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QUOTE OF THE DAY



The BRS is very weak in the state and the contest is between the BJP and the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP will win most of the LS seats in Telangana. The Prime Minister visited Telangana 22 times and attended most inauguration ceremonies of development projects, but KCR did not come for Modi's visit. The Congress may come to power by giving false promises

- Dr Tamilisai Sounderrajan, ex TG Governor



P4

Model Code of Conduct turned into 'Modi code of conduct':

Mamata

5

DJ KAYAN'S

'FIERCENESS' EMBODYING THROUGH HER MUSIC

10

'Baahubali: Crown of Blood will conclude on a cliffhanger,' reveals

RAJAMOULI

P12

కూటమిలు కట్టినా.. కుట్రలు చేసినా చివరికి చరిత్ర చెత్తు బట్టలో దుప్పి చిత్తువుయిం

సరికొత్త చరిత్ర విభిన్నూ జగన్

Presented by YSR Congress Party

DON'T MISS...

3.03 lakh voters made use of...

Mukesh Kumar Meena, the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh State, has disclosed that 3.03 lakh voters have utilised the postal ballot facility in the State thus far. Addressing the media on Tuesday, Meena informed that out of the 4.30 lakh voters who applied for permission to use the postal ballot, 3.03 lakh voters, constituting 70% of the applicants, have availed of the service. Among the applicants, 3.20 lakh are government employees, with over 40,000 being police personnel, and 31,000 falling under essential services categories...

-PAGE: 3

Patna most vulnerable to...

Patna experiences the worst floods in India, followed by West Bengal's Murshidabad and Maharashtra's Thane, according to a district-level flood severity index (DFSI) developed by researchers at IIT-Delhi and IIT-Roorkee. The index takes into account the historical severity of floods based on the number of affected people, the spread and duration of floods. The researchers said the top 10 districts where flood severity is the highest are: Patna, Murshidabad, Thane, North 24 Parganas (West Bengal), Guntur...

-PAGE: 5

Significant divide in India's...

A Swiss brokerage on Tuesday said there is a 'significant divide' in India's consumption story and that the K-shaped trend is likely to continue in the near future. "India's consumption story reflects a significant divide, driven by a resilient economy but characterised by a stark contrast in spending patterns," UBS India economist Tanvee Gupta Jain said in a note. "...the divergence between affluent and broad-based household demand persists, accentuated by factors such as income inequality, increased consumer credit access, and declining household savings," she added. The brokerage anticipates household consumption growth in FY25 to "remain subdued" at 4-5 per cent, which is...

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Inconsistent SRH take on LSG in...

Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to move on from their underwhelming batting display when they host Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games with SRH making the top four cut based on a slightly superior net run rate of 0.065 compared to LSG's -0.371. The Sunrisers find themselves in a fierce competition for the top four spot with Kolkata Knight Riders (16), Rajasthan Royals (16) and Chennai Super Kings (12) stationed above them on the points table. The winner of the duel will take a leap in the playoff race. The Pat Cummins-led side has ample talent but has been unable to hold on to a winning run recently...

-SPORTS

CM JAGAN's POSER TO PM MODI

Will NDA grant SCS to AP?

Jagan seeks votes for YSRCP to save Visakha Steel Plant from privatisation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, questioning the National Democratic Alliance's commitment to grant Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh.

Addressing an election rally at Gajuwaka on Tuesday, Jagan remarked on the shift in alliances, noting that while PM Modi once criticised former CM Chandrababu Naidu, he now aligns with him. He urged the public to ponder over such political manoeuvres. Warning against the privatisation of the Vizag Steel Plant (VSP), CM Jagan urged voters to support YSRCP to safeguard State assets. He criticised Chandrababu Naidu's tenure, highlighting alleged failures in implementing significant schemes. Accusing the TDP of obstructing the distribution of welfare benefits, Jagan emphasised the importance of the upcoming election in preserving ongoing welfare initiatives.

Detailing educational reforms, Jagan outlined initiatives such as school renovations, English medium instruction, digital classrooms, and various educational programmes.

Enumerating welfare schemes like 'Aasara', 'Sunnavaddi', 'Cheyutha', and 'Kapu Nestam', CM Jagan underscored the empowerment efforts undertaken by the YSRCP government, including the distribution of house title deeds.

CM Jagan juxtaposed TDP's unfulfilled promises from their 2014

The CM criticised Naidu's tenure, pointing out his failures in implementing welfare schemes and obstructing the distribution of welfare benefits.

Jagan detailed educational reforms, including initiatives such as school renovations, English medium instruction, digital classrooms, and various educational programs.

The CM enumerated various welfare schemes like 'Aasara', 'Sunnavaddi', 'Cheyutha', and 'Kapu Nestam', emphasising the empowerment efforts undertaken by the YSRCP government, including the distribution of house title deeds.

Jagan emphasised the importance of the upcoming election in preserving ongoing welfare initiatives and accused the TDP of obstructing the distribution of welfare benefits.

Jagan mentioned TDP's unfulfilled promises from their 2014 manifesto with the YSRCP's achievements, urging voters to consider the track record of both parties.

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CM Jagan juxtaposed TDP's unfulfilled promises from their 2014

manifesto with the YSRCP's achievements, urging voters to consider the track record of both parties.

Addressing the people in Ichchapuram, Jagan stressed the importance of the electorate's voice in shaping the State's future.

Regarding developmental projects, Jagan highlighted initiatives such as the Mulapeta port, fishing harbours,

and the Bhogapuram Airport, illustrating the government's commitment to infrastructure development.

Additionally, Jagan mentioned welfare measures like establishing a Kidney Research Centre in Uddanam to address health challenges in the region. Earlier the CM also addressed an election rally at Rajanagararam.

EXCISE 'SCAM'

No relief for Kejriwal, Sisodia & Kavitha

Delhi court extends judicial custody



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday extended the judicial custody of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his party colleague Manish Sisodia and BRS leader K Kavitha in cases related to the alleged excise scam. Special judge for CBI and ED matters Kaveri Bajweja extended Kejriwal's custody till May 20 in the money laundering case linked to the

alleged scam being probed by the ED, after he was produced before the court through a video-conference on the expiry of his remand granted earlier.

The judge also extended the judicial custody of Sisodia till May 15 in a related corruption case being probed by the CBI. The judge fixed May 15 for further arguments on framing of charges in the corruption case against Sisodia. The court, meanwhile, extended till

May 14 the judicial custody of Kavitha in the money laundering case, while her JC in the corruption case was extended till May 20. The judge extended the custody of the Telangana MLC after she was produced before the court on expiry of her remand.

During the proceedings, the Enforcement Directorate told the court the investigation was at a crucial stage and it is likely to file a charge sheet against Kavitha within a week. The judge also extended the judicial custody of co-accused Chanpreet Singh till May 20 in the money laundering case. Kejriwal was arrested on March 21 and is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under judicial custody.

The court had on April 30 court dismissed the bail pleas of Sisodia in corruption and money laundering cases, lodged by the CBI and the ED.

It had on May 6 dismissed the bail applications filed by Kavitha in corruption and money laundering cases. The matter pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.



Rain brings relief from heatwave

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rain, accompanied by gales, offered respite from the scorching heatwave conditions in various districts on Tuesday.

Dark clouds blanketed the sky, and gentle breezes began to stir around 4 pm in Vijayawada city. Gales persisted for approximately 30 minutes, resulting in the uprooting of several trees. Power outages were reported in various localities due to the intense winds.

While two fatalities due to lightning strikes were reported, details are still awaited.

Continued on Page 2

Govt moves HC against EC for stalling DBT schemes



Sajjala raps Naidu



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Jagan-led government has taken legal action against the Election Commission of India's (ECI) decision to postpone the disbursement of financial aid to farmers and students under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes. This move comes after the EC directed the deferment of Rs 847.22 crore for agricultural input subsidies and Rs 610.79 crore for post-matric scholarships under the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevena' scheme until the conclusion of the State's election process.

On Tuesday, the Jagan government filed a petition with the AP High Court, contesting the EC's directive. It argued that these schemes are ongoing initiatives, and halting the distribution of funds would adversely affect the beneficiaries. The government said that if the funds were not disbursed by the end of May, they would expire.

In response, the EC's counsel clarified that the Commission had merely requested a postponement of the payments until after the upcoming elections, scheduled to conclude next Monday. Continued on Page 2

State general secretary of YSRCP, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has lashed out at TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu for obstructing developmental initiatives.

Addressing an election rally, Sajjala affirmed that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is the sole torchbearer of YSRCP's ideals. "I am not here to deliver a speech; rather, I am here to carry forward the vision of our leader, CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, to every doorstep," proclaimed Sajjala, emphasising the grassroots outreach of their message.

Describing the upcoming 2024 general elections as a battle between the haves and have-nots, Sajjala reiterated the commitment of YSRCP towards inclusive governance.

Continued on Page 2

ECI's biased decisions draw flak from public

SNCHN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission's decision on some issues is drawing flak from not only political parties but also the public as the ECI is taking different decisions on the same issue in different states.

On some issues, the Election Commission has taken different decisions in Telugu states. The Election Commission gave the green signal to the Telangana government to release funds for farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

But the Election Commission refused to permit the Andhra Pradesh government to release funds for welfare schemes like Rythu Bharosa.

When the Andhra Pradesh Government sought permission to release input subsidy funds to farmers as compensation for crops

damaged by cyclone and drought the Election Commission refused permission.

Similarly, the Election Commission refused permission to release funds for students' fee reimbursement scheme.

The Election Commission directed the Andhra Pradesh government not to release any funds for any welfare schemes till the elections are over.

However, the Election Commission permitted the Telangana government to release funds to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme as input subsidy. The Telangana government has already started releasing funds to farmers.

The people of Andhra Pradesh are criticising the biased decisions of the Election Commission. In both Telugu states, the BJP or its alliance partners are not in power. Continued on Page 2

All set for PM Modi's roadshow in V'wada today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Elaborate arrangements have been made for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the city on Wednesday. Modi is scheduled to lead a roadshow along Mahatma Gandhi Road (MG Road).

The NTR district administration, in collaboration with the Police department, has meticulously made all arrangements for this event.

As part of his electoral outreach, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a road-

show in Vijayawada.

To ensure the smooth conduct of the event, the Police department has taken comprehensive measures, including traffic diversions in Vijayawada on Wednesday evening. The PM Modi roadshow is slated to commence from IGMC Stadium and traverse through to Benz Circle between 6 pm and 8 pm.

To facilitate this, authorities have cordoned off MG Road with barricades.

2

DoT cracks the whip on fraudsters

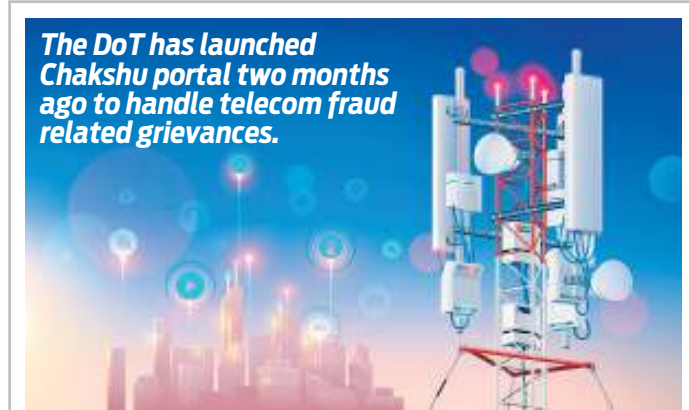
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tightening the noose around fraudsters engaged in defrauding mobile users through text messages, the Department of Telecom (DoT) has started blocking handsets used in such activities besides disconnecting mobile numbers.

The DoT has launched Chakshu portal two months ago to handle telecom fraud related grievances.

Since the launch of the portal, the department has blacklisted 52 entities involved in sending malicious and phishing SMSes, blocked 348 mobile handsets on pan-India basis and flagged 10,834 suspected mobile numbers for re-verification, according to official sources.

In response to a post on social media platform X by a technology professional on an SMS related



fraud, the DoT said that it has blocked the mobile number mentioned in the post as well as blocked handsets linked to it. "Mobile number is disconnected,

and 20 associated mobile handsets have been blocked for misuse in cyber-crime/financial fraud. If you observe any such incidents, please immediately report suspected fraud to Chakshu,"



YSR's recorded voice echoes in Sharmila's campaign

PNS ■ PRODDATUR

In the high-stakes battle for the Kadapa parliamentary constituency, Congress leader Y S Sharmila Reddy is leaving no stone unturned to woo voters by invoking the political legacy and popularity of her late father, the iconic Y S Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR), the former chief minister of united Andhra Pradesh.

Sharmila, who merged her party into the Congress ahead of elections, is taking on her cousin Avinash Reddy, the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) candidate accused in the murder case of their uncle and the party's senior leader, Y S Vivekananda Reddy.

Sharmila campaigns in the bylanes and streets of Proddatur, one of the seven assembly segments under the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat, crowds swell to cheer the state Congress president when they hear the recorded voice of her father, who tragically died in a helicopter crash in September 2009.

"Namaste amma (mother), akka (sister), and paapa (child). Namaste, namaste to all," the former CM's voice greets the crowds, especially in the Muslim-dominated Jinha Road area. After the recorded voice stops, the party's election song "O Sharmila, O Sharmila" plays like a Tollywood hit, sending the gathering into a frenzy.

Standing atop an open vehicle adorned with party posters, Sharmila addresses the gatherings, repeating the lyrics of her election song, suggesting she was introduced to politics like a sword forged in fire. "I am the daughter of Dr Rajasekhara Reddy. Vote for me, make me victorious," she urges as the crowd in Darga Bazaar cheers.

Sharmila accuses her opponent, Avinash Reddy, of being involved in the murder of her uncle and YSR Congress leader Vivekananda Reddy. "The CBI has named Avinash Reddy as an accused, but he is my opposing candidate. You should decide if you will vote for someone accused of murder or for me, the daughter of Rajasekhara Reddy, who always fought for the rights of the people," she tells the crowd.

As her vehicle passes through another street of Proddatur, Sharmila occasionally waves and says "Namaste" to a large number of women voters, some burka-clad, while moving through the narrow streets.

At one stop, after her father's recorded voice greets the crowd, she takes a dig at her brother, Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, the incumbent Chief Minister, accusing him of aligning with the BJP and TDP chief and former CM Chandrababu Naidu. Sharmila again takes the mic and says, "This morning, I gifted a mirror to my brother to see his face in it and asked him if he saw himself or TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, who he has been claiming is funding my election and the campaign. He is obsessed with Naidu."

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Reddy, the incumbent Chief Minister, accusing him of aligning with the BJP and TDP chief and former CM Chandrababu Naidu. Sharmila again takes the mic and says, "This morning, I gifted a mirror to my brother to see his face in it and asked him if he saw himself or TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, who he has been claiming is funding my election and the campaign. He is obsessed with Naidu."

"I would like to tell you all that you should vote for Congress as this is the only party that is looking for change. Both Naidu and my brother Jagan are aligned with the BJP, so whoever you vote for will ultimately benefit the BJP. If you want to vote against the BJP, then you should vote for Congress," she adds.

Again, her father's voice comes on, a well-thought strategy to re-establish a deep connect with the people who have not yet forgotten their poor and farmer-friendly leader. It's a voice that was recorded in the 2004 campaign. The iconic leader

Reddy, the incumbent Chief Minister, accusing him of aligning with the BJP and TDP chief and former CM Chandrababu Naidu. Sharmila again takes the mic and says, "This morning, I gifted a mirror to my brother to see his face in it and asked him if he saw himself or TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, who he has been claiming is funding my election and the campaign. He is obsessed with Naidu."

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Rajasekhara Reddy is no more, but his voice lives on. As dusk falls, Sharmila winds up her campaign appealing to people to bless her and vote for Congress on May 13 polling day.

Sharmila has already covered all seven constituencies falling under the Kadapa parliamentary segment once.

The Congress is contesting 23 out of the 25 parliamentary seats in Andhra Pradesh, while its allies, the CPI and CPM, are contesting one seat each as part of the India bloc.

For the 175 state assembly elections, the Congress has fielded candidates from 157 constituencies, while the CPI, CPM, and CPI (ML) are contesting the remaining seats as part of the India bloc.

Sharmila's campaign in the high-stakes Kadapa battle is a calculated effort to leverage her father's enduring popularity and project herself as the rightful custodian of his political legacy.

Her strategy involves capitalising on Reddy's voice recordings to forge an emotional connection with the people, while simultaneously positioning the BJP, which she accuses her brother and Naidu of aligning with, as the main opponent to rally against.

There are about 17 lakh electors in the Kadapa Lok Sabha segment, dominated by women voters of about 9 lakh. This constituency remained a Congress bastion till YSR Congress emerged victorious in 2014.

Botsa flays Oppn for obstructing welfare schemes

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has launched a blistering attack on various political figures, including former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, he expressed deep disappointment with the discourse set by Naidu. He asserted that the upcoming elections will reveal the true sentiments of the people, emphasising the need to be wary of the opposition alliance's alleged vindictive motives.

Minister Satyanarayana condemned what he described as "vile" and "inhuman" tactics employed by the opposition alliance, particularly in obstructing government schemes and benefits. He cited instances where the distribution of pensions and educational subsidies was allegedly hindered, leading to severe consequences for the beneficiaries. He emphasised the neces-



sity of routine government programs like YSR Aasara and Jagananna Vidya Deevena, criticizing the alliance for politicising these initiatives and causing delays in their implementation. Furthermore, he lamented the stoppage of input subsidies for farmers during critical times such as cyclones and droughts.

Amid escalating tensions, Minister Satyanarayana urged patience from the public, reassuring them of the government's commitment to delivering promised benefits post-election. He implored citizens

to scrutinize the actions of the alliance, emphasizing the need to uphold civility and dignity in political discourse. The minister also criticised the language and behaviour of opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu, condemning what he viewed as disrespectful and inflammatory rhetoric. He questioned the ethical implications of such language in public discourse and called for accountability from those responsible for incendiary remarks.

Addressing broader concerns, Minister Satyanarayana raised questions regarding the

integrity of government projects, particularly citing the Polavaram irrigation project. He called for transparency and accountability in the allocation of funds, challenging the Prime Minister's decision to release funds without due diligence. Minister Botsa criticised PM Modi and the BJP, alleging unprecedented levels of corruption under their governance. He denounced Modi's leadership, accusing him of diminishing the prestige of the Prime Minister's office.

Mocking Modi's recent statements on railway infrastructure, he suggested that the Prime Minister lacked understanding of local issues. In a sharp comment, Minister Botsa forecasted the electoral prospects of the BJP in Andhra Pradesh, humorously suggesting that they might have better luck in the Bay of Bengal than in the state. He advocated for a government aligned with his party's principles to assume power at the centre, asserting that it would serve the country's interests better.

Govt moves HC against EC for...

Continued from Page 1

They asserted that there was no urgency in releasing the funds at this moment.

The High Court noted that there is still considerable time until the end of May and advised the government to exercise patience.

It directed the government to provide clarification to the EC and scheduled further hearings for Thursday, contingent upon the EC's response.

CLASH OF TITANS

TDP State prez Atchannaidu, YSRCP's Duvvada Srinivas lock horns in Tekkali

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In the intricate fabric of Andhra Pradesh's political landscape, Tekkali stands out as a battleground where ambitions clash and futures are shaped. With the electoral drums beating louder, the spotlight falls on this Assembly constituency, where the forthcoming election promises a spectacle of power dynamics and high-stakes manoeuvring. At the heart of this political theatre stand two formidable figures: K. Atchannaidu, the prominent opposition leader and incumbent MLA, and Duvvada Srinivas, the sitting Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) representing the ruling party. Their impending showdown sets the stage for a contest of epic proportions, with each contender vying for supremacy and political survival.

Tekkali Assembly constituency resonates with historical echoes of the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) glory days, once symbolised by its founder, the legendary N.T. Ramarao. However, the ruling Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) now seeks to reshape this narrative, eyeing victory and aiming to unseat Atchannaidu, the incumbent MLA and TDP state president. Despite the TDP's statewide setback in the 2019 elections, Atchannaidu defied the odds, clinching victory with a commanding majority over his YSRCP counterpart, Perada Tilak. This year, however, the YSRCP has countered with the familiar face of Duvvada Srinivas, a seasoned opponent who previously crossed



Both contenders bear scars of past electoral battles, with Atchannaidu tasting defeat in the 2009 Assembly election and subsequent by-elections to Congress candidate Korla Revatipathi. Nevertheless, Srinivas exudes confidence in his prospects, citing the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government's developmental initiatives in Tekkali, including the ambitious Mulapeta seaport project.

