



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

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

- G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister P4

Maldives aims to deepen partnership with India



RBI GUW DISCUSSES WAYS TO SCALE UP UPI ECOSYSTEM



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

SATYADEV P12



కూటమలు కట్టినా.. కుట్రలు చేసినా చివరికి చిలత్త చెత్తు బుట్టలో దున్ను చిత్తున్నాయం

సరికొత్త చిలత్త విభిన్నా జగన్

Issued by YSR Congress Party

DON'T MISS...

Posani slams Chiranjeevi for...

Praising Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for successfully executing all the welfare schemes, APFDC Chairman Posani Krishna Murali said the YSRCP government deposited a whopping Rs 2.70 lakh crore into the bank accounts of beneficiaries without any hint of corruption or discrimination, during the last 59 months. Addressing a press conference in Tadepalli on Wednesday, Posani said these welfare schemes have proved beneficial as they are bringing positive changes in the lives of the people. He hit back...

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'Childhood inactivity leads ...

Being sedentary or performing little activity in childhood is associated with heart enlargement, which progressed with an increase in time spent sitting or being inactive, according to new research. An excessive increase in heart mass and size, known as left ventricular hypertrophy, is a known risk factor for heart attacks, stroke and premature death in adults. However, light physical activity of about three or four hours a day, including running errands and playing outdoor games, was found to reverse the...

-PAGE: 5

India overtook Japan to become...

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

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Resurgent RCB take on erratic...

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

-SPORTS

SAM PITRODA's REMARKS

Cong mindset 'racist': PM

PNS ■ RAJAMPET

Slamming the Congress "divisive mindset," Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hit out its leader Sam Pitroda's controversial remarks, and asked if a key ally of the national party, the DMK will snap ties with it for Tamil culture and pride.

Addressing an election rally here, he alleged the Congress was cut off from its roots, wants to divide the country for power and wondered what has befallen the national party. Alleging that the Congress, if voted to power at the Centre, it will bring Article 370 again, cancel CAA, stop the free ration scheme for the poor, and free medical treatment and reverse the SC verdict on Ram mandir and lock it up, Modi asked people if they agree with all of these.

"A big leader has displayed the divisive mindset of Congress. What the man very close to the Gandhi family and the biggest advisor of Shehzada said is very shameful," he said in an obvious reference to Pitroda's comments.

Continued on Page 2

MODI'S V'WADA ROADSHOW CAPS HIS AP POLL CAMPAIGN

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accompanied by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, as well as Jana Sena Chief K Pawan Kalyan, led a vibrant road show through the streets of Vijayawada on Wednesday.

Amid the jubilant atmosphere, Narendra Modi, Chandrababu Naidu, and Pawan Kalyan were prominently featured atop a flower-adorned vehicle, commencing their procession from the IGM Stadium and culminating at Benz Circle.

The roadshow, featuring Prime Minister Modi, garnered an overwhelming response from the public, with throngs of people lining both sides of the 1.5-km MG Road, eagerly extending their greetings to the Prime Minister.

Notably, a significant contingent of farmers from Amaravati, who had



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a roadshow in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

Pic by Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

relinquished their lands for the development of the capital city, gathered at Benz Circle to express their support. The event commenced at approximately 7 pm under tight security protocols, with a procession

of women clad in saffron attire, brandishing placards adorned with Modi's images, leading the convoy. This marked the inaugural participation of the Prime Minister in such a road show within the city.

'Vizag has potential to become capital'

Sribharat's rude shock to TDP, opposes Amaravati as the State capital

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

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

Chandrababu Naidu had announced in his election manifesto that he would revive Amaravati capital city, if his party is voted to power. Along with TDP, alliance partner BJP's national leaders like Amit Shah and J P Nadda have endorsed Amaravati as the State



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

Continued on Page 2

PM Modi 'cheated' AP for 10 years: Sharmila



PNS ■ KADAPA

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

"Sharmila alleged that Modi is "shedding crocodile tears" for Andhra Pradesh because of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

"You are ineligible to enter the state. First, seek the forgiveness of Andhra Pradesh people. For 10 years you have cheated the state and now you are shedding crocodile tears," she said, addressing a press conference in Kadapa.

Displaying a radio, the APCC chief said she is sending it as a gift

to the PM to listen to the 'Mann ki Baat' of the Telugu people from the state. Referring to the recent regular visits of the PM, Sharmila claimed that he is coming because of the polls but not for developing the state.

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

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

She questioned why Andhra Pradesh was backstabbed even after it was promised a special category status in the Parliament and why Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's reverse tendering was not stalled, including on the Polavaram Project, which was allegedly made futile by conspiring to lower its height.

Continued on Page 2



CAT revokes AB's suspension

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), on Wednesday, dismissed the suspension of senior IPS officer A B Venkateswara Rao by the State government. The CAT also directed the State government to pay all arrears to Venkateswara Rao and take him into service.

