The team found that in 2050, this scenario could increase the carbon removed by a more modest amount - 2.5 gigatonnes.

In this scenario, full imple-

mentation of the current carbon removal plans of countries would be almost sufficient, with a gap of 0.4 gigatonnes in 2050, the authors found.

"The most ambitious proposals for carbon dioxide removal (CDR) are close to levels in a low-energy demand scenario with the most-limited CDR scaling and aggressive near-term emissions reductions," the authors wrote.

The team acknowledged that sustainability issues, such as

increased land demand limit the scaling up of carbon removals.

Nevertheless, there is still plenty of room for designing fair and sustainable land management policies, they said.

NEWEST ENTRY TO SPACE TRAVEL

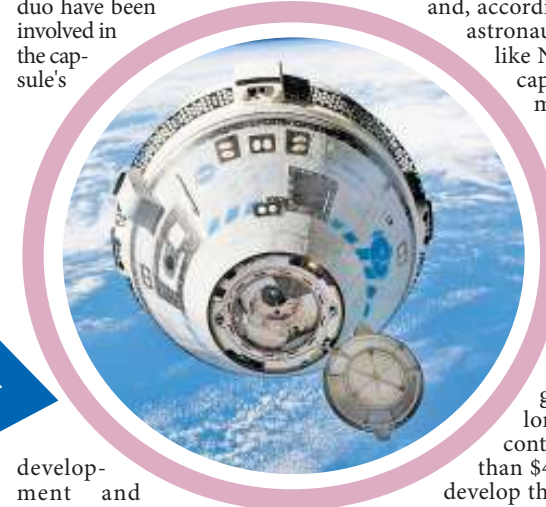
Boeing is on the verge of launching astronauts aboard new capsule

After years of delays and stumbles, Boeing is finally poised to launch astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA. It's the first flight of Boeing's Starliner capsule with a crew on board, a pair of NASA pilots who will check out the spacecraft during the test drive and a weeklong stay at the space station. NASA turned to US companies for astronaut rides after the space shuttles were retired. Elon Musk's SpaceX has made nine taxi trips for

Veteran NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are retired Navy captains who spent months aboard the space station years ago. They joined the test flight after the original crew bowed out as the delays piled up. Wilmore, 61, is a former combat pilot from Mount Juliet, Tennessee, and Williams, 58, is a helicopter pilot from Needham, Massachusetts. The duo have been involved in the capsule's

STARLINER VS DRAGON

Both companies' capsules are designed to be autonomous and reusable. This Starliner is the same one that made the first test flight in 2019. Unlike the SpaceX Dragons, Starliner has traditional hand controls and switches alongside touchscreens and, according to the astronauts, is more like NASA's Orion capsules for moon missions. Wilmore and Williams briefly will take manual control to wring out the systems on their way to the space station. NASA gave Boeing, a longtime space contractor, more than \$4 billion to develop the capsule,



while SpaceX got \$2.6 billion. SpaceX already was in the station delivery business and merely refashioned its cargo capsule for crew. While SpaceX uses the boss' Teslas to get astronauts to the launch pad, Boeing will use a more traditional "astrovan" equipped with a video screen that Wilmore said will be playing "Top Gun: Maverick." One big difference at flight's end: Starliner lands on the ground with cushioning airbags, while Dragon splashes into the sea.

development and insist Starliner is ready for prime time, otherwise they would not strap in for the launch. "We're not putting our heads in the sand," Williams told The Associated Press. "Sure, Boeing has had its problems. But we are the QA (quality assurance). Our eyes are on the spacecraft."

THE TEST FLIGHT

Starliner will blast off on United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. It will be the first time astronauts ride an Atlas since NASA's Project Mercury, starting with John Glenn when he became the first American to orbit the Earth in 1962. Sixty-two years later, this will be the 100th launch of the Atlas V, which is used to hoist satellites as well as spacecraft. "We're super careful with every mission. We're super, duper, duper careful" with human missions, said Tory Bruno, CEO of ULA, a joint venture of Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

Starliner should reach the space station in roughly 26 hours. The seven station residents will have their eyes peeled on the approaching capsule. The arrival of a new vehicle is "a really big deal. You leave nothing to chance," NASA astronaut Michael Barratt told the AP from orbit. Starliner will remain docked for eight days, undergoing checkouts before landing in New Mexico or elsewhere in the American West.

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THE FUTURE

Boeing is committed to six Starliner trips for NASA after this one, which will take the company to the station's planned end in 2030. Boeing's Nappi is reluctant to discuss other potential customers until this inaugural crew flight is over. But the company has said a fifth seat will be available to private clients. SpaceX periodically sells seats to tycoons and even countries eager to get their citizens to the station for a couple weeks.

Coming soon:

Sierra Space's mini shuttle, Dream Chaser, which will deliver cargo to the station later this year or next, before accepting passengers

Drone footage shows Ukrainian village battered to ruins as residents flee Russian advance

The Ukrainian village of Ocheretyne has been battered by fighting, drone footage obtained by The Associated Press shows. The village has been a target for Russian forces in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. Russian troops have been advancing in the area, pounding Kyiv's depleted, ammunition-depleted

forces with artillery, drones and bombs. Ukraine's military has acknowledged the Russians have gained a "foothold" in Ocheretyne, which had a population of about 3,000 before the war, but says that fighting continues.

Residents have scrambled to flee the village, among them a 98-year-old woman who walked almost 10 km (6 miles) alone last week, wearing a pair of slippers and supported by a cane, until she reached Ukrainian front lines. Not a single person is seen in the footage, and no building in Ocheretyne appears to have been left untouched by the fighting.