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amplifying his party's manifesto.

Amid the electoral fray, community affiliations add another layer of complexity. Srinivas and former Union Minister Killi Kruparani, contesting on a Congress ticket, hail from the dominant Kalinga community, while Atchannaidu represents the influential Velama community. Internal dissension within the TDP, notably from Kalamata Venkataramana, adds a twist to the tale, underscoring the intricacies of local politics. As the countdown to the election begins, Tekkali stands at a crossroads, its political destiny hanging in the balance. With each vote carrying weight, the electorate faces a pivotal decision that could shape the region's future. Amid the whirlwind of campaigns and allegiances, the outcome remains uncertain, highlighting the significance of every ballot cast in this closely contested constituency.

Haryana BJP govt loses majority

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Three Independent MLAs withdrew support to the BJP government in Haryana on Tuesday and announced that they would back the Congress reducing the Nayab Singh Saini government to a minority in the Assembly.

The government which has the support of two other Independents is now two short of a majority in the 90-member House which has a current strength of 88. Recently, some Jannayak Janata Party MLAs promised support to the BJP although the JJP pulled out of the coalition government in March. The BJP has 40 MLAs, the Congress 30 and the JJP 10 in the House. Independent MLAs Sombir Sangwan (Dadri), Randhir Singh Gollen (Pundri) and Dharampal Gonder (Nilokheri) announced their decision at a press conference in Rohtak in the presence of the Leader of the Opposition Bhopinder Singh Hooda and state Congress chief Uday Bhan.

NRIs, intellectuals on bus yatra in support of YSRCP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold display of solidarity and endorsement, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), intellectuals, and IT professionals have come together to kickstart a bus campaign aimed at rallying support for the re-election of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy here in Visakhapatnam.

Speaking to the media, Venkat Medapati, NRI from the USA informed that this initiative will start today and continue till May 10. The campaign will span major cities across Andhra Pradesh, with four buses mobilising public backing for CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's governance and developmental endeavours. Medapati emphasised the government's commendable efforts in delivering wel-



fare schemes directly to the citizens and urged the people to notice factual information from the false narratives propagated by certain media outlets.

Venkat Medapati said Andhra Pradesh has witnessed remarkable strides in governance and development under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's stewardship. Advocates of the campaign stress the significance of sustainable development for the state to emerge as a national frontrunner, asserting Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's singular capability in steering

Andhra Pradesh toward this objective. A key focus of the bus campaign is to spotlight the tangible impact of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's policies and programs on the state's advancement. NRIs, in particular, have voiced their support for Jagan's leadership, citing transformative changes observed in their respective locales.

Supporters like NRI from UK Manohar Nakka and Ram Thavanam have lauded the strides made in the medical and education sectors under Chief Minister Jagan Mohan

Reddy's tenure, highlighting significant developments such as the establishment of numerous medical colleges and the revamp of the education system.

Moreover, NRI members have underscored initiatives such as direct financial assistance to mothers through AmmaVodi, Jagananna affordable Housing Schemes and Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevena, and the efficient response during the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's commitment to progress.

The campaign also stresses the importance of good governance, transparency, and accountability, principles proponents affirm are embodied in Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration.

Rain brings relief...

Continued from Page 1

Heavy rainfall led to water stagnation in the APSRTC complex areas of Rajahmundry, VL Puram, and Shyamala Centre, with two large trees uprooted in the vicinity.

Thunderstorms accompanied by rain were observed in various locations in Guntur and Palnadu districts.

Bhimadole mandal in Eluru district also experienced heavy rainfall, strong winds, and thunderstorms, leading to the uprooting of electrical poles in several villages.

In Amaravati, Achampet, and Krosuru mandals, standing maize and chili crops suffered damage across hundreds of acres due to the untimely rain and gusts.

Normal life in Machilipatnam was disrupted as major thoroughfares were submerged in knee-deep water. Interestingly, despite the adverse conditions, Jana Sena leaders persisted with their election campaign, navigating flooded streets on boats in Machilipatnam.

According to the IMD weather report, "Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on May 7 & 8, over Telangana on May 7."

ECI's biased...

Continued from Page 1

In Telangana, the Congress is in power and in Andhra Pradesh the YSR Congress is in power.

In Telangana, the release of funds under the Rythu Bandhu scheme has become a big controversy between the BRS and the Congress. This controversy led to BRS and Congress MLAs and Ministers challenging each other with resignation offers. In this situation, the Election Commission decided in favour of the Congress government.

There is a general impression that the Election Commission takes decisions under the influence of the Central Government whichever party may be in power at the Centre. In this context, the people are saying that the Election Commission is taking decisions influenced by the Central Government led by the BJP.

The Congress is the main political rival of the BJP at the national level. In Andhra Pradesh, the YSR Congress headed by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy helped the BJP-led Central Government in Parliament many times in the last five years. Even though the YSR Congress is not a member of the NDA it has acted as a reliable friend of the BJP during the last five years. In these circumstances, the decision of the Election Commission has shocked the YSR Congress.

All set for PM....

Continued from Page 1

In anticipation of the event, NTR Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna personally reviewed the city's arrangements.

He convened a meeting with all police officials at the Andhra Loyola College Auditorium on Tuesday to ensure seamless coordination.

Police Commissioner Ramakrishna announced the deployment of approximately 5,000 police personnel to safeguard Modi's roadshow in Vijayawada.

He further stated that the stretch from Gannavaram International Airport to Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium has been designated as a Red Zone, thereby rendering it a no-fly zone.

Sajjala raps Naidu...

Continued from Page 1

"Late CM YS Rajasekhara Reddy laid the groundwork for transformative reforms within his constraints, while CM Jagan Mohan Reddy is steadfast in realising Rajasekhara Reddy's aspirations to ensure the last mile delivery of welfare measures," Sajjala remarked, highlighting the government's focus on empowering the underprivileged.

Sajjala accused Naidu of appropriating the incumbent government's achievements and deceiving the people for political mileage. He assured continuous engagement with the people of the State, expressing optimism for a progressive future. Drawing attention to the intensified electoral contest in the Vijayawada-West constituency, Sajjala contrasted the candidates' backgrounds, portraying a battle between integrity and affluence. "The outcome in this constituency will be etched in memory," he asserted.

Censuring Chandrababu Naidu for exacerbating the plight of senior citizens and pensioners, Sajjala condemned the opposition's callous manoeuvres for electoral advantage. He accused Naidu of placing obstacles to the implementation of crucial welfare schemes, jeopardising the welfare of beneficiaries. Alleging that Chandrababu Naidu derived sadistic pleasure from inflicting suffering upon the populace, Sajjala urged voters to rebuke such tactics in the upcoming elections. "The people must teach a fitting lesson to the opportunistic alliance," he declared.

Moreover, Sajjala denounced the Opposition's propagation of misinformation regarding the Land Titling Act, underscoring CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's commitment to secure land rights for the populace. "Chandrababu's deceitful tactics have eroded public trust," Sajjala concluded.

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3.03 lakh voters made use of postal ballot facility: CEO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mukesh Kumar Meena, the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh State, has disclosed that 3.03 lakh voters have utilised the postal ballot facility in the State thus far.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, Meena informed that out of the 4.30 lakh voters who applied for permission to use the postal ballot, 3.03 lakh voters, constituting 70% of the applicants, have availed of the service. Among the applicants, 3.20 lakh are government employees, with over 40,000 being police personnel, and 31,000 falling under essential services categories. Additionally, 28,000 voters are participating through home voting.

For those unable to utilise the postal ballot, arrangements were made for them to cast their votes at facilitation centres on May 7



The CEO said that four persons were apprehended for distributing money in Tadepalligudem, with an FIR lodged against them. In Anantapur, a constable was suspended for wandering with the voters' list of government employees.

and 8, Meena added.

Meena cautioned against any attempts by government employees to succumb to candidate pressures, expressing disappointment over allegations of cash-for-votes. He noted that home voting commenced on May 3 in some districts and May 4 in others, mentioning his inspection of the postal ballot facilitation centre in Vizianagaram district.

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Considering VVIP visits scheduled for May 7 and 8, directives were issued to officials to extend the postal ballot option to government employees on May 9 as well.

Andhra University EET results out

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University Vice-Chancellor PVGD Prasad Reddy, on Tuesday, released the results of AU Engineering Entrance Test (AUEET-2024), conducted for admissions into four-year Engineering (B.Tech self-support) courses in AU Engineering College. Uppada Sai Eswar secured top rank, while Kondaji Sai Praneeth secured second rank. Giduturi Mohan Sai Sampath bagged third rank.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Prasad Reddy said that as many as 4,349 candidates had applied for the examination of which 3,952 appeared. The examination was conducted across the State on May 5 in eight centres -- Visakhapatnam, Rajamahendravaram, Vijayawada, Guntur, Tirupati and Kadapa.

The results are available on the AU Admissions website, and the schedule for counselling sessions is expected to be released shortly.

I.N.D.I.A bloc gears up for public meeting in V'wada on May 10

Yechury, Kharge and D Raja to take part in election

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada is set to witness a political spectacle on May 10 as the I.N.D.I.A bloc prepares to host a crucial public meeting in support of its alliance party candidates. The Gymkhana Grounds in Vijayawada will serve as the venue for this gathering. Notable leaders from the I.N.D.I.A bloc, including Mallikharjuna Kharge, president of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), Sitaram Yechury, general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and D Raja, general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), are expected to take part in the rally in support of the I.N.D.I.A bloc candidates.

Ahead of the upcoming elections, the I.N.D.I.A bloc alliance has announced its candidates for various constituencies. Valluru Bhargav will represent the Congress party for the Vijayawada Lok Sabha constituency, while P Nanchaiah will contest for the Vijayawada East assembly constituency. Similarly, the Communist Party of India (CPI) has nominated G Koteswara Rao for the Vijayawada West constituency, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is fielding Ch Babu Rao for the Vijayawada Central constituency.

This marks a significant moment as the top leadership of the I.N.D.I.A bloc alliance comes together for an election meeting in Vijayawada for the first time since its formation.



Sitaram Yechury



Mallikharjuna Kharge



D Raja

Anticipation runs high among I.N.D.I.A bloc leaders, who are optimistic about securing seats in the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha from Andhra Pradesh. They note a positive response from the public nationwide towards the oppo-

sition INDIA Bloc, expressing confidence in winning a majority of seats in Andhra Pradesh.

Leadership from the Congress party, including state affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore, as well as representatives from the CPI and CPM, are actively mobilising support for the public meeting in Vijayawada on May 10. In addition to the top leadership, other key figures such as CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna and CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao will be present at the event.

The proposed INDIA Bloc public meeting is generating considerable buzz among political circles and the public in Vijayawada. Party leaders believe that this event will showcase the impact of their candidates in the upcoming elections. Despite the absence of representation from the Congress, CPI, and CPM in either the Assembly or Lok Sabha from the state, the parties' election campaigns are resonating with the public.

In a related development, CPM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury will participate in a hall meeting in support of Congress party candidate Gollu Krishna for the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha Constituency and CPM candidate Kallam Venkateswara Rao for the Gannavaram Assembly Constituency on May 8. The hall meeting is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. at a venue in Davajigudem, Gannavaram, in the Krishna district.

MEET-THE-PRESS

Gadde vows to restore past glory of V'wada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to revitalise Vijayawada, TDP candidate Gadde Rama Mohana Rao of the Vijayawada East Assembly constituency vowed to usher in a new era of development if elected.

Rao, speaking at the 'Meet-the-Press' event organised by the APUWJ Krishna Urban and Vijayawada Press Club, asserted that the TDP-BJP-JSP alliance, under the upcoming NDA gov-

ernment, would restore the city to its former glory. He lamented the stagnation in development during the past five years under YSRCP rule.

Rao, a seasoned politician with roots tracing back to student politics, emphasised his commitment to serving the people. Drawing inspiration from TDP founder Dr NTR, Rao outlined his journey in politics, highlighting his dedication to public service.



Reflecting on his past accomplishments, Rao underscored his role in key infrastructure projects, such as the revival of the Gannavaram Airport and the

development of the BRTS road in place of the railway line at Satyanarayanapuram. He pledged to continue his efforts towards the advancement of Vijayawada, promising initiatives like the distribution of house pattas and APITDCO houses to eligible beneficiaries.

Challenging his opponent's claims of development under the YSRCP regime, Rao contested the figures presented, citing a stark contrast between the actual

progress and the purported achievements. He urged voters to consider the tangible advancements made during the TDP's tenure and expressed confidence in replicating past successes.

The event, chaired by Vijayawada Press Club president K Jaya Raju, witnessed the presence of prominent leaders and community members, underscoring the significance of the upcoming elections in shaping Vijayawada's future.

Strike by Adani Gangavaram Port workers cripples VSP operations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The wage dispute between the Adani Gangavaram Port management and manual workers has created a crisis at the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). The ongoing strike, initiated in April by manual workers, has disrupted the supply of critical raw materials like coking coal and coal, jeopardizing the functionality of the plant's coke oven batteries. The striking workers, predominantly former fishermen, allege that they were promised improved wages when the port displaced them from their traditional livelihood. Their current demands centre on achieving wage parity with their counterparts employed by the Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA).

In an attempt to resolve the impasse, the Andhra Pradesh High Court issued an interim order directing the Visakhapatnam district administration, including the Collector and Police Commissioner, to facilitate dialogue between the port management and striking workers. However, negotiations have reportedly reached



a standstill due to the workers' insistence on the presence of senior officials during discussions, a condition yet to be met by the port management.

The extended strike has inflicted substantial economic losses on the Visakhapatnam steel plant, estimated at approximately Rs 2,000 crore. Displaced workers, seeking resolution for their grievances, have demanded a one-time settlement of Rs. 35 lakh each from the port management. Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the port's reliance on temporary labour, with calls for prioritis-

ing the hiring of regular employees to ensure operational stability.

Amid mounting tensions, the steel plant's Chairman and Managing Director, Atul Bhat, has urgently appealed to district authorities and law enforcement for swift action to avert a catastrophic shutdown. The disruption in coal supplies has triggered a steep decline in VSP's production capacity. Currently, only one blast furnace remains operational, resulting in a daily output of a mere 3,000 tonnes - a stark contrast to the plant's usual production of 17,000 tonnes.

Women's panel chief condemns Naidu, Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission (APWC) Chairperson Gajjala Venkata Lakshmi has attacked TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief Pawan Kalyan for their comments against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Following complaints from Women's Forum leaders K Samrajyam, G Venkata Lakshmi, Y Durga Bhavani, Selvam Durga, Doctors Cell president Ambati Naga Radhakrishna and others, she lodged petitions against Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan

with the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the National Women's Commission.

On Tuesday, the YSRCP-affiliated Women's Forum leaders met Venkata Lakshmi, and explained the words used by Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan at Anakapalli and other public meetings.

Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan intentionally insulted the mother of Jagan, she alleged and added that TDP leaders are threatening the people. She urged the Election Commission to provide a protocol for the Women's Commission.



Women's Forum leaders submit a complaint to Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission (APWC) Chairperson Venkata Lakshmi in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

THREE DAY FEST AT TIRUMALA FROM MAY 17 TO 19

'Padmavati Parinayotsavams' to draw the devout

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The much-awaited three-day annual festivity of Sri Padmavati Parinayotsavam is set to grace Tirumala from May 17 to 19. Amid the serene ambience of the Narayagiri Gardens, the celestial wedding ceremony of Sridevi Bhudevi and Srinivasa will unfold with grandeur, marking a cherished tradition.

During this auspicious affair, Sri Malayappa Swamy will be adorned astride 'Gajavanam' on the inaugural day, followed by a majestic procession atop a



horse-carrier on the subsequent day, and culminating with a divine ride on 'Garuda Vahanam' on the final day. To honour the sanctity of the occa-

sion, TTD has decided to suspend 'Arjita Brahmotsavam' and 'Sahasra Deepalankara Sevās' on these three days.

According to ancient scrip-

tures, approximately five millennia ago, during the dawn of 'Kali Yuga', Sri Maha Vishnu descended upon earth as Sri Venkateswara from Vaikuntha. It was during this epoch that 'Akasharaja', the sovereign of Narayanavana, bestowed his daughter Sri Padmavati in wedlock to Sri Venkateswara.

As chronicled in the Sri Venkatchala Mahatyam, the divine union transpired in Narayanavanam on Vaishaka Shuddha Dashami under the auspices of 'Phalguni Nakshatra'. In reverence to this sacred

union, TTD meticulously orchestrates the Padmavati Parinayotsavam, preceding and succeeding every 'Vaisakh Shuddha Dashami Tithi'. Since its inception in 1992, this festival has remained a beacon of tradition and spirituality.

Narayanagiri Gardens at Tirumala, resonating with the echoes of antiquity, serve as the fitting backdrop for commemorating the nuptials of Sri Padmavati and Srinivasa, underscoring the enduring significance of Narayanavanam.

Awareness programme marks World Asthma Day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of World Asthma Day observance, an awareness programme was conducted at the new OPD block, Vijayawada Divisional Railway Hospital, on Tuesday. Dr M Sowribala, Chief Medical Superintendent at the hospital, was the chief guest. The event aimed to promote awareness about asthma, its prevention, and treatment options.

Dr G Lokesh, Consultant Pulmonologist, Manipal Hospital, spoke to the audience on asthma symptoms,



diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Dr Lokesh stated that asthma affects people

of all ages, and it is essential for patients to work closely with healthcare professionals to control their symptoms, prevent asthma attacks, and maintain good quality of life.

Addressing the gathering, Dr M Sowribala highlighted several factors that can trigger asthmatic symptoms, including allergens (such as pollen, dust mites, pet dander), respiratory infections, air pollution, smoke and cold air. Dr Sowribala appealed to the patients to undergo regular checkups like pulmonary function tests to avoid misdiag-

nosis, and emphasised on strict adherence to treatment protocols.

On the occasion, live demonstration of using Metered Dose Inhalers (MDIs), breathing exercises and spirometer usage for those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease was given.

Dr M Jaideep, Additional Chief Medical Superintendent, Health & Family Welfare, welcomed the audience and briefed them about the importance of World Asthma Day, and the 2024 theme. Around 100 beneficiaries attended the awareness programme.

Krishna University staff refute allegations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The teaching and non-teaching employees of Krishna University have condemned the 'deliberate false propaganda' against the Vice-Chancellor of Krishna University, Prof. G. Gnana Mani. Dr Navina Lavanya Latha, Dr R Kiran Kumar, Dr DDS Reddy, Dr M Sravani and others said that the reports circulating in social media about Krishna University and Vice-Chancellor Prof. Mani are completely untrue

and far from the truth. They alleged that some professors working in the university are spreading false news for their benefit.

The KU staff said that the examinations and evaluation will be conducted in a timely and transparent manner without manipulations and carelessness. They pointed out that the Controller of Examinations also denied the allegations.

They also refuted the allegations regarding PhD admis-

sions, submission of research papers and conferment of degrees as they are done as per the regulations in the research department.

The KU staff stated that the daily wage employees working in various departments of the university will be tested for their skills without any recommendation as per the requirement of appointment. They further stated that the faculty and the non-teaching staff strongly condemn all allegations.

BJP's pick Varaprasad Rao confronts doubts in Tirupati

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a bid to reclaim its former citadel Tirupati-- where the world-famous Venkateswara Swami temple is located-- the BJP is going all out on an improbable dark horse - Varaprasad Rao Velagapalli, a YSRC turncoat and former bureaucrat who captured the constituency in 2014 before defecting.

While the BJP is betting the 71-year-old Rao's administrative experience can catalyse a revival, with development and the Ayodhya Ram Mandir emerging as potential poll planks, many within the saffron party's own

ranks are voicing scepticism. They doubt whether he can attract enough voters to defeat the soft-spoken but formidable current sitting MP Maddila Gurumoorthy, still just 39 years old.

Although optimism reigns after improving to 5 per cent vote share in the 2019 by-polls, murmurs of dissent have surfaced among the BJP's cadre, besides allies fretting over Rao's mass connect and local leaders questioning whether he's potent enough

to fully leverage the Ram Mandir emotive appeal.

Local BJP leaders feel the party should have fielded a better candidate to take on the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) candi-

date. "Like Ram, Venkateswara Swamy -- the presiding deity of the Tirupati temple is the avatar of God Vishnu. There is a positive sentiment among people about the Ram Mandir issue," a local BJP leader said.

In his campaign, Rao is high-

lighting the central government's schemes like PM-KISAN for farmers and development projects like making Tirupati a smart city and building an international airport. BJP is hoping the construction of Ram Mandir will create a positive sentiment among voters.

Despite multiple attempts, Rao could not be contacted.

On the other hand, the incumbent young MP Gurumoorthy is confident of winning again as YSRC's machinery remains



strong. He dismisses Ram Mandir as a non-issue locally and plans to focus on upgrading infrastructure for pilgrims and resolving eco-disputes affecting locals' livelihoods.

Despite Rao's defection, Gurumoorthy insists the party machinery 'remains strong' while dismissing the Ram Mandir as a non-issue locally.

Speaking to PTI, he vowed to recapture all seven assembly segments under Tirupati and prioritise upgrading infrastructure to

boost pilgrim footfalls, which is already at 70,000 a day.

He further promised to resolve a festering eco-dispute involving the livelihood concerns of over 80,000 locals in two assembly segments dependent on the Pulicat lagoon.

From soaring heights to rock bottom, the BJP's rollercoaster journey in Tirupati has been a cosmic saga of triumph and tribulation.

BJP had a massive victory of 49 per cent votes in Tirupati in

1999 but slumped to just 1.5 per cent in 2019. Now the party aims to regain its former glory in this temple town as the ideological battle unfolds on May 13th, the polling day.

For the BJP's foot soldiers, regaining Tirupati's sacred soil is an existential imperative to avoid perpetual irrelevance in the fractured landscape of Andhra politics.

Tirupati, a reserved segment, is one of the six Lok Sabha constituencies the BJP is contesting in Andhra Pradesh as part of an alliance with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena Party (JSP).

For KCR, it is a struggle for political existence

It is indeed a turbulent period for Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR), who ruled India's youngest state for a decade after having successfully spearheaded the movement for a separate state of Telangana for 13 long years! With the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) being the ruling and the principal opposition parties at the Centre then, KCR had tactfully realised his dream of having a separate administrative unit for the region comprising Telangana in the undivided state of AP under the banner of his party originally called Telangana Rashtra Samithi.



The regime change in Telangana following the 2023 Assembly elections is attributed to a strong anti-incumbency factor, though KCR, with his party renamed as Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS), had been confident of playing a larger role in national politics. Therefore, BRS began expanding its footprint in Maharashtra and Karnataka, to begin with. But KCR failed to read the writing on the wall. Moreover, the arrest of KCR's daughter and party MLC K Kavitha by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi liquor scam cast a shadow over the pink party. After all, she had been the face of women empowerment in the state. Some circles believe that the TRS could retain power in 2018 only by raking up 'anti-Andhra sentiment' as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister of undivided AP N Chandrababu Naidu had arrived at an electoral under-

The regime change in Telangana following the 2023 Assembly elections is attributed to a strong anti-incumbency factor, though KCR, with his party renamed as Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS), had been confident of playing a larger role in national politics. Therefore, BRS began expanding its footprint in Maharashtra and Karnataka, to begin with. But KCR failed to read the writing on the wall.

standing with the Congress party. KCR had then raised the bogey of Telangana State coming under Naidu's proxy rule should the Congress come to power. In his second stint, KCR knowingly or unknowingly allowed the intervention of his family members in administrative matters. So, he could not wash his hands off the stigma of

endorsing 'Kalvakuntla family rule'. Subsequently, serious charges were leveled against his government that phones of prominent leaders were being tapped, including that of then TPCC president and present chief minister A Revant Reddy. Above all, Telangana, despite being financially sound at bifurcation, piled up debts running to Rs. 5 lakh crore.



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist

No wonder, people responded positively towards the Congress' appeal to grant it an opportunity to rule the new state, which after all was granted by the grand old party. Today, KCR is facing the Lok Sabha elections with his

back to the wall. On the whole, it is now a question of political survival BRS as well as his party BRS. Today, BRS cannot afford to cling to regional sentiments that had given TRS a boost in the past, though the renamed party has decided not to contest in the Lok Sabha polls outside Telangana. Today, amidst intense political campaigning, with the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party projecting it as mere fight between themselves, KCR and his son and political heir KT Rama Rao are hoping that their party would win at least eight seats out of the 17 Lok Sabha seats in TG. Hyderabad has been unofficially left to the Majlis by both Congress and BRS, despite their presence in the electoral fray. The Congress is focused only on BJP, its rival at the

national level. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has preferred a number of visits to TG to leave his own mark on the state. Likewise, the brother-sister duo from the grand old party, Rahul and Priyanka, are engaged in making it look like a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress. The Congress is expecting to win a dozen Lok Sabha seats in TG, whereas the BJP is hopeful of getting at least one more seat in addition to its previous tally of four seats. Amid desertions by party leaders and cadre, the BRS has an uphill task. Giving regionalism another twist, KTR has posited that Hyderabad could become a Union territory soon, probably before 2nd June 2024, when the city ceases to be a joint capital under the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014. So,

KTR has urged people to give at least 12 Lok Sabha seats for BRS to 'save Hyderabad' and retain it for TG permanently. The saving grace for BRS is that it managed to get impressive results in and around Hyderabad. Although the Congress had emerged victorious in various parts of Telangana, it could not wrest even a single seat in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area that accounts for 24 seats (more than 20% of the total 119 seats). But the charges of graft relating to the Kaleshwaram project and the phone tapping issue will haunt the BRS. In this backdrop, for both KCR and BRS it appears to be a struggle for political existence in TG, where two national parties are battling it out with a pitch for a national outlook.

'Expedite steps for effective handling of polling stations'

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the election officials to expedite the arrangements for setting up of polling stations and their effective management.

The Collector directed the election officials to make arrangements for the management of distribution, reception centres and polling centres in accordance with the guidelines of the Election Commission in the context of general elections. The Collector here on Tuesday reviewed the arrangements with the officials for the setting up of distribution and reception centres to be set up on May 12 for the conduct of the elections on May 13.

While reviewing the arrangements regarding the distribution centres in the various Assembly



constituencies in the district, the Collector made suggestions to the arrangements to set up the help desks, PA system, drinking water, food arrangements, vehicle parking arrangements and barricades.

Actions should be taken at all stages in accordance with the plan without any trouble to the polling staff. They should be vigilant in receiving the relevant legal documents and other documents after reaching the distri-

but ion centre after polling.

Special arrangements should be made to provide bus facility to the returning personnel after providing EVMs and legal documents, he told them. Necessary lighting facilities should be provided to the polling stations, he said adding that the traffic management plan and parking plan should be evolved.

He directed the officials to set up signboards concerning those who were present.

should be set up in accordance with the counters set up in the distribution and reception centre.

Collector Venkatesh ordered the officials to properly examine the strong room security arrangements, and seals that secure the EVMs. The polling staff should check the arrangements in the polling center and conduct the mock polling in the morning on the polling day after which the button should be cleared and polling started.

The election officials were directed to set up a medical camp and keep ready a fire tender at the distribution centres. Voter help desks with BLOs should be set up at the polling stations, he directed them. DRO D Pushpamini, Collectorate AO K Kashivesswara Rao and other officials were among those who were present.

Chiranjeevi urges Pithapuram voters to elect PK

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mega Star K Chiranjeevi, has appealed to the voters of Pithapuram to elect Pawan Kalyan to the Assembly. He said Pawan Kalyan was thrust into the cinema field, but his foray into politics was a conscious choice.

In a video message released on Tuesday, Chiranjeevi commended Pawan Kalyan for his altruistic endeavours, noting his commitment to serving the people. "Pawan Kalyan's actions consistently reflect his concern for the welfare of others. He has generously supported tenant farmers from his earnings and has been a steadfast ally to soldiers and fishermen," Chiranjeevi expressed with admiration.

Expressing dismay over the criticism directed at Pawan Kalyan, Chiranjeevi emphasised the actor-turned-politician's dedication to public service.

DRINKING WATER SCARCITY

Buggana incurs wrath of women

PNS ■ NANDYALA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy incurred women's anger at Sundar Nagar colony in 'Dhone town' on Tuesday when he went there for an election campaign on drinking water scarcity.

A group of women complained to him that the drinking water being supplied by the municipality was stinking. The women told him that acute drinking water scarcity prevailed in the locality but the municipal officials did not take steps to mitigate the drinking water crisis.

The women questioned the Finance Minister about how they could consume the drink which was contaminated and stinking. Moreover, drinking water is supplied once in three days, the women brought to his notice.

The women told the Minister that the authorities concerned did not take steps to provide drinking water to the colonies



through water tankers and questioned him about where they could fetch drinking water. The women had also taken to the notice of the Finance Minister about the damaged roads and told him that the local municipal councillors were not regarding their problems.

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy conducted election campaigns at Mallepally village Lakshimpalle and other villages. Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister asked people not to trust the 'Super Six' welfare schemes, announced by Chandrababu Naidu as he can not implement them.

Buggana demanded that Naidu tell people how he could implement the free bus travel scheme for women if voted to power. "Their manifesto did not have the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AP BJP election in-charge Siddharthanath Singh did not even touch the manifesto documents," Buggana pointed out.

Buggana wooed voters to elect him to the Assembly from Dhone Assembly constituency and Pochamma Reddy to Lok Sabha. Meanwhile, as many as 65 families quit the TDP and joined the YSRCP in the presence of Buggana Rajendranath Reddy.

I will be accessible to all elected to Lok Sabha: Sharmila

PNS ■ KADAPA

APCC president YS Sharmila has assured people of being accessible at any time to all if she is elected to Lok Sabha.

Addressing an election meeting in Kamalapuram, she said that if she was elected to Lok Sabha from the Kadapa constituency, the people of the constituency could meet her at her house.

"If you elect YS Avinash Reddy in the election, you need to go to prison to meet your MP. The election is being held between justice and crime," she told the people.

Stating that Kamalapuram YSRCP MLA Ravindranath Reddy is her maternal uncle, she said the MLA is distributing money and asked the people to take the money but vote for her.

The establishment of a steel plant in Kadapa district is very important as it would generate huge employment, she said. She lashed out that Chandrababu Naidu and YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had ruined the state during the last 10 years.

YS Rajasekhara Reddy had started the construction of 54 irrigation projects under the Jalayagnam scheme of which 42 projects were pending in 2014. Jagan Mohan Reddy has failed not only in completing the irrigation projects but also in launching the mega DSP, she criticized. "When Jagan Reddy



was in the Opposition, he criticized Naidu for not filling 2.35 lakh vacant posts. But after coming to power, Jagan Reddy has not filled 2.25 lakh vacant posts," she pointed out. "The liquor mafia, ganja mafia, sand mafia, gravel mafia and drugs mafia are rampant in the state. The state has no capital city even after 10 years of bifurcation of combined AP state," Sharmila decried.

She recalled that Naidu assured of constructing a Singapur-type capital but he could not do so during the five years and Jagan Reddy brought three capital cities concept.

She strongly objected to giving a ticket to YS Avinash Reddy, who is involved in the YS Vivekananda Reddy murder case, to contest for LS from the Kadapa constituency. The Chief Minister is protecting Avinash Reddy from the murder case using his Chief Minister post, she lambasted.

SVEEP drive organised for 'first time voters'

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Central Bureau of Communication (CBC) Guntur and Krishna districts' Field Publicity Officer R Ramesh Chandra has called upon the voters to fulfil their responsibility by participating in the election process by voting.

He addressed a gathering of students participating in voting for the first time in an awareness program on Voter Literacy and Participation in Elections, a part of the 'Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation' (SVEEP) program at Chalapati Institute of Engineering and Technology



College at Lam, Guntur.

He said that a higher percentage of voter participation would increase the responsibility of the candidates and the governments formed consequently and urged the first-time voters not only to partici-

participate in large numbers but also to take personal responsibility to increase the voter turnout in their respective constituencies.

The voter awareness programme is part of a nationwide campaign, organized by the

Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with the District Election Authority, Guntur. SVEEP Nodal Officer KVV Satyanarayana appealed that every voter should exercise their right to vote to participate in the building of democratic and responsible governments.

Dr M Chandra Sekhar, Principal of Chalapati Colleges, appealed to the students to send a loud and clear message of participation in voting. He declared an additional day of holiday for the students to facilitate a higher percentage of their students' participation in voting on May 13.

Edu Dept to launch Youth Parliament competitions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commissioner of School Education S Suresh Kumar has said that the Andhra Pradesh Education Department will be organising Youth Parliament competitions in high schools to promote democratic values and awareness among students. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Director Dr. B. Pratap Reddy has been appointed as the nodal officer. This initiative aims to cultivate a culture of tolerance towards diverse opinions and enhance awareness about parliamentary proceedings among the youth.

Suresh Kumar stated that the competitions serve as a platform to strengthen the foundation of democracy and empower students with a deeper understanding of parliamentary functions. Detailed guidelines and training materials for conducting the Youth Parliament competitions are available on the Ministry's website <https://mpa.gov.in/activities/youth-parliament>.

Suresh Kumar said that Regional Joint Directors of School Education and District Education Officers have been instructed to take necessary measures to conduct the competitions annually and provide guidance to school principals.

Naidu, PK hold roadshow in temple town

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu, along with Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan, have promised to revive the Amara Raja company to AP if their coalition is voted to power.

Speaking at an election rally here on Tuesday, Naidu criticised the YSRCP, warning that if they were to remain in power, they would seize land from the people. He labelled the Land Tiling Act as burdensome for the common citizens and promised to strengthen the Brahmin Corporation if their coalition secured victory.

Pawan Kalyan echoed Naidu's sentiments, vowing to



protect the sanctity of the hill shrine Tirumala. "YV Subba Reddy and B Karunakar Reddy have treated Tirumala like a commercial venture. Ticket prices were inflated under the guise of Sri Vaikutam," he criticised.

Kalyan also accused the YSRCP government of driving away Amara Raja batteries from the State. "We commit to bringing back Amara Raja if our coalition is elected," he affirmed.

Both leaders urged voters to support their respective candidates—Aarani Srinivasulu from JSP, Vara Prasad from BJP for Tirupati MP, and Pulivarthi Nani for Chandragiri MLA. Meanwhile, a joint TDP and JSP roadshow commenced at Asha Function Hall on Karakambadi Road, winding through Karakambadi Road, Mangalam, Leelamahal Centre, Tilak Road, Gandhi Nagar Road, and concluding at Nalugu Kalla Mandapam. The procession, spanning two and a half hours, saw overwhelming support from the public.

During the rally, a power outage occurred, but the procession continued with the aid of mobile torchlights.

BRS weak, fight now between BJP & Congress: Tamilisai

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP's star campaigner Dr Tamilisai Sounderajan said that the BRS is very weak in the state and that it is a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections.

Dr Tamilisai was speaking at a media conference held at the BJP state office here on Tuesday.

She said that she was confident that the BJP would win a majority of the LS seats in Telangana and added that she had good relations with the people of Telangana. She said that the Prime Minister had visited Telangana 22

times and attended most of the inauguration ceremonies of development projects, but KCR did not come to receive the PM when he was the CM. She said that KCR never showed any courtesy to the Governor's office and added that people know about the

BRS. She criticised Congress for grabbing power using false promises. Dr Tamilisai said that Rahul Gandhi was trying to gain political mileage by spreading lies on reservations and by inciting casteism.

She said the Prime Minister, Home Minister and RSS leaders have already given their explanations regarding reservations.

Dr Tamilisai demanded a clarification on how the loan waiver will be done and how much money will be allotted for that. She also asked who the Congress's Prime Ministerial candidate was.

She said the Centre has no idea of making Hyderabad a Union Territory and KTR is telling lies regarding this.

Dr Tamilisai said that she is winning in South Chennai and has strengthened the BJP at the booth-level in Tamil Nadu.

ANU signs MoU with Lumbini Buddhist University

VIJAYAWADA: The Department of Buddhist Studies at Acharya Nagarjuna University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal. This collaboration aims to foster academic exchange and research opportunities for students and scholars in the field of Buddhist Studies. During an international conference held in Nepal on May 4 and 5, Acharya L Uday Kumar, the head of Acharya Nagarjuna University's Buddhist Department, presented his research paper highlighting the potential for expanded research opportunities for students and researchers within the department. The formal signing of the MoU took place on Tuesday, with Uday Kumar presenting the documents to Vice-Chancellor Professor P. Rajasekhara. Prof Rajasekhara expressed happiness and hoped that there will be a lot of research on different subjects such as literature, culture, and ideas between the two countries.

Collector inspects 'home voting' in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao inspected the home voting process at Patamata in Vijayawada on Tuesday. He observed the vote-from-home process in which senior citizens above 85 years and disabled people cast their votes. He gave directions to the voters.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao said that 1,052 voters are using the facility in the district. As per the details available with the district administration, there are 9,500 people who are above 85 years or differently-abled. Of them, only 1,052 voters have applied for home voting, he added.

Special teams visited their houses and conducted the voting process in a transparent manner. Thirty-two teams have been appointed for

the purpose in the district. So far, 90 per cent of voters have exercised their franchise and the remaining 10 per cent will cast their votes on May 9, he added.

Strong rooms, counting centres inspected

In view of the polling for the general elections on May 13, Collector Dilli Rao, Joint Collector Dr P Sampath Kumar, and Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar inspected the strong rooms and counting centres arranged on the premises of the Nova and Nimra Engineering Colleges at Jupudi on Tuesday. As per the guidelines from the Election Commission of India, they are taking all security measures at the strong rooms and counting halls, he said.



NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao inspecting the home voting process at Patamata in Vijayawada on Tuesday

INDIA CORNER

Entrepreneur booked for molesting woman in building lift

Police have registered an FIR against a Mumbai-based entrepreneur partner of a firm for allegedly molesting a 43-year-old woman in a building lift, an official said on Tuesday. The FIR was registered against the 38-year-old man on a complaint lodged by the woman, who works as a wedding planner, claiming he had groped her in the lift on April 29 this year. No arrest has been made so far, the official said. The accused and the victim know each other as they are the residents of the first and second floors of the highrise, situated in Khar, according to the FIR. "He allegedly followed the woman in the lift. He spoke to her in obscene language and groped her, which left her shaken and scared. She started crying. After coming out of the lift, she narrated her ordeal to her family members," police said. A case was registered under sections 354 (outraging the modesty of a woman), 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and 506 (Punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code and investigation is underway, the official said.



'Olive oil linked with lower risk of death from dementia'

About a teaspoon of olive oil a day is linked with lowering the risk of death due to dementia by roughly 30 per cent, particularly in women, according to a new research. Replacing five grams a day intake of mayonnaise and margarine (vanaspathi) with olive oil in equal amounts was found to be associated with a 14 per cent and eight per cent lower risk of death due to dementia, respectively. An international team of researchers, including those at Harvard University, US, observed over 92,000 adults in the US for 28 years to study the effects of olive oil intake on the risk of dementia-related death. Dementia refers to an impaired ability to remember, think and make decisions, and thus, impacts daily activities and quality of life. "Consuming at least 7 grams per day of olive oil was associated with a 28 per cent lower risk of dementia-related death compared with never or rarely consuming olive oil," the authors wrote. They also found that the results held good regardless of diet quality.



Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra not political, Centre to Delhi HC

The Centre on Tuesday told the Delhi High Court its 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra', which aimed to "reach the unreached", was devoid of any political reference or insignia and the PIL alleging "political propaganda" wants to "turn it on its head". The central government, while responding to the PIL by E A S Sarma and Jagdeep S Chhokar against the alleged use of public servants and defence personnel in the yatra as well as installation of selfie points with the prime minister's placard, said the yatra, which is now over, was an "agglomeration" of various government schemes for the benefit of the masses and merely sought to spread awareness in the public. It stated that there was also an endeavour to spread awareness through the selfie points and several crore people participated in these programmes. "Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is to draw the last man standing, to make him feel proud of the achievement," said Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma.



SCHOOL JOBS SCAM IN WEST BENGAL

SC stays HC order annulling appointment of teachers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Calcutta High Court order invalidating the appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff made by the state's School Service Commission (SSC) in state-run and state-aided schools.