Most houses, apartment blocks and other buildings look damaged beyond repair, and many houses have been pummeled into piles of wood and bricks. A factory on the outskirts has also been badly damaged.

The footage also shows smoke billowing from several houses, and fires burning in at least two buildings.

Elsewhere, Russia has in recent weeks stepped up attacks on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, in an attempt to pummel the region's energy infrastructure and terrorise its 1.3 million residents.

Four people were wounded and a two-story civilian building was damaged and set ablaze overnight after Russian forces struck Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, with exploding drones, regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday.

The four, including a 13-year-old, were hurt by falling debris, he said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russian state agency RIA reported Saturday that Moscow's forces struck a drone warehouse in Kharkiv that had been used by Ukrainian troops overnight, citing Sergei Lebedev, described as a coordinator of local pro-Moscow guerrillas. His comments could not be independently verified.

Syniehubov said Russia also bombed Kharkiv on Friday, damaging residential buildings and sparking a fire. An 82-year-old woman died and two men

were wounded. Ukraine's military said Russia launched a total of 13 Shahed drones at the Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions of eastern Ukraine overnight, all of which were shot down by Ukrainian air defences.

Ukraine's energy ministry on Saturday said the overnight strikes damaged an electrical substation in the Dnipropetrovsk region, briefly depriving households and businesses of power.

According to Serhii Lysak, the province's governor, falling drone debris damaged unspecified "critical infrastructure" and three private houses, one of which caught on fire. Two residents, a man and a woman, were rushed to hospital.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed early on Saturday that its forces overnight shot down four US-provided long-range ATACMS missiles over the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014. The ministry did not provide further details.

Ukraine has recently begun using the missiles, provided secretly by the United States, to hit Russian-held areas, including a military airfield in Crimea and in another area east of the occupied city of Berdyansk, US officials said last week.

Long sought by Ukrainian leaders, the new missiles give Ukraine nearly double the striking distance -- up to 300 km (190 miles) -- than it had with the mid-range version of the weapons it received from the US last October.

A Ukrainian drone also damaged telecommunications infrastructure on the outskirts of Belgorod, a Russian city some 50 km (31 miles) from the Ukrainian border, according to the local governor.



Houston braces for flooding to worsen in wake of storms



Houston, according to the National Weather Service. In the rural community of Shepherd, Gilroy Fernandes said he and his spouse had about an hour to evacuate after a mandatory order. Their home is on stilts near the Trinity River, and they felt relief when the water began to recede on Thursday. Then the danger grew while they slept.

"Next thing you know, overnight they started releasing more water from the dam at Livingston. And so that caused the level of the river to shoot up by almost 5 or 6 feet overnight," Fernandes said. Neighbours who left an hour later got stuck in traffic because of flooding.

The Harris County Joint Information Center told KPRC-TV that 196 people and 108 animals have been rescued by emergency response agencies in Harris County.

Elsewhere, in neighbouring Montgomery County, Judge Mark Keough said there had been more high-water rescues than he was able to count.

"We estimate we've had a couple hundred rescues from homes, from houses, from vehicles," Keough said. In Polk County, located about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northeast of Houston, officials have done over 100 water rescues in the past few days, said Polk County Emergency Management Coordinator Courtney Comstock.

High waters flooded neighbourhoods around Houston on Saturday following heavy rains that have already resulted in crews rescuing hundreds of people from homes, rooftops and roads engulfed in murky water. A flood watch remained in effect through Sunday afternoon as forecasters predicted additional rainfall Saturday night, bringing another 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) of water to the soaked region and the likelihood of major flooding.

Friday's fierce storms forced numerous high-water rescues, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes. Officials redoubled urgent instructions for residents in low-lying areas to evacuate, warning the worst was still to come. "This threat is ongoing and it's going to get worse. It is not your typical river flood," said

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, the top elected official in the nation's third-largest county.

She described the predicted surge of water as "catastrophic." Schools in the path of the flooding cancelled classes and roads jammed as authorities closed highways taking on water. For weeks, drenching rains in Texas and parts of Louisiana have filled reservoirs and saturated the ground. Floodwaters partially submerged cars and roads this week across parts of southeastern Texas, north of Houston, where high waters reached the roofs of some homes.

More than 21 inches (53.34 centimeters) of rain fell during the five-day period that ended Friday in Liberty County near the city of Splendora, about 30 miles (48 kilometres) northeast of

Yoga officially makes debut in Pakistan

After making global headlines, the ancient Indian physical, mental and spiritual practice of yoga has officially arrived in neighbouring Pakistan.

According to the official Facebook page of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which is responsible for the upkeep of Islamabad, the Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad has launched "Free yoga classes in F-9 Park" in the capital.

"Many people have already joined in to kickstart their journey towards health and wellness," the CDA said.

It also posted pictures of people taking part in the yoga exercises.



appeal, the United Nations on 11 December 2014 proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. A draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175

member states. Yoga is normally linked with India and there are not many formal institutions in Pakistan to teach yoga. Though privately people like the physical part of yoga exercises.

Many residents appreciated the move to organise Yoga classes with several people inquiring about the programme.

A step at the official level to organise yoga at the most prominent park of the capital

is a welcome move and may send a positive message across the border amidst a chill in bilateral ties over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism.

"Good job I really appreciate your work CDA pls send the timing," Shahid Iqbal, a resident, commented.

However, some criticised the CDA for failing to provide decent residential facilities to the people of Islamabad and instead resorting to show-casing sideshows.

Ghulam Mustafa said in his comments that CDA failed to develop new sectors.

"For God's sake concentrate on your core functions and develop the residential sectors you failed to develop during the last 35 years," he said