A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, however, permitted the CBI to continue with its investigation and probe even members of the state cabinet. The top court, however, asked the CBI not to take any precipitate action like arresting a suspect during the investigation. Earlier in the day, it termed the alleged scam as a "systemic

fraud" and said the state authorities were duty-bound to maintain digitised records pertaining to the appointment of teachers and non-teaching staff. The top court was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the Calcutta High Court's April 22 decision that invalidated the

appointment of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff. "Public job is so scarce... Nothing remains if the faith of the public goes. This is systemic fraud. Public jobs are extremely scarce today and are looked at for social mobility. What remains in the system if their appointments are also

maligned? People will lose faith, how do you countenance this?" the CJI asked the lawyers representing the state government. The bench said the state government has nothing to show that relevant data was maintained by the authorities and asked about its availability. "Either you have the data or you do not have it... You were duty-bound to maintain the documents in digitised form. Now, it is obvious that there is no data. You are unaware of the fact that your service provider has engaged another agency. You had to maintain supervisory control," the bench told the state government's lawyers. The state government had challenged the Calcutta High Court order, saying it cancelled the appointments "arbitrarily".

Ex-Cong leader Radhika Khera, actor Shekhar Suman join BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress leader Radhika Khera and actor Shekhar Suman joined the BJP on Tuesday. Khera, the former national coordinator of the Congress's media department, resigned from the party's primary membership on Sunday, days after her altercation with another leader at the party's Chhattisgarh office. In her resignation letter to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Khera also claimed she was facing opposition in the party for her visit to the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Suman, a popular TV actor who also worked in many Bollywood films, has returned to politics after a gap of about 15 years. He had fought the 2009 Lok Sabha elections from Patna Sahib seat in Bihar on a Congress ticket but came third in the contest which was won by Shatrughan Sinha, who was then with the BJP.

Misleading ads: Public figures must act with responsibility: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It is imperative for celebrities and public figures to act responsibly while endorsing a consumer product, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday as it clamped down on misleading advertisements. The apex court directed that before an advertisement is permitted to be issued, a self-declaration be obtained from advertisers on the line of the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994. Rule 7 of the 1994 law stipulates an advertisement code that says advertisements carried should be designed to be conformity with the laws of the country. A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah also directed the Union ministries concerned to apprise it of misleading advertisements and the action taken or proposed to be taken against them by the Central Consumer



The apex court directed that before an advertisement is permitted to be issued, a self-declaration be obtained from advertisers on the line of the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994.

Protection Authority (CCPA). "Endorsements by celebrities, influencers and public figures go a long way in promoting products and it is imperative for them to act with responsibility while endorsing any product in the course of advertisement and taking responsibility for the same," the bench observed. The apex court was hearing the case related to misleading advertisements by Patanjali

Ayurved Ltd. It is hearing a plea filed in 2022 by the Indian Medical Association alleging a smear campaign by Patanjali and yoga guru Ramdev against the Covid vaccination drive and modern systems of medicine. The bench has been critical of misleading advertisements about Patanjali products that have now been prohibited being still available on various internet channels.

India withdraws 51 military personnel from Maldives

PNS ■ MALE

India has withdrawn 51 of its soldiers from the Maldives so far, the government here has said ahead of the May 10 deadline set by President Mohamed Muizzu for the complete withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The Maldivian government earlier announced that two batches of Indian soldiers had left the country. However, the exact figure was not disclosed previously. The Chief Spokesperson of the President's Office Heena Waleed, in response to questions regarding the issue, said on Monday, that a total of 51 Indian soldiers have been repatriated so far.



"All Indian military personnel in the country will be withdrawn from the Maldives by May 10. As of now, 51 soldiers stationed at two platforms have been repatriated," Heena was quoted as saying by the Edition.mv news portal. She however refused to disclose the exact figure of the Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives, stating the details

would be shared at a later date, Sun.mv news portal reported. According to previous announcements by the Maldives government, 88 Indian soldiers were stationed in the country to operate two helicopters, a Dornier aircraft and at the Senahiya military hospital. The two helicopters and the Dornier aircraft were gifted by India. President Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, had set May 10 as the deadline for the withdrawal of the Indian military personnel from his country. Repatriation of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives was a key pledge of Muizzu during his presidential campaign.

State govt orders all districts to be vigilant

WEST NILE FEVER IN KERALA

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Tuesday said West Nile fever cases have been reported from Thrissur, Malappuram and Kozhikode districts of the state. State Health Minister Veena George, in a statement, confirmed that cases of the viral infection have been reported in the state and that all the districts have been asked to be vigilant. While the health officials confirmed five cases of the infection in Kozhikode, no details regarding the number of cases in Thrissur and Malappuram districts were provided by the authorities. As part of the preventive measures against the viral fever,



spread by the Culex species of mosquitoes, the Minister has ordered that steps be taken for mosquito control by destroying their breeding grounds, the

statement said. The minister said there was no need to be concerned, but requested anyone showing signs of fever or other symptoms of the

West Nile infection to seek treatment immediately. The main symptoms of West Nile infection are headache, fever, muscle aches, dizziness and loss of memory, but most patients do not experience these, she said. Some people experience symptoms like fever, headache, vomiting and itching and in one per cent of the cases, it can lead to brain damage resulting in unconsciousness and sometimes death, the minister's statement said. But the death rate is relatively low compared to Japanese encephalitis which shows similar symptoms and is more dangerous. It said that instructions to

begin pre-monsoon cleaning activities were already given in a high-level meeting held last week and now the District Medical Officers (DMOs) have been directed to further intensify the same. As there is no medicine or vaccine available against West Nile virus, symptomatic treatment and prevention are key, the minister said. As part of the preventive measures, she suggested wearing clothing that completely covers the body, use of mosquito nets and repellants and keeping one's home and surroundings clean. Earlier in the day, Kozhikode district health officials confirmed reports of five cases of West Nile fever there.

Vote for Congress for bright, more equal future: Sonia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday appealed to the people to reject the proponents of lies and hatred and vote for her party for a "brighter and more equal future" for all. Her appeal came on the day of the third phase of polling for the Lok Sabha polls. She said the Congress and the INDIA bloc members were committed to defending the Constitution and democracy. "Reject the proponents of lies and hatred and vote for the Congress for a brighter and more equal future for all. Press



the hand button and together let us build a stronger, more united India with peace and harmony for all," Gandhi said in a video message. She alleged that youth unemployment, crimes against women and discrimination against Dalits, Adivasis, and minorities have reached unprecedented levels.

Model Code of Conduct turned into 'Modi code of conduct': Mamata

PNS ■ PURULIA (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that the Election Commission has turned a blind eye to the allegations against BJP leaders that they indulge in hate speeches during campaigns, converting the Model Code of Conduct to "Modi code of conduct". Addressing an election rally at Purulia, the TMC supremo also claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders consider only them-



selves as Hindus, and they do not think about other communities. Modi and other BJP leaders by their "hate-filled speeches" are intimidating lower caste Hindus, minorities and other margin-

alised sections, but the Election Commission is silent, she alleged. "The Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct has turned out to be a mockery and should be rechristened as Modi code of conduct. But we will continue to flag every incident of violation of rights of citizens of this country," Banerjee said. Continuing her tirade at Modi, Banerjee said she has not seen another PM who utters so many lies. She asked, "What happened to his 2014 promise of giving Rs 15 lakh in the bank account of

every citizen? What happened to his promise to give free LPG gases? What happened to his 'Beti Bachao Beti Padoo' project?" "In every village, BJP leaders are making a false promise of giving Rs 3000 to every poor woman under the 'Annapurna Bhandar' scheme. Remember, the BJP has withheld 100 days wage to the poor in Bengal for three years. The BJP is also not releasing a single paisa for rice, we have shouldered the entire amount so that our poor don't feel the crunch," she added.

BJP will provide pension to journalists if voted to power in Odisha: Pradhan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday said the BJP will provide pension to journalists if the party is voted to power in Odisha. "We believe in the motto of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vishwas'. In accordance with it, we will make a provision of pension for journalists," Pradhan told reporters at Sambalpur. The journalists' accreditation policy will be modified to expand its purview

so that individual scribes, working at the subdivision level, are also included, he said. Certain restrictions on the entry of media persons in various government offices will be lifted, too, Pradhan, the Minister of Education, said. "A proper guideline will also be issued so that journalists can report on the performance of the government," he said. Simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections will be held in Odisha in four phases, starting May 13.

Patna most vulnerable to floods in India, finds new research

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Patna experiences the worst floods in India, followed by West Bengal's Murshidabad and Maharashtra's Thane, according to a district-level flood severity index (DFSI) developed by researchers at IIT-Delhi and IIT-Roorkee. The index takes into account the historical severity of floods based on the number of affected people, the spread and duration of floods. The researchers said the top 10 districts where flood severity is the highest are: Patna, Murshidabad, Thane, North 24 Parganas (West Bengal), Guntur

(Andhra Pradesh), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Ballia (Uttar Pradesh), East Champaran (Bihar), and East Medinipur (West Bengal). These are followed by Muzaffarnagar (Bihar), Lakhimpur (Assam), Kota (Rajasthan), Aurangabad (Maharashtra), Malda (West Bengal), Rajkot (Gujarat), Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), Aurangabad (Bihar), Bahraich (Uttar Pradesh), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Jalpaiguri (West Bengal), Darjeeling (West Bengal), Dibrugarh (Assam), Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh), Chamoli (Uttarakhand), West



Champaran (Bihar), Amravati (Maharashtra), Medinipur West (West Bengal), and Samastipur (Bihar). Though Chamoli in Uttarakhand does not face recurrent floods, it appears on this list because of a few isolated

highly damaging flood events. Among the 30 districts facing the highest risk of floods, 17 are in the Ganga basin and three are in the Brahmaputra basin. Among all the Indian river basins, the Ganga basin has the highest population, and its high flood proneness is worrisome, said the researchers, including Manabendra Saharia, an assistant professor at IIT-Delhi. Assam experiences the highest number of floods in India, having faced more than 800 flood events over 56 years. The other flood-prone states, in descending order of flood events, include Kerala,

Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Data from 1967 to 2023 shows that Thiruvananthapuram has experienced more than 231 floods or more than four events per year on average. Five districts -- Thiruvananthapuram, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Kamrup, and Nagaon -- have been categorised as "severely flood-prone," having recorded more than 178 floods, or more than three events per year on average. The researchers said localised intense rainfall events are likely to rise in the future due to climate change, and therefore, more flash floods are expected.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress accused the BJP-led Centre on Tuesday of "neglecting" the Adivasi communities of Madhya Pradesh and alleged that the saffron party's allocation for Adivasis in the central budget has consistently fallen short of the 8.2-per cent target set by the NITI Aayog. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh posed questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the latter's rallies in Madhya Pradesh. "Why has the BJP failed to improve rural connectivity in MP's tribal districts? Why are Adivasis unwelcome in 'Modi ka Parivar'? Why does the



Modi sarkar continue to neglect migrant workers?" Ramesh asked on X. Elaborating on what he said were "jumla (rhetoric) details", the Congress leader said even after being in power for 10 years, the Modi government has "failed" to complete the Dahod-Indore and Chhota Udaipur-Dhar railway lines.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The die is cast

The pivotal third phase of the elections concluded with a low turnout, featuring prominent contenders

Yesterday, Prime Minister Modi exercised his voting right. He was vocal about India's exemplary democratic process on the global stage. Indeed, the complexity of Indian elections, given the vastness of the nation and its electorate, makes their execution a challenging feat. As the 2024 Lok Sabha election reaches midway, India's political arena brims with fervour, anticipation, and meticulous scrutiny. The third phase of voting holds particular significance, especially for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with voting taking place in Gujarat, the home turf of Prime Minister Modi, and Amit Shah, the Home Minister. The presence of both leaders casting their votes amplifies the importance of this phase, shaping the election's narrative thus far. The third phase encompassed 11 States and Union territories, witnessing 93 constituencies participating in the electoral process. Notably, the BJP secured victory in the Surat constituency in Gujarat uncontested. With voting in 283 Lok Sabha seats (52 per cent of total Lok Sabha seats)



complete, the election is less than a month away from its logical conclusion. After four more phases, the results would be out on June 4. What set the third phase apart was the presence of several constituencies where notable figures were contesting. This phase hosted several prominent candidates, including Amit Shah (BJP) from Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat; Digvijaya Singh (Congress) from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh; Shivraj Singh Chouhan (BJP) from Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh; Dimple Yadav (Samajwadi Party) from Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh; Supriya Sule (NCP - Sharad Pawar) from Baramati, Maharashtra; Jyotiraditya Scindia (BJP) from Guna, Madhya Pradesh; Pralhad Joshi (BJP) from Dharwad, Karnataka; and KS Eshwarappa (BJP) from Shimoga, Karnataka, among others.

The Election Commission reported a turnout of 66.14 per cent and 66.71 per cent for the first and second phases, respectively. The third phase was no different in terms of voter turnout. With the completion of the third phase, the fate of 283 Lok Sabha seats has been sealed, marking the election's midpoint with 52% of seats voted upon. The persistently low turnout across all phases raises concerns for both democracy and political parties, each grappling with the challenge of ensuring voter participation. For the BJP, the third phase holds immense significance. As a party entrenched in power since 2014, it faces the daunting task of not only maintaining its stronghold but also expanding its influence across diverse regions of the nation. As the Lok Sabha election unfolds, discernible trends and dynamics offer insights into the nation's pulse. Despite facing formidable challenges, the BJP leverages its organisational strength, robust campaign machinery, and Modi's charismatic leadership to maintain its competitive edge. However, navigating through economic concerns, social tensions, and regional disparities presents formidable obstacles. The outcome of this phase serves as a litmus test for the BJP's policies and leadership shaping the trajectory of Indian politics.

PICTALK



Women show their ink-marked finger after casting votes for the 3rd phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Bareilly. PTI

Evolution of monetary policymaking in India

With the changing nature of inflation and macroeconomic turbulence, remaining committed to inflation-targeting seems daunting

The history of monetary policymaking in India dates back to the pre-independence era, but it gained significant momentum and structure post-independence. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established in 1935, as a private shareholders' bank and was nationalized in 1949, giving the Government greater control over monetary policy and credit system. With the establishment of the Planning Commission in 1951, emphasis was laid on the direct and active role of Central banking. A breakthrough year was 1969 when 14 private sector banks were nationalized. It led to transforming monetary policy into 'credit planning' and taking up a 'command approach' (Khatkate, 1990). Soon the economy suffered due to the two oil price shocks (1973-75 and 1979-81) leading to critical economic crises, which led to large-scale monetary expansion in the form of Government debt to support fiscal policy. It badly hit the inflation situation when it reached 23% in 1974-75. The condition worsened and

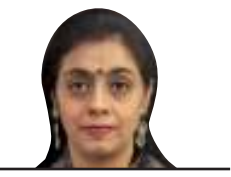


became dismal when India had to borrow largely from the IMF and also faced a critical BOP situation. Hence, the revision of the monetary policy framework was the way ahead. This was done by appointment of a committee (which came to be known as the Chakravarty Committee (1985) chaired by Sukhmoey Chakravarty) to review the functioning of the monetary system by the then Governor of RBI, Dr Manmohan Singh. The RBI Governor, C Rangarajan, introduced the Multiple Indicator Approach (MIA) in 1998, incorporating various macroeconomic factors like interest rates, inflation, exchange rates, output growth, employment, foreign trade, capital flows,

banking stability, among others, into the monetary policy framework, moving away from the unreliable M3 target due to economic liberalisation's unpredictability. This provided monetary authorities the flexibility to cater to a broad forum of economic disruptions. The economy was coordinating well with the MIA till the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 dawned, and a high-order expansionary fiscal and monetary policy was floated to capture the receding economic growth. This jeopardised inflation management by the RBI with the inflation gliding into double digits in 2009-10. The RBI became hawkish and between March 2010 and October 2011, the repo rate was increased by 325 basis points. It started preparing for inflation as the primary goal of monetary policy. Finally, in May 2016, the RBI formally adopted inflation-targeting (IT), the target being a 4 per cent inflation rate, with a relaxation of 2 per cent on both sides, to handle unforeseen macroeconomic disruptions. Taming inflation helps

counter investor uncertainty and business sentiments, anchors inflationary expectations, unfavourable exchange rates and balance of payments, besides supporting receding purchasing power. The IT did not get a fair chance to prove itself due to economic disturbances like Demonetisation and the Pandemic, and the current geo-political unrest has led to supply-side inflationary pressures that are difficult to control with IT, which is more efficient against demand-side inflation. With the changing nature of inflation from demand to the supply side, macroeconomic turbulence, and burgeoning uncertainties, remaining committed to IT seems daunting. The RBI needs to frame a comprehensive policy to make determined efforts to address and supplement IT with prudent actions to counter supply-side disruptions especially, affecting food prices.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR

Global South's cultural diplomacy

Cannes transcends its role as a mere film festival; it serves as a beacon of cultural exchange, artistic exploration, and industry innovation



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

As we inch closer to the second week of May, excitement for the forthcoming 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival is reaching a crescendo. The Cannes Film Festival, since its inception, has been hailed as the platform celebrating the joy and creativity of cinema, the high point of confluence of cultures, and talents, and an assembly of masters of storytelling. In recent years, its stage has increasingly spotlighted the cinematic voices of the Global South, a trend underscored by the burgeoning presence of films from Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Building on last year's diverse selection from Japan, China, and South Korea, Cannes in its 77th edition, from 14th to 25th May 2024, reaffirms its commitment to amplifying varied narratives and perspectives. This year's edition promises to continue this trajectory, featuring standout entries like "All We Imagine As Light" by Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia, "Boku No Ohisama (My Sunshine)" by the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Hiroshi Okuyama, "Viet Nam" by Vietnamese filmmaker Truong Minh Quy, and "The Village Next to Paradise" by Somali filmmaker Mo Harawe. These selections highlight the new creative talent spots for cinema.

With the evolving world, there is a deeper significance highlighted by the recognition of cinema as a potent tool of soft power by countries in the Global South. Across the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, nations have increasingly acknowledged the power of storytelling through cinema as a means to amplify their cultural influence and enhance their global standing. Over the past two years Cannes Film Festival has seen a dynamic shift in programming, from a European narrative to a more perceptive Southern inclusion and interconnection. In the borderless world that we live in today, the prominence of the Global South as a group has risen despite being dominated by multipolarity. Enhanced communication and the growing effects of globalisation have blurred geographical



boundaries, ushering in a new era where technology plays a pivotal role in shaping interactions. This transition has reverberated across various realms, including the cinematic sphere, where soft power finds expression on prestigious platforms. Cannes truly give the Global South a platform for creativity on the silver screen. Nomination and participation in prestigious festivals like Cannes are not merely accolades but recognition of the importance of soft power in the creative ecosystem. By showcasing their cinematic prowess and an amalgamation of their creative skills on a global stage, countries in the Global South seek to assert their cultural identity, foster cross-cultural dialogue, and bolster diplomatic ties. In an era where cultural diplomacy holds increasing sway, the Cannes Film Festival serves as a creative platform for nations to assert their soft power through the medium of cinema. Through their cinematic endeavours, these filmmakers become cultural ambassadors, bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding between nations. At the helm of the 77th Cannes Film Festival jury stands Greta Gerwig, both an accomplished actor and a filmmaker. Gerwig's appointment signals a broader effort towards gen-



BY SHOWCASING THEIR CINEMATIC PROWESS AND AN AMALGAMATION OF THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS ON A GLOBAL STAGE, COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH SEEK TO ASSERT THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY, FOSTER CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE, AND BOLSTER DIPLOMATIC TIES

der representation at Cannes, a realm historically dominated by male voices. Symbolising a step towards inclusivity and recognition of the invaluable contributions of women in shaping cinematic discourse. As the jury list for this year awaits announcement, anticipation brews for a lineup that mirrors the festival's commitment to diversity, echoing last year's eclectic mix of talents from Argentina, Afghanistan, Morocco, Zambia, and beyond. Amidst the glitz and glamour, the Marché du Film emerges as a vital nexus for industry professionals, offering a platform for networking, deal-making, and creative exchange. With its finger firmly on the pulse of evolving industry dynamics, the Marché du Film embraces innovation and adaptation. Recognising the need to cater to the ever-changing landscape of filmmaking, it champions emerging trends, technologies, and voices, fostering a conducive environment for the flourishing growth of the global film industry. As over 14,000 industry professionals converge in Cannes annually to present and explore nearly 4,000 films and projects, the Marché du Film serves as a catalyst, urging professionals to elevate their business acumen and seize new opportunities.

Indeed, Cannes itself is a reflection of society's evolution, a microcosm of shifting cultural paradigms and technological advancements. Embracing the ethos of change, the Festival de Cannes introduces innovative elements to its programming, staying at the vanguard of storytelling in the digital age. One of the nominations for this year's Immersive Competition includes 'Maya: The Birth of a Superhero', an XR experience created by Poulomi Basu, an Indian artist and CJ Clarke. The announcement of eight projects as part of the Immersive Competition heralds a bold foray into uncharted territory, encompassing location-based virtual reality, mixed reality experiences, projection mapping, and holographic works. Amid these shifts, India shines bright with the participation of Payal Kapadia, Sandhya Suri's "Santosh", FTII's "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know" and the screening of Shyam Benegal's "Manthan". As the global cinematic landscape continues to evolve, Cannes remains steadfast in its mission to celebrate the myriad voices that enrich the tapestry of world cinema. (The writer is former additional director general, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JP AGGARWAL'S COMMITMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "I have not lost touch with Chandni Chowk people: Aggarwal," published on May 6, this is my response. In a political landscape rife with rhetoric and rivalry, Jai Prakash Aggarwal emerges as a steadfast figure, deeply rooted in Chandni Chowk's tapestry. Despite electoral setbacks, his commitment to constituents remains resolute. Aggarwal's recent critique of Prime Minister Modi's language underscores a concern for decorum in public discourse, a sentiment often lost in the cacophony of contemporary politics. His indictment of the BJP's alleged misuse of investigative agencies reflects a broader apprehension about democratic norms and the rule of law. Beyond partisan skirmishes, Aggarwal's focus on local issues—traders' welfare, infrastructure, and healthcare—reveals a genuine concern for Chandni Chowk's residents. His vision for the area, encompassing tourism, urban renewal, and social welfare, speaks to a holistic approach to governance. Amidst shifting political alliances, Aggarwal's unwavering commitment to his constituency stands out as a beacon of stability. As he embarks on his eighth electoral campaign, his pledge to serve remains unyielding, a testament to the enduring spirit of public service.

Zoya Chatterjee | Chandigarh

VOTERS' DISILLUSIONMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Narendra Modi introduces India to its Ashtalakshmis," published on May 4, this is my response. The narrative of electoral promises, unfulfilled commitments, and regional disparities echoes through the decades of Indian politics. From the inception of the democratic process to contemporary times, the saga persists. The cyclical pattern of pledges made during elections, often forgotten once power is secured, perpetuates a sense of disillusionment among the populace. Despite significant milestones like the Green

Make mistakes to learn something new



Apropos the news article, "Oops, I Dropped The Lemon Tart," published on April 28, this is my response. Gyaneshwar Dayal's piece in The Pioneer paints a vivid canvas of Chef Massimo Bottura's recent culinary odyssey in New Delhi. Bottura, not merely a chef but a maestro of gastronomy and a beacon of philanthropy, brought the essence of Osteria Francescana to India's capital once more. His partnership with The

Leela Palace New Delhi illuminated the culinary scene, offering an unforgettable experience steeped in innovation and sustainability. The narrative delves into Bottura's culinary philosophy, highlighting his penchant for turning mistakes into masterpieces, epitomised by the iconic "Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart." His interactive session at The Leela, where he shared the genesis of this dish, revealed profound insights into creativity and embracing imperfection. Through his culinary prowess and philanthropic endeavours, Bottura transcends the role of a chef, becoming a global inspiration. His anticipation for a simple breakfast with underprivileged children reflects his humility and dedication to making a difference beyond the kitchen. In essence, Bottura's visit not only tantalised taste buds but also stirred hearts, leaving an indelible mark on India's culinary landscape.

Neha Gupta | Delhi

Revolution, persistent challenges like hunger and malnutrition endure, revealing systemic failures in addressing agricultural productivity. The poignant juxtaposition of floods ravaging the North while droughts parch the South underscores the urgent need for holistic solutions, like river interlinking. However, bureaucratic inertia and political apathy have impeded meaningful progress. Amidst this backdrop, the Northeast emerges as a beacon of transformation, propelled by visionary leadership and concerted efforts to integrate the region into the national fabric. The narrative of Modi's North East Story encapsulates this metamorphosis, beckoning readers to witness the evolution firsthand and embrace the region's vibrant culture and potential.

Amaira Singhania | Bengaluru

WORK FROM HOME CHALLENGES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Mastering self-leadership during work from home," published on May 6, this is my response. The transition to remote

work has been a mixed bag, with some relishing newfound flexibility while others struggle to delineate between work and home life. Blurred boundaries breed conflicts, taxing individuals' energy and focus. Boundary theory sheds light on these dynamics, emphasising the impact of role transitions on work-home conflicts.

Employers must support employees, but self-leadership is equally vital. As remote work becomes ubiquitous, individuals must proactively manage their roles. Yet, challenges persist, from lacking managerial support to battling distractions. Self-leadership emerges as a beacon amid these complexities. Its principles empower individuals to adapt, innovate, and thrive in remote environments. As remote work becomes the norm, mastering self-leadership will be indispensable for professional success and personal well-being alike.

Reyansh Joshi | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN OVERCOMING BONDAGE OF THINKING

God's grace frees us from anguish,
guides us on the right path



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

This is a cruel fact. We are hopelessly tied down by our thinking, especially negative. What do you see on roads? Older folks are engrossed in thoughts. What happened? They realized that they were not so great after all. But the obstinate ego would not allow them to seek help where it is available. If a solution to a problem is to be found, it must be; this is their thinking. Sure, but how long would you meditate on it? There should be a time limit. No, that is why obsession is a very common problem.

Other ages are no better. The younger ones are guilty of lusty thoughts. With the advent of cell phones and the internet, age is no longer a bar. What a shame when one is supposed to be in the 'brahmacharya' (celibacy) stage. As one gets older, thoughts of earning the maximum amount of money capture the imagination. There is nothing wrong with it except our expectations should be based on reality. Otherwise, there will be a lot of pain. What is common to all ages is fear of different kinds. This is a real problem, which causes all kinds of mental diseases. This particular problem requires help at the highest level, that is from God, but will we turn to Him? Also common to all ages are hate, anger, enmity, etc. There is hardly any chance of relief when we think that we are the centre of the universe, even though there are eight billion of us. If that were true, there would be eight billion centres of the universe. See, how silly such thinking is. This is what is the basis of our thought process. The frog mentality of thinking one's limited knowledge is everything leads many to dismiss spiritual practices as simplistic, when in fact they are meant to be easily accessible to all.



Let us get to the bottom of this all-pervasive problem. What is this mind? It is a faculty given to us for thinking, willing and feeling. It is subtle, i.e. far more strong than the gross body. The mind affects the body, as we all have experienced. When we are disturbed, our bodies get affected; their working is disturbed. Why has God given us a faculty, which can hurt us so much? He had to do to give us free will, which can bring bliss, as indicated by Lord Krishna, 'A person, having consciousness, unattached to external sense objects, enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He who, with consciousness united to Brahman, finds eternal joy. God's kindness lies in our return to Him, part of the Cosmic Design, where independence is limited, and control rests with God. So we must turn to God to control our uncontrolled and negative thinking. Lord Krishna States, "Undoubtedly the mind is very difficult to control due to its fickle nature, but it can be brought under control by practice and by detachment from inappropriate sense objects." (6.35) This practice has to be with help from God. Otherwise, there will be partial success only. As we age, our focus shifts towards God, as our physical pleasures diminish, highlighting the purpose of the "Ashram" system for spiritual growth in later years. Therefore, God has made provisions for unlimited mental enjoyment. But we have to seek shelter from God for that. We should not be turning to drinks, etc. for compensation to get over our woes, because they send us deeper into more suffering. Fear is a defence mechanism but only in the limited sense. It should alert us to take curative action. But if it overtakes our thinking, fear becomes a serious problem, as all mental diseases point to.

The conclusion is: that we must turn to God with determination sooner than later. Then God will not only free us from the bondage of painful thinking but will also help us in all matters with His guidance and help. This is the way the System has been designed.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Elected leaders need to rethink



JS RAJPUT

It is time that elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders



These are election times and each one of us is a part of the process. These are also times of model code of conduct in the shape of guidelines for political parties and candidates. There are restrictions imposed by the election commission on the maximum expenditure a candidate could incur. Everyone knows what happens to it! In general, people are no more worried about spiralling high expenses that the spread of elections imposes on the candidate and State exchequer.

The spread of elections leads to avoidable wastage of manpower and other resources required to conduct and complete the process. The worst sufferers are the schoolchildren, as teachers are the most easily available manpower for elections at every stage! Once elected, no one is willing to pave the way for the generation next! Election times also reveal the behavioural decline amongst those who had tasted the fruits of power earlier but were dethroned by the people.

Their frustrations even bring forth utterances that may be blatantly unsocial, personal and not acceptable in a civil society. The elders have created conditions that demand innovative action by the young 'millennials' who must realize how their elders have decimated the basic principles of democracy by taking recourse to caste combinations, igniting regional and linguistic sentiments, and creating communal antagonism at the cost of deteriorating social cohesion! Independent India began its new journey at around 18% of literacy, today its boosts to nearly 80% of it despite the population increase of over 100 crores. We are a learning society. Our international standing is at its best after independence. One wonders why the language used by politicians against each other should become so coarse and uncivil. It could put to shame any decent educated person. Respect for the learned, committed and experienced is one of the most liked of the treasures of our heritage which unfortunately stands torn to tatters. India shall never be in a position to ignore the



ARTICULATING THE NORMAL EXPECTATIONS FROM THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE APJ ABDUL KALAM WAS GIVING VOICE TO EVERY SANE INDIAN: "IT HAS BECOME CRUCIAL FOR US TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE CAN RIGHTLY EXPECT FROM OUR LEADERS, FROM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT"

presence of great luminaries of contemporary times like Gandhi, Patel, Subhash Bose, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and others. How could anyone who wishes to understand India do so without getting familiar with Swami Vivekananda, Ramkrishna Paramhans, Tagore or Sri Aurobindo? Hope lies only in those who were in schools a couple of years ago, and were mesmerized by a saint-scientist; the indomitable APJ Abdul Kalam. I had personally witnessed on numerous occasions how children of India fell in love with him. It was not because of his position or the Pokhran II, it was because of the love his persona emanated for every child, every Indian! India stands blessed with numerous such luminaries who could make a change in the area around their place. One wishes political aspirants learn from APJ, and other luminaries how to deal with people! APJ Abdul Kalam was one of the most admired and loved celebrities during the millennial transition to the 21st century. He was a professional leader who led by example, through heart-to-heart connections with one and all. His dedication and devotion to the national cause were of the highest order. He inspired, he motivated and he achieved his target with gusto.

He could win over every Indian irrespective of their socio-economic station in life, his profession or his ideological leanings. APJ endeared himself particularly to the children of India in whom he could see the emerging India, the future India! He ignited the curiosity and creativity of millions of children. He gave them 'wings of fire'. He entered the Rashtrapati Bhavan with two bags and left with the same after five years. India needs people with such

personalities right from the panchayat level to the Parliament with whom every individual could feel connected, who may be acknowledged as 'approachable'. All this, and much more; reverberates in one's mind as various inputs concerning the general elections float before everyone. Each one of us who has voted over a dozen times in general elections would love to talk about the drastic change that has occurred in the quality of leadership on a larger scale, the deterioration in mutual respect and regard amongst those in public life, in power or opposition.

We are witness to the usage of a language for the opponents that would have shamed everyone some five decades ago. Today, no one seems to be worried about it. The only encouraging sign is that all this is being noted by the voters, and they are despising it. In the long run, one could say with confidence that it would not work in favour of the truants. Sadly enough, the defects of elections about whom Gandhi had written as early as 1922, have reached every stage of elections, including even those of panchayat Raj bodies.

One must not give up hope. And there is always hope for the better after having reached the bottom. Articulating the normal expectations from the elected representatives, APJ Abdul Kalam was giving voice to every sane Indian: "It has become crucial for us to be clear about what we can rightly expect from our leaders, from panchayat members to local councillors of a municipal corporation to members of parliament." In other words, there has to be ownership. Whether it is the panchayat member, development officer, councillor, MLA MP or minister, they have to at least try to be

the best of their ability to do what they are elected to do. We need a Parliament with a vision, one that has the larger picture in mind and can rise above petty party politics.

How would such a parliament perform? What are how it can play a far more constructive role than it has in the last Lok Sabha? I would also expect that the Hon'ble members of the next Lok Sabha shall firmly and sincerely resolve not to present before the nation any spectacles that disturb the functioning of the August House, and present a poor example before the young of India. What was happening till now, was a matter of serious concern for the last couple of decades. It was precisely articulated with great concern by the veteran politician C. Subramaniam: "The indiscipline that marks the proceedings of parliament and legislatures is a matter of great concern. Not only pandemonium is created obstructing the proceedings of the legislatures but also acts of violence among the members inside the legislatures are becoming common and an almost everyday occurrence. Nobody is prepared to observe the rules of the game. Then how can we expect the masses of the people to observe discipline and respect the laws and regulations?"

It is time that future MPs and other elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders. They have to be a source of inspiration to generations ahead. Let them resolve not to let even a minute of parliament's time be wasted! It would be a great gift to the nation!

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)

Benevolent hearts: Dynamics of begging and household donations

Despite legal prohibitions in many States, begging persists with beggars being one of the highest recipients of household donations

Begging is a ubiquitous phenomenon in India and is hidden in plain sight. Perceptions of 'persons engaged in Beggary' may vary but it is also evident that many households donate to them. 'Persons engaged in Beggary' are largely missing from the discussions on public policy in the country. A recent study by the Centre of Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP) at Ashoka University showed that 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the highest recipients of household donations, ranking only after 'religious organisations'. This leads us to question, what are the motivations that lead households in such a large proportion to donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Who are the biggest donation-makers to



SHAIVYA VERMA

'beggars' with respect to gender, geography and age? And in what 'form' donations are received by the 'persons engaged in Beggary'? Even though begging is not a crime it is legally prohibited in more than twenty States and Union Territories and can invite punishment for one year to 10 years and even beyond under special circumstances. The pros and cons of the existing laws are another

debate. The study by CSIP showed a 14% increase in total 'cash' donations by Indian households from INR 23.7 thousand crores in 2020-21 to INR 27 thousand crores in 2021-22 of which 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients of household giving among 'religious organisations', 'non-religious organisations', 'family and friends', 'household staff', and 'supporting a cause or signing a petition'. They are the second highest recipient of household donations both in terms of overall market size and the proportion of households who made donations to them among other recipient groups in the study. The report further notes that the market size and the average cash payments to

the 'persons engaged in Beggary' have increased from 2020-21 to 2021-22. While 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients, households do not trust them with their money but with materials. Despite a high proportion of households who donated to 'persons engaged in Beggary' they received the lowest value of 'cash' donations from households (under INR 100). While 'persons engaged in Beggary' were least preferred for 'cash' donations as compared to other recipient groups in the study, a clear preference to donate 'in-kind' was noted for this recipient group. More than half of those donating to 'persons engaged in Beggary' donated 'in-kind' which is starkly different from 'in-kind'

donations received by other recipient groups. Households are mostly driven by their intrinsic motivations when giving to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. 'Religious beliefs' are one of the top motivators. It guided 55% of households that gave to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Religious beliefs can be understood as 'helping others is a way to serve God', and 'good karma/ Almighty rewards good deeds'. Furthermore, 'family traditions' play an important role in motivating households to give to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. They are also affected by the visible hardship due to poverty and are driven to donate in order to support someone in financial distress. Rendering 'seva' or service

also emerged as a significant motivation for giving to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Households also find it easier to give in smaller amounts in 'cash', which leads many households to offer some money to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. About 60% proportion of households responded to have donated to them. The study also found that donations made to 'persons engaged in Beggary' were in the range of smaller amounts 'under INR 100'. It was intriguing to find that the givers who are more empathetic to the 'persons engaged in Beggary' are the people who have a 'vulnerable' position in society and are mainly dependent on others for social and economic security. Older women and households from

rural areas and from lower socio-economic categories are primary givers to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. More households from rural India donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary' than households from large towns. In fact, the proportion of households making offerings to 'persons engaged in Beggary' in rural India was higher than the national average of the proportion of households who gave to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Similarly, 'giving' by lower socioeconomic category (SEC D/E) to 'persons engaged in Beggary' was higher than the national average. While about 53% of households from higher and middle socio-economic categories (SEC A, SEC B and SEC C) contributed, more

than 65% of households contributed towards 'persons engaged in Beggary' from the lower socioeconomic groups (SEC D/E). In terms of gender and age, older women between the ages of 46 to 60 years are the biggest and primary donation-makers to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Beggary in many forms has been in existence for ages. Due to the hardships faced, persons engaged in Beggary usually suffer from negativity, hopelessness, low self-esteem and stigma. In India, 'people engaged in Beggary' are often seen outside religious places. The writer is Senior Research Manager at the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP), Ashoka University. Views expressed are personal

MONEY MATTERS

Japan's SMFG invests Rs 1,300 cr in SMFG India

Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group (SMFG) on Tuesday announced a Rs 1,300 crore investment in domestic non-bank lender SMFG India Credit Co (SMICC) through a rights issue. Pankaj Malik, the chief financial officer of SMICC, said the Rs 1,300 crore should be seen as a "strategic move" which underscores its commitment to fortify expansion efforts. SMICC has invested Rs 150 crore in its wholly-owned subsidiary SMFG India Home Finance Co, known as SMFG Grihashakti, a statement said. SMFGICC, an NBFC - Investment and Credit Company (NBFC-ICC), was acquired by SMFG in 2021 for a deal reported at USD 2 billion. Its investment in Grihashakti will help it amplify the market presence by taking affordable housing finance solutions to the underserved population in India and drive sustained growth, Malik added. SMICC's assets under management (AUM) stood at Rs 42,487 crore as of December 31, 2023, while the April-December 2023 disbursements were higher by 46 per cent compared to the year-ago period at Rs 28,790 crore. It has 990 branches in the country at present, as per the statement.



INOX Air Products to set up 190-tonne green hydrogen project

INOX Air Products on Tuesday said it will set up its first green hydrogen project with an annual capacity of 190 tonnes at Chittorgarh in Rajasthan. The clean energy will be supplied to Asahi India Glass Limited (AIS) under a 20-year offtake agreement, the company said in a statement. "This will be India's first-ever green hydrogen plant for the float glass industry. The plant will have a capacity to generate up to 190 tonne green hydrogen per annum through the electrolysis process," it said. The project will be powered by solar energy. INOX aims to commission the project by July 2024. The project is expected to reduce carbon emissions by around 1,250 metric tonnes (MT) annually and 25,000 MT over the 20-year period. Siddharth Jain, Managing Director of INOX Air Products, stated, "We are proud to begin our green hydrogen journey as we partner AIS for their Chittorgarh facility, and giving shape to our first green hydrogen plant."



JSW Energy profit rises 29% to Rs 351 crore

Saijan Jindal-led JSW Energy on Tuesday posted a 29 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 351 crore in the March quarter compared to a year ago mainly on the back of higher revenues. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 272 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2023, according to a BSE filing. "Profit after Tax (consolidated net profit) increased by a robust 29 per cent YoY (year on year) to Rs 351 Crore," it stated. During the quarter, total revenue increased by 3 per cent YoY to Rs 2,879 crore from Rs 2,806 crore in Q4 FY23, it stated. The profit after tax increased by 17 per cent YoY to Rs 1,723 crore in fiscal year 2023-24 compared to Rs 1,478 crore in FY23. For FY24, total revenue increased 10 per cent YoY to Rs 11,941 crore from Rs 10,867 crore in FY23, it said. The board has also recommended a dividend of Rs 2 per equity share of Rs 10 (20%) to the members of the company for declaration at the forthcoming 30th Annual General Meeting.



EO data can generate \$3 tn in economic benefits: WEF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Earth observation data can generate over US\$ 3 trillion in economic benefits globally and help eliminate two gigatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually by 2030, according to a new report by the World Economic Forum.



Earth observation data refers to the collection, analysis, and presentation of information about the Earth's physical, chemical, and biological systems using remote sensing technologies.

The report, created in partnership with Deloitte and endorsed by industry and climate leaders, emphasised that EO data is a crucial tool for economic growth and sustainability. While certain sectors like agriculture, energy, and finance

are expected to benefit the most from EO data, nearly all industries can gain insights to improve operations and reduce environmental impact.

For example, farmers can use EO data to enhance crop yield and sustainability practices, while insurance companies can better understand and mitigate environmental risks.

The report predicted that the global value of EO data could

grow from US\$ 266 billion at present to over US\$ 700 billion by 2030. This could lead to a cumulative US\$ 3.8 trillion contribution to global GDP and help eliminate 2 gigatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually - equivalent to the estimated combined annual emissions of 476 million gasoline-powered cars.

The Asia Pacific region is poised to capture the largest

share of EO's value by 2030, reaching a potential value of US\$ 315 billion, while Africa and South America are positioned to realise the largest percentage growth.

However, challenges such as limited awareness, talent shortage, and fragmented standards hinder the widespread adoption of EO data. To fully realise its potential, collaborative efforts and informed policies are needed to stimulate demand, advance technology, and establish key standards, the report said.

"Earth observation is a vital component of the Fourth Industrial Revolution," said Jeremy Jurgens, Managing Director and Head of the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution at the World Economic Forum.

Centre to meet e-commerce firms to curb fake online reviews

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has called a meeting of e-commerce players and organisations engaged in publishing online reviews for consultation on quality control order in the works to check fake reviews, according to a notice issued by the Consumer Affairs Ministry.

The consumer affairs ministry has also floated a draft of the Online Consumer Reviews (Quality Control) Order, 2024 (QCO) which proposes to accept reviews from verified purchasers and users of the product.

"This QCO mandates all the e-commerce aggregators and organisations engaged in publishing online reviews to declare self-compliance to the essential requirement prescribed in the order.."

"An organisation is required



to register with BIS and declare compliance to essential requirements. In this regard, a stakeholder consultation, chaired by Secretary (CA), to discuss the draft QCO has been scheduled on May 15, 2024," the notice said.

The draft QCO mandates that the organisations shall not publish reviews that have been purchased and written by

individuals employed for writing review by itself or the supplier, seller, or by a third party.

The consumer affairs ministry has proposed that all organisations managing and publishing online consumer reviews shall conform to the essential requirements, including bar on publishing fake reviews and register themselves as 'Review

"An organisation is required to register with BIS and declare compliance to essential requirements. In this regard, a stakeholder consultation, chaired by Secretary (CA), to discuss the draft QCO has been scheduled on May 15, 2024," the notice said.

Administrator' with BIS declaring self-compliance to the essential requirements prescribed in this order.

The proposed QCO bars platforms from rewarding consumers based on the content, edit reviews, prevent publishing of negative reviews and accepting reviews from individuals who have not used or experienced the good or service.

Sebi rejects NSE's proposal to extend trading hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has rejected a proposal by the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to extend the trading hours in the equity derivatives segment citing a lack of feedback from the stock brokers community.



"Currently, there is no plan to extend the timings as Sebi has returned our application as the stock brokers have not given the feedback that Sebi wanted. So, as of now, the extended time frame (plan) is shelved," NSE MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan said in a post-earnings analysts call. This came after the NSE had

urged Sebi to extend trading hours in the equity derivatives segment in a phased manner. This was aimed at potentially curtailing the overnight risk arising from global information flow. Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer of NSE, had told PTI in September that the bourse was planning a session from 6 pm to 9 pm after a break from the clo-

sure of the regular session from 9.15 am to 3.30 pm. Based on the response, a gradual extension of the market timing till 11.55 pm was proposed on the lines of commodity derivatives.

To begin with, only index derivatives in phase 1 were proposed to be available followed by single stock options and others.

In 2018, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) allowed stock exchanges to set their trading hours in the equity derivatives segment between 9 am and 11.50 pm. This was similar to the trading hours for the commodity derivatives segment, which are currently fixed between 10 am and 11.55 pm.

Household savings dip over Rs 9 L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Net household savings declined sharply by Rs 9 lakh crore to Rs 14.16 lakh crore in three years to 2022-23, according to the latest National Account Statistics 2024 of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.



The net household savings peaked at Rs 23.29 lakh crore in 2020-21. These have been on the decline since then, the data showed.

The net household savings

declined to Rs 17.12 lakh crore in 2021-22 and dipped further to a five-year low of Rs 14.16 lakh crore in 2022-23.

The previous low of net household savings was Rs 13.05 lakh crore in 2017-18 which increased to Rs 14.92 lakh crore in 2018-19 and Rs 15.49 lakh crore in 2019-20.

The data showed that the investment in mutual funds almost trebled to Rs 1.79 lakh crore in 2022-23 in three years from Rs 64,084 crore in 2020-21. It was Rs 1.6 lakh crore in 2021-22.

Equity markets end lower dragged by HDFC, ICICI Bank, Reliance

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Tuesday dragged by HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank amid concerns over rich valuation of equities.



Paring all its early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex went lower by 383.69 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 73,511.85. During the day, it tanked 636.28 points or 0.86 per cent to 73,259.26.

The NSE Nifty declined 140.20 points or 0.62 per cent to 22,302.50.

From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, NTPC,

HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were among the major laggards.

Among the gainers, Hindustan Unilever climbed over 5 per cent. Tech Mahindra, Nestle, ITC, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the other major gainers.

"Domestic benchmark indices opened higher on Tuesday, aided by favourable global cues. However, after some initial jitters, the market saw massive profit-booking," said Hrishikesh Yedve, AVP Technical and Derivatives Research, Asit C. Mehta Investment Intermediates Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 1.90 per cent and smallcap index dipped 1.65 per cent.

Among the indices, realty dropped 3.41 per cent, utilities (2.85 per cent), commodities (2.18 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.73 per cent) and telecommunication (1.43 per cent).

Gold climbs Rs 200; silver jumps Rs 700



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extending gains for second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday climbed by Rs 200 to Rs 72,450 per 10 grams in the national capital in line with firm trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous session, the precious metal had closed at Rs 72,250 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also jumped by Rs 700 to Rs 85,000 per kg. It had settled at Rs 84,300 per kg in the previous session.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,450 per 10 grams, up by Rs 200, taking positive cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,319 per ounce, up by US\$ 7 from the previous close.

"Gold moved higher on indications that the US Federal Reserve could cut interest rates this year. The dovish remarks from the US policymakers have boosted hopes for the interest rate cuts.

'Robust govt capex, improvement in biz confidence to push growth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Robust capital expenditure by the government and improvement in business confidence will push the country's economic growth in 2024-25, an official said on Tuesday.

Chief Economic Adviser in the Ministry of Rural Development Kuntal Sensarma said that the focus areas in 2024-25 should be infrastructure growth, inclusive development and harnessing demographic dividend, among others.

"The major reasons cited for India's growth prospects in FY25 include robust public

investment/ capex push by the government, sustained growth in business and consumer con-



fidence, and strong services sector, among others," industry body PHDCCI said in a statement quoting Sensarma.

He was speaking at the chamber's conference on 'Economy: Inflation, Investments, Interest

Rates and Inclusive Growth (EIIIG) Perspective for FY 2024-25' here.

Speaking at the event, Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist at HDFC Bank, said that despite the challenges of the global economy, India is consistently performing well and inflation is under the target band set by the monetary policy committee.

She estimated that going forward the Indian economy will grow at the rate of 8 per cent.

Presenting the interim Budget in February, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a Rs 11.11 lakh crore spending on infrastructure.

Toy exports marginally down; need strategy to push it: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's toy exports declined marginally to USD 152.34 million in 2023-24 from US\$ 153.89 million in the previous financial year, according to a report by economic think tank GTRI.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's toy exports did not benefit much from the mandatory quality control orders.

It said that while the domestic measures were primarily aimed at boosting local industry and ensuring safety, they did not significantly enhance



India's toy exports.

"From FY2020 to FY2022, exports increased modestly from US\$ 129.6 million to US\$ 177 million. However, by FY2024,

exports decreased to US\$ 152.3 million," the report said.

Imports, however, increased to US\$ 64.92 million in 2023-24 from US\$ 62.37 million in

2022-23. GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said that the QCO checked substandard imports from China but did not result in higher exports from India.

Though India has taken decisive steps since 2020 to curb the inflow of substandard toy imports, especially from China, and strengthen the domestic toy industry, but "India needs to take more comprehensive approach for development of the industry," he said.

The report proposes a comprehensive strategy aimed at developing India's toy industry and boosting exports.

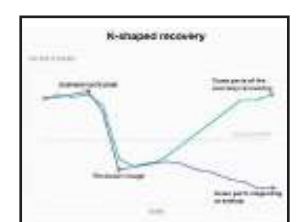
Significant divide in India's consumption; K-shaped trend continues: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Swiss brokerage on Tuesday said there is a "significant divide" in India's consumption story and that the K-shaped trend is likely to continue in the near future.

"India's consumption story reflects a significant divide, driven by a resilient economy but characterised by a stark contrast in spending patterns," UBS India economist Tanvee Gupta Jain said in a note.

"...the divergence between affluent and broad-based household demand persists,



accentuated by factors such as income inequality, increased consumer credit access, and declining household savings," she added.

The brokerage anticipates household consumption growth in FY25 to "remain

subdued" at 4-5 per cent, which is below the trend observed in previous years.

It can be noted that after the pandemic, concerns have been raised about a K-shaped growth representative of deepening inequalities in the country. Some economists have gone public with their disapproval and called the pandemic as a 'leveller' for reducing inequalities as well.

The UBS report said India's household consumption nearly doubled in the past decade to US\$ 2.1 trillion in 2023, with an annual compound growth

rate of 7.2 per cent.

However, household consumption growth remained muted in the last two years, it said, adding that it is the affluent segment that witnessed a significant increase in demand.

The brokerage said the consumption growth recovery is "uneven", and pointed out that there has been faster growth in premium car sales, residential units of over Rs 1 crore, smartphones costing over US\$ 300, or Rs 25,000, while entry-level and mass market goods have seen muted growth post-pandemic.

PREPARING FOR DISRUPTIONS

NSE, BSE to conduct special trading session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE on Tuesday said they will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failure at the primary site.

The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the Primary Site (PR) to the Disaster

Recovery (DR) site.

In separate circulars, the two exchanges said there will be two sessions -- the first from 9:15 am to 10 am from the PR, and the second from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm from the DR site.

During the special session, all securities, including those on which derivative products are available, will have a maximum price band of 5 per cent. Securities already in the 2 per cent or lower price

band will continue to be available in the respective bands.

Exchange shall be conducting a special live trading session with intra-day switchover from Primary site to Disaster Recovery site on Saturday, May 18, 2024, in equity and equity derivatives segments," NSE and BSE said in separate circulars. Earlier, NSE and BSE conducted similar trading sessions on March 2.

Anna Wintour apologises for creating 'confusion' with Met Gala 2024 theme

During an interview, Vogue Editor Anna Wintour apologised for the uncertainty caused by the somewhat complex Met Gala 2024 theme, *Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion*.

In November 2023, Vogue revealed the theme of the 2024 fashion event at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Met Gala, *Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion*. The subject caused a wave of bewilderment among fashion aficionados. They flocked to social media to anticipate a parade of designer pajamas or big princess gowns adorning the stairs of the event.

During a recent interview that aired hours before this year's Met Gala on May 6, Anna Wintour acknowledged the concerns with the 2024 theme. She admitted it may represent a variety of things and described the motivation for the dress code as "The Garden of Time."

Wintour explained that when they came up with the theme for the fashion event, they were thinking of something ethereal and romantic but confessed that it could be interpreted in several ways. She said, "This event broke my cardinal rule. When we came up with the title *Sleeping Beauties*, it was wonderful, poetic, and romantic, but actually, it could be many, many things."

Due to the confusion, Wintour, along with the curator in charge of The Costume Institute, Andrew Bolton, scrambled to simplify things and emerged with a dress code titled *The Garden of Time*. Wintour explained, "I said, 'What are we going to say to people to wear to this night?' And he said, 'Well, what about 'Garden of Time'? So, I fear that we've unleashed a lot of confusion out there, for which I deeply apologise."



'WHY DO WE HAVE TO COMPARE OURSELVES TO H'WOOD?' ASKS ROHINI IYER

Addressing the audience about women shattering the glass ceiling, Rohini Iyer delivered a powerful message recently, stating that it only takes one individual to break through the barriers with a hammer of determination.

Furthermore, Iyer challenged the traditional labels associated with the Indian film industry, expressing her disdain for the term 'Bollywood'. She emphasised, "In my industry, which is the Indian film industry, I don't even call it Bollywood because it feels like stereotyping such a beautiful industry. Why do we need to compare ourselves to Hollywood? We are very good and very secure on our own."

Iyer also highlighted the distinctive strength of the Indian entertainment industry and showcased its significance on the global stage.



what's brewing?

Sudha Reddy stuns at MET GALA 2024

Renowned philanthropist and business-woman Sudha Reddy, hailing from Hyderabad, made a captivating appearance at the prestigious 2024 Met Gala, hosted at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Embracing the theme *Sleeping Beauties: Reawakening Fashion*, her red-carpet ensemble was a true reflection of her profound understanding of the theme and the *Garden Of Time* dress code, following her remarkable debut in 2021.



Clad in a custom creation from the esteemed couturier Tarun Tahiliani's atelier, complemented by exquisite jewellery from Farah Khan Ali, Sudha Reddy presented a red-carpet moment that seamlessly blended timelessness with avant-garde flair.

Handcrafted by over 80 artisans over a period of 4500-man hours, the ivory silk gown was a true testament to collaboration. The hand-carved bodice featured a miniature self-portrait of Sudha holding a delicate rose, symbolising the promise of hope and peace. Adorning the bodice were hand-carved mother-of-pearl flowers, symbolising luminosity and permanence, while 3D butterflies symbolised the cycle of life. The flowing drapery of the gown cascaded like unfolding flower petals, embodying the yearning for self-expression.

The largest diamond, a 25-carat King of Hearts, honouring Krishna Reddy, while the Queen of Hearts, a 20-carat heart, symbolising Sudha Reddy. Two additional 20-carat hearts, known as the Prince of Knowledge and Prince of Treasures, represented their sons, Pranav and Manas. Completing this masterpiece were twenty-one luminescent round diamonds, symbolising the shared experiences and cherished

moments of Sudha-Krishna's love story. Sudha Reddy said, "It was an incredible evening at the Met Gala 2024! I'm grateful to have received the opportunity to celebrate culture, community, and creativity on such a grand scale once again. Collaborations are what make fashion so exciting! Thank you to everyone who made this possible, from the visionary designers to my management and my glam team."

Patty Jenkins opens up about Wonder Woman 3 being shelved

Director Patty Jenkins stated in a new interview that she was already working on the script for *Wonder Woman 3* and had left the *Star Wars* film to focus on the DC project, which was eventually scrapped.

Wonder Woman director Patty Jenkins recently appeared on *Max's Talking Pictures Podcast*, where she discussed the film's third installment. Jenkins made it clear that James Gunn and Peter Safran have no plans to film *Wonder Woman 3*. Patty replied, "Yeah, for the time being, but probably easily forever." When asked if another director would take on the project, she responded, "No, they're not interested in doing any *Wonder Woman* for the time being."

Jenkins revealed she was developing *Wonder Woman 3* when the film got cancelled. She also mentioned leaving the *Star Wars* movie for that. The *Wonder Woman* maker said, "It's not an easy task. What's going on with DC? James Gunn and Peter Safran have to follow their own hearts into their own plans. I don't know what they're planning on doing or why... I have sympathy for what a big job it is." She also said, "So, when I left *Star Wars* to do *Wonder Woman 3*, and I started working on that, we talked about, 'Well, maybe I'll come back to *Star Wars* after *Wonder Woman 3*, so we started a deal for that to happen.'" "When *Wonder Woman 3* went away, Lucas film and I were like, 'Oh, we've got to finish this deal.' We finished the deal right as the strike was beginning, so I now owe a draft of *Star Wars*. So we will see what happens there. Who knows?" added Patty.



Munawar Faruqui collaborates with Spectra and Sez On The Beat for Dhandho

Musician Munawar Faruqui is currently in his best career phase. Finally, unveiling his latest masterpiece, he took to social media to announce his newest song titled *Dhandho*, marking his first post-*Bigg Boss 17* release. Created in collaboration with rapper Spectra and music producer Sez On The Beat under the Warner Music India label, *Dhandho* is a hip-hop party number scheduled for release on May 10, 2024.

Being a Gujarati from Junagarh, Munawar Faruqui continues to represent his roots, as *Dhandho* in Gujarati means business. Interestingly, Munawar Faruqui began his rap journey with Spectra four years ago with a song called *Jawab*, and ever since there has been no looking back for him. This marks the first official song by Munawar after *Bigg Boss 17*, collabo-



rating with Warner Music India and SEZ on the Beat, two music giants, further showcasing the magnitude of the song.

In the poster, Munawar Faruqui and rapper Spectra can be seen sharing a laugh while surrounded by cash, exuding charm. It will be interesting to see what theme the musi-

cian brings forth with this song about money, business, and rap. *Dhandho* is expected to offer fresh beats, catchy lyrics, and rap by these acclaimed musicians. Sharing the same on his social media handle, Munawar wrote, "Dongri se Noida crash course on 10th May..."

Opening up about the song, Munawar Faruqui said, "It's my first music release after *Bigg Boss*, which makes it even more special. The song will transport audiences to the *Nagpada Ka Rider* song zone with strong lyricism and underground hip-hop while representing the streets. I can't wait for everyone to listen to what we have created together this time around."

Apart from this, Munawar Faruqui recently announced his acting debut in a web series titled *First Copy* and unveiled the official teaser, stirring up major excitement among fans.

International artists join Freedom at Midnight

Freedom at Midnight promises an immersive dive into one of India's most pivotal eras—the struggle for independence and the subsequent partition. From the early calls for self-rule to the triumphant moment of independence in 1947, the series delves into the motivations, conflicts, and sacrifices of key figures like Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel.

Alongside historical figures, the platform introduces global talent: Luke McGibney, Andrew Cullum, Richard Teverson, Alistair Finlay, and Cordelia Bugeja. McGibney and Bugeja embody the last Viceroy and Vicereine of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten and Lady Edwina Mountbatten, respectively. Finlay essays Archibald Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy of India preceding Mountbatten. Cullum brings to life the character of Clement Attlee, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1951, while Teverson portrays

Cyril Radcliffe, the chairman of the Boundary Commission for the Partition of India. With meticulous research and a stellar cast, Sony LIV aims to deliver a cinematic homage to India's iconic history and the quest for freedom.

Talking about this casting, director Nikkhil Advani said, "One of the biggest regrets that we had during the making of *Rocket Boys* was not being able to cast the international actors from the UK and USA. COVID prevented us from doing that.



When we started the casting of *Freedom At Midnight* both Sony LIV and us were determined to correct that. We were determined to use iconic footage and pictures of some seminal moments. And so, we had to get the actors who not only physically resembled these historical figures but also those who would challenge the super Indian actors we had cast."

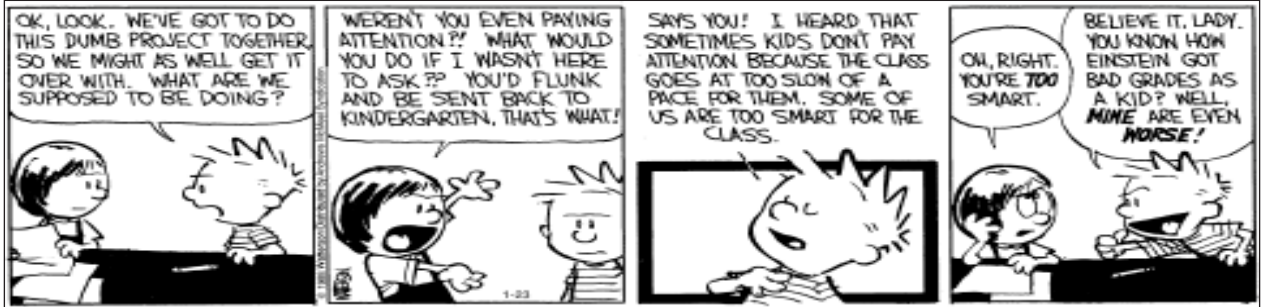
Sharing his thoughts on playing Lord Louis Mountbatten, Luke McGibney expresses, "As Mountbatten, I step into the shoes of a pivotal figure in India's history. Mountbatten's role during the transfer of power and partition was both profound and controversial. It's a fascinating challenge to tap into the complexities of a character who wielded immense influence during a critical period. From his tenure as the last Viceroy of India to the tumultuous aftermath of partition, *Freedom at Midnight* allows us to explore his relationships and decisions that altered the course of nations."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



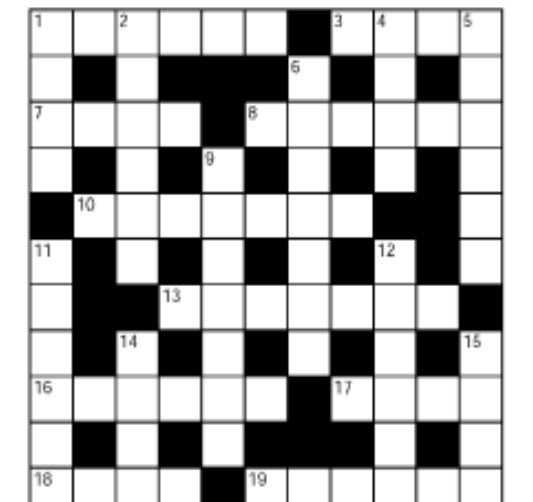
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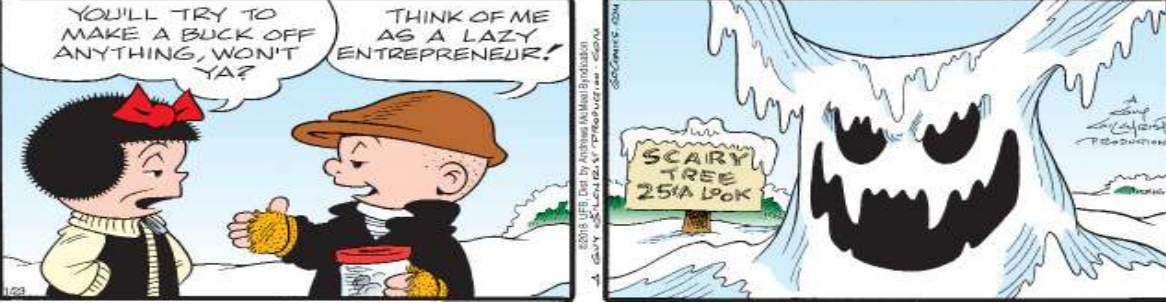
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Bleeding injuries
- Counts up
- This heavy metal is used for making fishing sinkers
- Took part in a game
- Write this on an envelope
- A two-wheeled ride-on you push along with a foot
- Of greater height
- Young female
- Gritty stuff on beaches
- A small river
- Australia's largest city
- A flower on a fruit tree
- A game with bats and wickets
- A prickly desert plant
- Make up your mind
- A map of a building
- This fruit has a stone

SOLUTION

S	H	O	L	D	E	R	S	
C	R	A	W	L				
C	R	A	W	L				
B	O	Y	S					
B	O	Y	S					
A	N	S	W	E	R			
F	L	A	M	E				
C	R	A	W	L				
I	D	E	N	T				
I	D	E	N	T				

DOWN

- Go on foot
- Ugandans live here
- Parts of a week

DJ Kayan's 'FIERCENESS' embodying through her music

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Ambika Nayak, popularly known as Kayan, is an Indian musician, vocalist, and DJ. Her stage name, Kayan, is a playful reversal of her surname, 'Nayak'. She is also a member of the group *Kimochi Youkai* and the electronic duo *Nothing Anonymous*, alongside Nirmal Shah. Nayak's musical roots run deep, with her family boasting a legacy of Hindustani classical vocalists and Kathak dancers, providing her with ample exposure and training.

As the saying goes, there are no shortcuts to success; Kayan's musical journey is certainly a shred of evidence of that. She has carved her own unique path, encountering challenges along the way. She begins, "My musical journey has been an exhilarating exploration of new sounds, melodies, and emotions, fuelling my evolution as an artist and inspiring stories that deeply connect with my audience."

Music provides peace and rhythm to everyday life, and each individual finds their own reasons to be captivated by music. "Music has been an integral part of my life from early childhood," shares the artist as she goes on to add, "Serving as my sanctuary, it's where I find solace, express myself authentically, and forge profound connections with others. My decision to enroll

in the True School of Music approximately eight years ago was driven by this passion! Surrounded by kindred spirits who shared my aspirations to create and perform music, I embarked on a transformative musical journey that continues to shape me today."

Undeniably, inspiration surrounds us, and Kayan draws her inspiration from a diverse array of sources, including musicians, fashion designers, artists, and the individuals in her life. "Immersing myself in music allows me to explore different sounds and discover what resonates with me, although my musical style is always evolving. Currently, some of my inspirations include Jorja Smith, Kaytranada, and Avril Lavigne."

She believes that emerging music platforms like VHI, Spotify, Apple Music, and others have played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of independent musicians, including herself. "These platforms offer an equal opportunity for artists to present their work to a broad audience, transcending geographical limitations and facilitating direct interaction with fans across the globe. This accessibility and visibility have revolutionised the landscape for independent artists, serving as a game-changer in terms of reaching wider audiences and fostering engagement."

She enjoys being on her own as more of a homebody or prefers to be out and about, we ask her, and she says, "I find myself embodying a blend of both worlds. Some

days, I cherish tranquility and introspection, using it as a canvas for creative expression and personal development. Yet, on other days, I thrive on the vibrancy of social connections and the excitement of new experiences. It's about striking a harmonious balance that nurtures both my artistic soul and my interactions with others."

Music serves as a rhythmic vehicle for conveying stories and emotions in a soul-stirring manner. At times, it becomes the sole medium capable of articulating the depth of one's feelings. She further shares, "My music is deeply rooted in my journey, stemming from my experiences, emotions, observations, and inspirations. Each song serves as a mirror to moments, relationships, and thoughts that have influenced my path, translated into melodies and lyrics that strike a chord with myself and my audience."

In recent years, the music landscape in our country has experienced a remarkable phenomenon: a surge of immensely talented female musicians! Their emergence reflects a dynamic and vibrant scene spanning across diverse genres. She says, "The music scene in our country is witnessing a surge of talented female musicians, reflecting the vibrant and dynamic landscape across various genres. It's truly inspiring to witness women breaking barriers, defying norms, and leaving their mark on the industry. With an abundance of creativity and passion, female artists are making significant contributions, underscor-

ing the importance of supporting and elevating their voices to nurture a more inclusive and diverse musical community."

Incorporating bold song titles serves as a method of expressing inner stories and sentiments, encapsulating the essence of each track with impactful clarity. She says, "For me, music is more than just a form of expression; it's a mirror reflecting my inner fire, thoughts, and emotions. Each song I create embodies my fierceness and captures the essence of my journey. Often, the titles of my tracks emerge from moments of inspiration, where a single phrase or concept encapsulates the bold and impactful message I aim to convey."

For many artists, fashion is not merely about clothing; it's a dynamic form of self-expression woven deeply into their identity. Within the realm of creativity, every garment becomes a brushstroke on the canvas of their persona. Ambika, who was recently a part of a fashion show as well, shares, "Fashion serves as a canvas for my creative expression, intricately woven into the fabric of my identity as an artist. Before each performance, I meticulously curate a style board, a visual testament to my creative vision and personal flair. Embracing individuality is paramount to me, as I revel in the freedom to experiment with diverse styles. For me, fashion is more than just adornment; it's a powerful medium through which I convey confidence and authenticity to the world."

The year ahead holds a wealth

of opportunities and endeavours for her. With music at the forefront of her priorities, she is committed to channelling her energy into the creation process and bringing forth an album for the audience to experience. On a concluding note, she says, "There's a lot on the agenda for me this year. My primary focus is channelling my energy into music creation and releasing an album. I have upcoming songwriting sessions and collaborations in the pipeline, along with a lineup of exciting shows throughout the year."

A true-blue breakout star, Ambika Nayak, a.k.a. Kayan in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, discusses embarking on a musical transformation, witnessing women defying norms, and more.



'I harboured worries about whether or not audiences would notice any slips in my accent'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Patna Shukla, a courtroom drama, does not have the comedic allure of *Jolly LLB*, where laughter erupts at the humour in legal professional banter. However, the Anushka Kaushik-led movie takes a more controlled approach, with a much more serious undertone, creating an effective narrative that captivated viewers.

In our exclusive interview, the co-lead exhibits all the in-depth details and how!

Anushka begins by expressing, "Throughout the series, I have not accomplished anything overly remarkable. However, I am delighted to have obtained massive attention and understanding for my character's development. I accept as true that this cognizance has come at the best second for me. This success is now mine, untouchable by any political impact or power. It has caught me off guard, and I am now enthusiastic to push myself even similarly in future roles."

Although the story had its flaws and started out to wander off the at times, it is Anushka's honest and compelling overall performance that lifted the plot and held our attention. Similarly, the *Crash Course* fame remarks, "While discussing with my director, I had several questions swirling in my head. Referencing information articles proved priceless in gaining a perception of my character's perspective. I delved past simply the examination scam, conducting an enormous non-public lookup on a range of associated subjects to enhance my personal understanding. I was once that interested! At the end of the day, I was solely feeling horrific about how many humans have been the victims, and no one empathised with them. I named the scamsters 'vultures'. I could not have fought a hostility like this in opposition to these vultures."

Portraying a *Bhojpuri* accent, she says, introduced a considerable venture for her. She further shares, "Emotionally severe scenes posed a specific concern as I naturally revert to my mother tongue all through such moments, complicating my capability to express thoughts authentically. Following the film's release, I harboured worries about whether or not audiences would notice any slips in my accent; however, to my delight, many approached me with compliments on my good portrayal. While I was once going through the reviews, this part actually stood out for me. I'd like to take a bow to the critics who appreciated me throughout."

The movie's plot surrounds around Tanvi Shukla (played by Raveena Tandon), a lawyer in Patna's lower court, who has her happy family life turned upside down when she decides to fight the case of Rinki Kumari (played by Anushka Kaushik) and sets out to expose a big scam in the education system involving youth icon Raghubir Singh (played by Jatin Goswami).

Actress Anushka Kaushik, who is currently enjoying the love she's received for her recent project *Patna Shukla*, speaks to *The Pioneer* over an exclusive chat sharing some interesting in-depth insights working on the project, experience working with Raveena Tandon, and more.

"Raveena Tandon generously shared her technical insights with me without any hesitation," shares the *Lust Stories 2* actress on her experience working with the OG Raveena Tandon. "She was once deeply engaged in supporting me as I held close to the nuances of working with the camera, which left me amazed. Moreover, she emphasised the significance of retaining a wholesome work-life balance and no longer letting my whole commitments overshadow my private life. I was once especially touched when she prompted me to prioritise spending time with my parents. This recommendation resonated with me so profoundly that I now make it a point to call my mother and father all through each and every break. Thank you, Raveena."

Then comes a revelation—"In the early ranges of my career, I rejected several scripts." However, with the upward shove of OTT platforms, she says she is now extra open to distinctive opportunities. "Eventually, I envision a time when I will prioritise ardour over pay and take on fewer projects. This is a transition that all actors experience. I have acquired heartfelt paragraphs in reviews that definitely resonate with me, as well as remarks asking for more of my presence on screen, which is pleasing as an actress. It suggests that viewers are related to my character's plight. More the merrier they are."

Being on set except for make-up was a first for the *Maharani* fame. Growing up, she shares, "I usually admired glamorous roles. However, this film shifted my view. It taught me that you can captivate audiences even with heavy makeup. The true depth lies in the narrative, not our appearance. The movie centered on women's empowerment, which made it simply special."

Meanwhile, on the work front, she has a film by Maddock films, followed by a show produced by Reliance Entertainment, a music video, and then a few short films that have been getting selected and rewarded at various film festivals. So, a lot of good things are on the way!



HEADACHES IN CHILDREN: Common or cause of concern?

Picture this: a topic usually associated with grown-ups, headaches. We've all been there, right? The pounding, the pressure, the downright annoyance. But here's something that might surprise you: headaches aren't just for adults. In truth, virtually every person could begin to experience headaches but an infant has no clue or way to tell an adult what is going on. Toddlers and kids alike have these headaches, but they can't exactly express to us what is happening. As a person and child ages and grows the child will begin to realize they are in a lot of discomfort. Children really start to complain of different types of body pain (all of which are childhood headaches) around the age of 5 or 6.

There is no hard and fast rule about when headaches might make their appearance.

So, what exactly qualifies as old enough for a child to start experiencing those awful head pains? The answer is not all too clear. In truth, virtually every person could begin to experience headaches but an infant has no clue or way to tell an adult what is going on. Toddlers and kids alike have these headaches, but they can't exactly express to us what is happening. As a person and child ages and grows the child will begin to realize they are in a lot of discomfort. Children really start to complain of different types of body pain (all of which are childhood headaches) around the age of 5 or 6.

Is it indicative of underlying illness?

Headaches in kids are not always an indication of something serious. Sure, some children might get headaches because of underlying illnesses, but plenty of others experience them for totally normal reasons. Headaches in children can come from all sorts of things. Maybe they didn't drink enough water, or they've been staring at screens too long stress from school, lack of sleep, or even skipping meals can also trigger a headache in a little one.

However, it's essential to pay attention to the location, severity, and accompanying symptoms of headaches in children, especially if they seem unusual or persist over time. Noticing these patterns can help get timely medical attention if it is something severe.

Certain dietary factors can also surprisingly contribute to headaches in children. These include consuming foods or beverages with caffeine, excessive sweets such as chocolate or cola, which can trigger headaches, particularly when consumed in large amounts. Artificial additives like MSG or nitrates found in processed foods may also be potential triggers. For children with food sensitivities or allergies, allergens like dairy, gluten, nuts, or certain additives can provoke headaches. Additionally, irregular eating patterns, dehydration due to inadequate fluid intake, and tyramine-rich foods such as aged cheeses or processed meats can contribute to headaches. Monitoring your child's dietary habits and keeping a food diary may help identify potential triggers.

When it comes to headaches caused by underlying illnesses in children, there are a few key symptoms to watch out for:

- **Migraines:** These can cause intense throbbing or pulsating pain, usually on one side of the head. Children experiencing migraines might also have sensitivity to light and sound, nausea, and vomiting. They might describe seeing flashing lights or experiencing visual disturbances, known as aura, before the headache sets in.

- **Tension headaches:** These headaches often feel like a dull ache or pressure around the forehead, temples, or back of the head. Kids with tension headaches might also feel tightness or tenderness in their neck and shoulder muscles. Stress, poor posture, or lack of sleep can trigger tension headaches in children.

- **Sinus headaches:** When the sinuses become inflamed or infected, it can lead to a sinus headache. Children with sinus headaches often experience pain and pressure in their forehead, cheeks, or the bridge of their nose. They might also have a stuffy or runny nose, cough, facial tenderness, and fever.

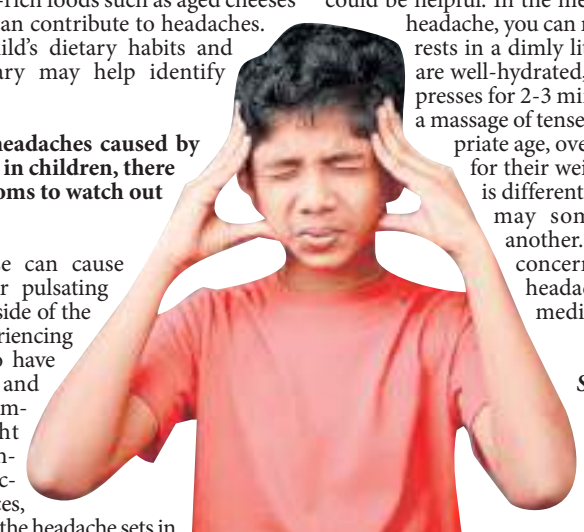
- **Cluster headaches:** These are less common in children but can still occur. Cluster headaches cause excruciating pain, usually around one eye or temple, often described as sharp or piercing. Children might also experience redness or watering of the eye on the affected side, stuffy or runny nose, and agitation or restlessness.

- **Brain tumours or intracranial pressure:** In rare cases, headaches in children can be a sign of a more serious condition like a brain tumour or increased pressure inside the skull. Headaches caused by these conditions might be severe and persistent, often accompanied by vomiting, changes in vision, balance problems, weakness, or seizures. The location of the pain can vary depending on the location of the tumor or pressure, but it might be generalised or focused in one area.

Finding the balance between when to rush to the emergency room and when to treat headaches at home in children is essential. The general rule is this: mild headaches that respond to rest, hydration, or an over-the-counter pain reliever after a few hours can be managed at home. However, if the headache lasts >24-48 hours or if your child's headache is unusual or severe, there are symptoms like vomiting, increased sleepiness, and confusion, changes in vision, or weakness in muscles, or upper or lower limbs or problems walking, then you should not hesitate to rush to the emergency to check, especially if these symptoms are accompanied by a headache.

In general, if your child often has headaches, more severe headaches, or if headaches follow unusual patterns, talk to your paediatrician about these symptoms and ask whether an evaluation or testing for headaches could be helpful. In the meantime, at home, after a headache, you can make sure that your child rests in a dimly lit environment, that they are well-hydrated, that they use cool compresses for 2-3 minutes, and that they have a massage of tense muscles and, if of appropriate age, over-the-counter pain relief for their weight and age. Every child is different, and what works for one may sometimes not work for another. If you're ever unsure or concerned about your child's headaches, always best to get a medical opinion.

(The author, Dr. Srinivasa Murthy C L, is a Lead Paediatrics, Consultant - Paediatrics and Neonatology, at Aster Women and Children Hospital.)





INCONSISTENT SRH TAKE ON LSG IN PUSH FOR PLAYOFFS SPOT

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to move on from their underwhelming batting display when they host Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games with SRH making the top four cut based on a slightly superior net run rate of -0.065 compared to LSG's -0.371. The Sunrisers find themselves in a fierce competition for the top four spot with Kolkata Knight Riders (16), Rajasthan Royals (16) and Chennai Super Kings (12) stationed above them on the points table. The winner of the duel will take a leap in the playoff race. The Pat Cummins-led side has ample talent but has been unable to hold on to a winning run recently. Sunrisers have lost three of their last four matches, mainly because their destructive batting line-up hasn't delivered. In their last match against Mumbai Indians, which they lost by seven wickets, they failed to put up a good target on the board, which has been



their strong suit this season. Barring Travis Head, who has been their stand out performer, the other batters in the side have faced a recent slump. After displaying his power-hitting ability, young opener Abhishek Sharma has

breached the 30-run mark just once in the last four games. And while SRH head coach Daniel Vettori has conceded that the openers are not expected to do the job all the time, the middle order needs to step up.

The flamboyant Heinrich Klaasen has also been unable to strike the ball consistently and Nitish Reddy too has been patchy. The bowlers have fared better compared to their batting counterparts. T Natarajan has been

consistent with the ball while seasoned seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar also seems to have found his mojo after his incisive spell helped SRH eke out a one-run win against RR. LSG, on the other hand, have to get over their overall lacklustre display against Kolkata Knight Riders, when they not only conceded the first-ever 200 plus score at the Ekana Stadium but also folded their innings at 137. It was a day when skipper KL Rahul failed to anchor the innings while the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran were unable to get the big shots when needed. Ayush Badoni has had a subdued run in this IPL and the uncapped Indian player would be keen to shrug off the rustiness. LSG's struggles with the ball have been majorly due to the lack of firepower in their pace-bowling department. With tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav ruled out of the IPL and left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan also picking up an injury, the onus will be on Afghan quick Naveen-ul-Haq, young Yash Thakur, Stoinis and spinners Krunal Pandya and Ravi Bishnoi to deliver.



No plans to rest Bumrah yet: MI batting coach Pollard

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians have no plans to rest ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah ahead of the T20 World Cup even though they are out of contention for the IPL playoffs, said batting coach Kieron Pollard. MI defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets here on Monday after Suryakumar Yadav (102 not out) struck his second IPL century to help his team chase down a target of 174 with 16 balls to spare. The win helped MI end their four-match losing streak and record only their fourth win in 12 matches. "I certainly haven't had any discussions about that," Pollard told media after the game when asked if there are any plans to rest Bumrah from MI's remaining two matches keeping in mind the upcoming T20 World Cup. "I don't think that's my role and function at this point in time. But let's see what happens. We are all here to play an entire IPL. Sometimes when we think too far ahead of different things, thinking about World Cups, all these things could affect performances even from before the team was selected. "For us and in our camp, the most important thing is finishing off the IPL and let's see what happens after that. When he leaves the IPL and he goes into the Indian team, I think that's where that concession will take place."

MI's last IPL game is against Lucknow Super Giants at home on May 17. The T20 World Cup, to be co-hosted by USA and the West Indies, will begin on June 1. Pollard said as a batting coach the most difficult aspect of coaching an all-round batter like Suryakumar is to curb his attacking instinct. "He's one, who, by nature, instinctively, is very aggressive. He wants to take the bowler's on more often than not. At times it's just a matter of understanding the situation and respecting the new ball when it's moving around," Pollard said. "If the conditions are not suitable for a certain amount of shot making, having that discipline in order to be there for a period of time and they'll get into your work. "I think that would be the hardest thing - to try to curb the attacking instinct. But it's not something you want to curb too much and get them in a defensive frame of mind because of the direction the sport is heading now in terms of the amount of runs being scored."

take your hat off and say well played and well played to him. He's an exceptional cricketer and he's always going to demand a spot in the Indian team and I'm sure he'll have an influence in the World Cup," he said. "It's very difficult (to bowl at Suryakumar) and you guys have seen him close up for many years as I have. He's a very difficult batsman to match up with when he's in that sort of frame of mind, that sort of mood." Helmot said the conditions assisted swing bowling with the new ball in both the innings which forced the batters to adjust their game. "Travis (Head) has been one of our best players this season at the top of the order. But even he found it difficult at times to time the ball out in the middle on this particular track and that will happen at different times during the season," he said. Helmot said not losing their fourth spot in the IPL points table was the biggest positive for SRH in a resounding defeat. "The positives are that we're still fourth in the ladder. It's a really tight competition; one of the tightest competitions we've had in IPL for years that I can remember," he said. "For us, we've got our very first fly tomorrow (Tuesday) and then play the next day against Lucknow (on Wednesday). For us, it's (about) very quickly get through over this game," he added.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

'Fatigued' Rohit Sharma needs break to freshen up ahead of T20I World Cup: Michael Clarke

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke does not read much into Rohit Sharma's string of poor scores, but suggests that the "fatigued" Indian skipper take a break to freshen up ahead of the T20I World Cup. Rohit, who will lead India in the next month's 20-team global showpiece, has four single-digit scores in his last five outings for his franchise Mumbai Indians in the ongoing IPL. The 37-year-old has had a busy season this year with an intense five-Test series preceding the IPL for Mumbai Indians, who are all but eliminated from the race to the playoffs this year. "Rohit, being the wise judge of his own performances, will

undoubtedly be disappointed, especially considering his strong start. In my view, he might be feeling a bit fatigued as well," Clarke told Star Sports. "A break to freshen up could do wonders for him, but as the Indian captain and a key player for Mumbai Indians, you're not getting a break. He's going to have to find form," Clarke continued. Rohit played as an impact substitute in their match against Kolkata Knight Riders last week, raising some concerns for the Indian camp. However, he played a full game



against Sunrisers Hyderabad three days later. Clarke said it is only a matter of time before Rohit gets back to his usual elements as a batter.

"He was in a great mood. He's happy, which is a really good sign. He doesn't seem to be struggling with his timing; it's just a matter of getting out," he

said. "With someone like Rohit, it's only a matter of time before he finds his form again. Hopefully, he stresses less and focuses on his game because he's too talented to keep missing out. He's at his best when he's timing the ball, rather than trying to force it," he added. Clarke, meanwhile, also had praise in store for Rohit's deputy for the World Cup and MI skipper Hardik Pandya, who returned with 4-0-31-3 in their seven-wicket win over SRH on Monday.



KKR players spend night in Varanasi after flight diverted multiple times due to bad weather

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kolkata Knight Riders players had a harrowing experience as they were forced to spend a night at Varanasi after their flight from Lucknow to Kolkata was diverted multiple times due to bad weather. Following their massive 98-run win over Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday, the Shreyas Iyer-led side left on Monday evening for Kolkata at 5:45pm. The team was scheduled to arrive at 7:25pm. But the charter flight had to be diverted to Guwahati first and then to Varanasi after adverse weather conditions made it impossible to land the plane in Kolkata. The KKR media team provided an update at 8:46pm, saying, "Due to inclement weather over Kolkata, the KKR charter flight has been diverted to Guwahati. We've just landed here." Then another update at 9:43pm said, "We've got clearance to fly back to Kolkata now, from Guwahati. Estimated arrival: 11pm."

However, the ordeal was not over for the players and support staff as multiple attempts to land the flight failed, forcing the officials to divert the flight mid-air to Varanasi. "Flight took off from Guwahati to Kolkata, was scheduled to land at 11 PM. Couldn't land once again due to bad weather, despite several attempts. Diverted mid-air to Varanasi now. Just landed here," said an update at 1:15 am. The KKR team then spent the night at Varanasi and will be travelling to Kolkata this afternoon. "The team would be checking into Varanasi hotel for overnight stay. Return flight to Kolkata TBD on Tuesday (7 May) afternoon," the KKR media team said in the final update at 3:00 am. Fortunately, KKR's next game is against Mumbai Indians at Edens Garden on May 11. The two-time former champions will play Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on May 13 and Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati on May 19 for their final two league matches.

OTHER SPORTS

Man United in crisis: Transfers, tactics and takeover helped lead up to 4-0 humiliation at Palace

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

A bad season just keeps on getting worse for Manchester United. The 20-time English champion was routed 4-0 by Crystal Palace on Monday and faces the prospect of its lowest finish in the Premier League era, as well as a season without European soccer. League qualification was already beyond Erik ten Hag's troubled team before its latest defeat. Now, sitting eighth in the standings, even the third-tier Conference League could end up out of reach. On current form, United might need to beat Manchester City in this month's FA Cup final to secure a place in the Europa League. On current form, there is little chance of that happening. One of the world's most storied clubs is in a mess and the humiliation at the hands of

Palace was the latest evidence of that. A record of 13 league defeats is the most United has suffered in a Premier League campaign. In all competitions that number rises to 18, including four losses in six games as United crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage. Ten Hag's team has conceded 81 goals in all competitions, which is the most since 1976-77. According to stats company Opta, United has also spent more time in a losing position in league games this season than a winning one. Its only win in its last seven league games was against last-placed Sheffield United. United's lowest finish in the Premier League era - which it long dominated, winning 13 titles under former manager Alex Ferguson - was seventh under David Moyes in 2013-14. Here are some of the reasons



behind United's fall this season. **INJURIES:** United's substitutes' bench against Palace included six teenagers and two goalkeepers, such is the level of the injury crisis which has gripped Ten Hag's team. Jonny Evans, the veteran 36-year-old center back, was rushed back from injury to cover for the absent Harry Maguire and midfielder

by absences. Even Ten Hag accepted there was no excuse for Monday's performance. "The players who were available should do better. It's a deserved defeat," he said. **TACTICS:** Last season United had one of the meanest defenses in the Premier League, with only treble-winning City and Newcastle conceding fewer goals. It's been a very different story in Ten Hag's second season in charge, with the openness of his team a consistent problem. To compound the issue, United has found goals hard to come by at the other end of the field. A total of 52 scored is the joint lowest in the top half of the standings, level with 10th-place Bournemouth. Luton - which is in the relegation zone - has scored 49. United is too open in midfield, too fragile in defense and not potent enough in attack. And it falls on Ten Hag to come up with the solutions.



Badosa shows signs of her old form in a win over Andreieva at Italian Open

AP ■ ROME

Paula Badosa showed signs of her former top-five form during a 6-2, 6-3 victory over 17-year-old Mirra Andreieva in the first round of the Italian Open on Tuesday. Badosa was ranked as high as No. 2 before she missed the second half of last year due to a back injury that has also slowed her this season. She's now No. 126. Badosa jumped out to a 5-1 lead in the first set before a 45-minute rain delay and then picked up where she left off against the 40th-ranked Andreieva, who was the WTA tour's newcomer of the year in 2023. Badosa reached the quarterfinals in Rome last year but that turned out to be her penultimate tournament of the season. It was Badosa's first win since beating Simona Halep at the Miami Open last month in Halep's return from a doping ban. It also ended Badosa's six-match losing streak against players ranked in the top 40 that had stretched back to Rome last year. Also on the red clay at the Foro Italico, Shelby Rogers routed Italian wild-card entry Lisa Pigato 6-1, 6-0. The only other matches scheduled on the opening day featured 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez against Ana Bogdan and Yulia Putintseva against Martina Trevisan.

Bengal, Haryana win women hockey nationals ties

PTI ■ RANCHI

Bengal and Haryana registered identical victories by margins of 2-1 over Odisha and Maharashtra respectively in the National Women's Hockey League 2024 here on Tuesday. Bengal showed relentless attacking prowess and swift passing throughout the game. Their breakthrough came in the second quarter when Shanti Horo (23) manoeuvred past Odisha's defence before unleashing a thunderous shot into the net. The momentum swung further in Bengal's favour in the second half when Shanti Horo (39) capitalised on an unmarked opportunity



in the D area, slotting home her second goal with precision. Odisha managed to score a goal in the final quarter

through Dipi Monika Toppo (51), who converted a penalty corner. Nevertheless, Bengal held on to their lead to emerge

winners. Despite the loss Odisha, remained on top of the points table with 12 points from six matches.

In the day's other match, Haryana dominated possession from the start. The breakthrough came through Manju Chorsiya (12), who capitalised on an opportunity to score from open play, putting Haryana in the lead. In the second half, Haryana strengthened their position with Pooja (37) converting a penalty corner. Despite Maharashtra's efforts and multiple opportunities, including four penalty corners, they could only convert one, with Sukanya Dhaware (55) scoring a field goal in the dying minutes to narrow the deficit for her team.

NIKHIL'S **SWAYAMBHU** ACTION SET ERECTED FOR ₹8 CRORE!

Nikhil, the acclaimed actor who stole hearts with his performance in *Karthikeya 2*, is set to embark on another cinematic journey with the ambitious Pan India project, *Swayambhu*. Directed by the visionary Bharat Krishnamachari, this movie marks Nikhil's 20th venture, promising an epic tale of a legendary warrior. In preparation for his role, Nikhil underwent rigorous training in weaponry, martial arts, and horseback riding, embodying the essence of his character. Produced by Bhuvan and Sreekar under the banner of Pixel Studios, with Tagore Madhu as the presenter, *Swayambhu* boasts high production values and technical finesse. The current buzz surrounds an awe-inspiring action sequence being filmed, featuring a stellar ensemble cast. Spanning 12 days and involving 700 artists, including Vietnamese fighters, this grand spectacle is being meticulously crafted on two

expansive sets. With a staggering budget of Rs 8 crore, this segment promises to be a visual feast, elevating the movie to new heights of excitement. The released stills depict Nikhil exuding raw power, poised to enthrall audiences with his portrayal of a formidable warrior. Supported by an ensemble cast including Samyuktha and Nabha Natesh in lead roles, and with music by the maestro Ravi Basrur of *KGF* and *Salaar* fame, *Swayambhu* is poised to captivate audiences with its grandeur and intensity. As anticipation builds for its release, *Swayambhu* stands as a testament to Nikhil's versatility and dedication to his craft, promising an unforgettable cinematic experience for audiences nationwide.



Niharika Konidela turns singer for **Committee Kurrollu**

The eagerly awaited debut venture of Pink Elephant Pictures into feature films, *Committee Kurrollu*, takes another stride forward with the release of its first single, *Gorrela*. This vibrant track, launched amidst much anticipation, resonates with a powerful message that has struck a chord with audiences and critics alike. At the grand unveiling ceremony, held with pomp and fervour, notable activist Jaya Prakash Narayana showered praise upon the makers for their bold and socially relevant approach. Commending the team for infusing entertainment with a thoughtful message, Narayana emphasised the importance of the youth's role in shaping the nation's future. He lauded the film's endeavor to inspire meaningful dialogue and introspection among its viewers. Written by the talented Nag Arjun Reddy, *Gorrela* serves as a rallying cry for conscientious voting, urging listeners to weigh their choices carefully. The energetic musical composition by Anudeep Dev, coupled with spirited vocals from

Anudeep Dev, Niharika Konidela, Yadhu Vamsi, and the ensemble chorus, infuses the song with infectious energy. The teaser had already sparked intrigue, but the full release exceeds expectations, blending entertainment seamlessly with social commentary. An array of vibrant visuals, coupled with Anwar Ali's deft editing and Raju Edurolu's masterful cinematography, promises a visual feast for audiences. Producer Niharika Konidela expressed her excitement at Pink Elephant Pictures' foray into feature films, collaborating with Sriradha Damodar Studios. Director Yadu Vamsi, supported by the dynamic duo of Venkata Subhash Cheerla and Kondal Rao Addagalla on dialogues, aims to deliver a narrative brimming with freshness and vitality. The entire cast and crew, including Sandeep Saroj, Yashwanth Pendyala, and Trinath Varma, contribute their talents to the project, underscoring the collaborative spirit driving *Committee Kurrollu* to success. The audio release handled by the esteemed T-Series label, *Gorrela* marks a significant step forward for the film, building anticipation for its theatrical release in August. As audiences eagerly await the film's arrival, *Committee Kurrollu* promises to be an engaging cinematic experience that sparks both thought and entertainment in equal measure.

'Baahubali: Crown of Blood' will conclude on a cliffhanger,' REVEALS RAJAMOULI



Directed by renowned director SS Rajamouli, the animated series *Baahubali: Crown of Blood* will premiere on Disney Plus Hotstar on May 17. The Telugu trailer for the series was released by the makers recently, and it is currently receiving a lot of publicity. The group held a press conference at Hyderabad's AMB Cinemas on Tuesday. The complete cast, including Sharad Kelkar, who dubbed for Prabhas in Hindi, Shobu Yarlagadda, the producer of *Baahubali*, and show creator Rajamouli, attended the promotional event. In an interview with the media, Rajamouli disclosed that, similar to 'Why Kattappa Killed Baahubali,' the series will likewise conclude on a cliffhanger. "It's a great idea to have Kattappa and Baahubali at odds," Rajamouli remarked. "I firmly feel that many people in India enjoy animation. In Hyderabad, audiences are fond of Japanese anime movies. I believe that viewers should not wear their film glasses when watching the series. Nine episodes of *Baahubali: Crown of Blood* will feature a cliffhanger akin to that of 'Why Kattappa Killed Baahubali.' With a cliffhanger, the series will continue, and it will be interesting," remarked the director.



SKN bags the Dasari Film Award

Producer SKN is making a big name for himself in Tollywood as a successful young producer by producing films with diverse stories to please the audience's taste. Directed by Sai Rajesh and featuring Anand Devarakonda, Vaishnavi Chaitanya, and Viraj Ashwin, *Baby*, produced by him under the banner of Mass Movie Makers, became the biggest blockbuster hit last year. SKN received the Dasari Film Award for 'Best Commercial Film of the Year' for this movie. It was a privilege for him to receive this award

from ace producer Allu Aravind, whom he considers his mentor. *Baby* was released as a small film last year and became a big hit. In Tollywood, where the trend is currently towards raw, rustic, and action movies, the success of the love story *Baby* stands out as particularly noteworthy. *Baby*, which grossed over Rs 100 crore, was a super success across the South. Known as a cult hit, *Baby* has become popular among audiences and within the industry. *Baby* is currently being remade in Bollywood.

ALLU ARJUN EXPRESSES GRATITUDE FOR **ARYA**

National Award-winning actor Allu Arjun marked the 20th anniversary of his blockbuster movie *Arya* on Tuesday. The 2004 film was a major milestone in Arjun's career after he made his debut in Telugu cinema with 2003's *Gangotri*. "Twenty years of *Arya*. It's not just a movie... It's a moment in time that changed the course of my life. Gratitude forever," the 42-year-old star wrote in a post on social media platform X. *Arya*, in which Arjun played the role of the titular protagonist, a free-spirited guy who falls in love with a girl named Geetha, marked the directorial debut of popular filmmaker Sukumar. The actor and the filmmaker later collaborated on *Arya 2*, the 2009 follow-up that also featured Kajal Aggarwal and Navdeep. After the *Arya* films, Arjun and Sukumar reunited for the 2021 blockbuster movie *Pushpa 1: The Rise*, which went on to become one of the biggest money-spinners of the year, earning over Rs 350 crore. The film depicted the rise of a low-wage labourer (played by Arjun) in the smuggling syndicate of red sandalwood, a rare wood that grows only in the Seshachalam Hills of Andhra Pradesh state. The duo is currently awaiting *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, which is currently slated for release on August 15.



SELVARAJ TALKS ABOUT **BISON KAALAMAADAN**

In a recent interview, acclaimed filmmaker Mari Selvaraj provided insights into his highly anticipated project, *Bison Kaalamaadan*, which recently commenced its first schedule shoot spanning 60 days. While the film revolves around the sport of Kabaddi, Selvaraj clarified that it is a work of fiction rather than a biography, promising audiences a fresh and compelling narrative. Speaking about the creative direction of the film, Selvaraj highlighted the importance of a distinctive musical score to complement the script's unique vision. In light of recent controversies, Selvaraj opted for composer Niwas to helm the music, ensuring a seamless integration of sound and storytelling. The film's tagline, "Kalamadan," holds thematic significance, according to Selvaraj, hinting at deeper layers of meaning that will unfold as audiences delve into the cinematic experience. The decision to shoot the first schedule in Tirunelveli underscores the film's commitment to authenticity, with plans for

the next phase of filming to take place in Chennai. An exciting addition to the cast is Anupama Parameswaran, who will portray the female lead, adding depth and complexity to the ensemble. Selvaraj expressed confidence in Parameswaran's ability to bring the character to life, citing her talent and dedication as valuable assets to the project. As production progresses, *Bison Kaalamaadan* promises to deliver a thought-provoking and immersive cinematic experience, blending elements of sports drama with social commentary. With Selvaraj at the helm and a talented cast and crew, anticipation is high for this upcoming film that is poised to captivate audiences with its unique storytelling and thematic richness.



Cinematographer Bharani dons director's hat

A promising new venture is on the horizon as acclaimed cinematographer Bharani K Dharan steps into the director's chair for the first time with the upcoming film, *Sivangi*. With an ensemble cast featuring Anandi, Varalakshmi Sarathkumar, and John Vijay in leading roles, this project promises a captivating narrative that blends family values with the intrigue of a domestic crime thriller. Produced by Naresh Babu P under the esteemed banner of First Copy Movies, *Sivangi* is set to deliver an enthralling cinematic experi-

ence that resonates with audiences of all backgrounds. Director Bharani K Dharan, known for his prolific work behind the camera spanning over 40 films, expressed his enthusiasm for this maiden directorial venture, citing the compelling storyline as a driving force behind the project's allure. "At the heart of *Sivangi* lies a story of resilience and determination in the face of adversity," remarked Director Bharani, adding, "While the film navigates

through unexpected twists and turns, it remains grounded in its exploration of family dynamics and moral complexities." Central to the film's narrative is a focus on female empowerment and the strength of familial bonds, ensuring that *Sivangi* strikes a chord with audiences on multiple levels. With renowned composer AH. Kasif collaborating with Ebenezer Paul to craft the film's musical score, and director Bharani himself assuming the dual role of director and cinematographer, *Sivangi* promises a seamless blend of visual and auditory excellence.

Music director Sai Karthic turns producer for **100 Crores**

There is special attention given to films based on real incidents. Meanwhile, a movie called *100 Crores*, which is inspired by real events in 2016, is getting ready to enthrall the audience. Popular music director Sai Karthic is venturing into production, with the movie being made entertainingly. Alongside Sai Karthic, Divija Karthik is producing the movie under the banner of SS Studios. The film is written and directed by Virat Chakravarthy. Kalyan Chakravarthy, G is the co-producer of this movie, while Venkat Sudhakar is the executive producer. Rahul, Chetan, Yami, Sakshi Chaudhary, Lahari, Annapoornamma, Aishwarya, Bhadram, Inturi Vasu, and Sameer played key roles in this film. Freshly, the first look poster for this film was released at an event organised on Monday. Directors Veera Shankar, Mallik Ram, producer Harshith Reddy, and producer Damodara Prasad attended it as chief guests and also released the first look poster. Later, they extended their best wishes to the entire team.



The grey theme, the grand set-up, and the heavy truck in the first look poster generate a different atmosphere altogether. While the title *100 Crores* alone created curiosity, the first look poster further increased the excitement. Sai Karthic said, "It's based on a true story that happened in 2016. We locked the script, after the Corona phase. This movie has come out well. Everyone who saw it appreciated the content. I am confident that this movie will be a big success." Meanwhile, director Mallik Ram said, "I like Sai Karthic a lot. Even if you call him in the middle of the night, he has no hesitation to give tunes. He encourages new talent. This is Chetan's first film in Telugu. Telugu audiences should encourage this film's unit. I hope it will turn out to be a big hit." The film has music by Sai Karthic himself. Charan Madhavaneni is the cinematographer. Editing is by SB Uddhav, and Wing Chun Anji is the fight master.