Venkateswara Rao was placed under suspension by the YSRCP government in 2019. He approached the High Court challenging his suspension. The court directed the State government to take him into service. Following the High Court orders, the State government posted him as Commissioner of Printing and Stationary.

Continued on Page 2

Skill scam case: Relief for Naidu

SC defers by 10 weeks hearing on special leave petition filed by Jagan government, seeking cancellation of bail

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has got a major relief in the multi-crore Skill Development Corporation scam with the Supreme Court deferring by 10 weeks the hearing on the special leave petition filed by the Jagan Mohan Reddy government, seeking cancellation of bail to Chandrababu.

Senior lawyer Ranjit Kumar, arguing for the Crime Investigation Department



(CID) of the Andhra police, told the Bench of Justice Bela Trivedi that the case pertaining to applicability of Section 17-A of the Prevention of Corruption Act was pending before the three-member Bench.

Justice Trivedi wanted to know whether the SLP on bail cancellation could be taken up after the issue on

Section 17-A was resolved. Arguing for Chandrababu, senior lawyer Siddharth Luthra said the CID had already filed the chargesheet in the case, but the court had not taken it into cognizance as the issue of 17-A was not resolved. He pointed out that the bail was granted to the TDP chief by the State High Court much before the Supreme Court took up the case on Section 17-A. Justice Trivedi announced that he would defer the hearing on Chandrababu's bail cancellation petition to July till the three-member Bench decides on the applicability of Section 17-A.

The judge said there was no need to take up the hearing so urgently and would hear the same after summer vacations.

RECOVERY OF GST

SC to Centre: Don't use threats, coercion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to not use "threat and coercion" during search and seizure operations against traders for recovery of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and instead persuade them to clear the dues voluntarily.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi,

which is examining various provisions of the GST Act, said there is no provision under the law which empowers the authorities to exert force for payment of outstanding dues.

"There is no power under the Act to compel any person to pay the tax liability during the search and seizures. Ask your department that the payment should be voluntarily and there should not be use of any force.

K'taka Minister rejects demand for CBI probe in cases against Prajwal



P 5

AstraZeneca withdraws Covid-19 vaccine

Cites that there is surplus of available updated vaccines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

UK-based pharmaceutical major AstraZeneca has started global withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine, which was provided in India as 'Covishield' in partnership with Serum Institute of India, days after it admitted to rare side-effects of blood clotting and lowering of platelet counts.

The withdrawal has been initiated due to a surplus of available updated vaccines since the pandemic, the company said in a statement.

In India, the company's partner Serum Institute of India (SII) said it has stopped the manufacturing and supply of additional doses of Covishield since December 2021 while reiterating that it had disclosed all rare to very rare side-effects,



including Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome, in the packaging insert in 2021.

AstraZeneca had partnered with Oxford University to develop the Covid-19 vaccine, which was sold in India as Covishield and as Vaxzevria in Europe.

"As multiple, variant Covid-19 vaccines have since been developed there is a surplus of available updated vaccines. This has led to a decline in demand for Vaxzevria, which is no longer being manufactured or supplied," AstraZeneca said.

The company further said, "We will now work with regulators and our partners to align on a clear path forward to conclude this chapter and significant contribution to the Covid-19 pandemic."

Earlier, according to global media reports, AstraZeneca had admitted that its Covid-19 vaccine could in very rare cases have the potential to cause a rare side-effect called Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS).

Survey agencies rule the roost in election year

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Who is confusing whom? Whether the voters are confusing the survey agencies or the survey agencies are trying to confuse the voters? During the elections it has become common for several agencies conducting surveys to know the public pulse to whom they are going to vote. At present various agencies are conducting surveys. There are some professional agencies which conduct surveys during every election. For some organisations it has become a fashion to get publicity through the surveys in the elections. If the survey agencies really catch the public mood, there should not be much difference in the outcome of the surveys.

But interestingly, just the opposite to the surveys was conducted by various agencies. In Telangana, about Lok Sabha elections and in Andhra Pradesh mainly on Assembly elections, the agencies are conducting surveys. In Telangana some agencies said that the BJP will get majority seats and some agencies said that the Congress will win in majority seats. Regarding BRS, all the survey agencies expressed the same opinion. They said that the BRS will be in the third place by winning two or three Lok Sabha seats.

In Andhra Pradesh regarding Assembly elections, some agencies said that the ruling YSR Congress headed by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will retain power by winning around 130 seats out of total 175 seats.

Continued on Page 2



PITHAPURAM

It's PK's charisma vs Vanga's credentials

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A sizeable Kapu community voters and anti-incumbency coupled with his personal charisma are what Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan hopes to see him through the hustings in the Pithapuram assembly segment, while his opponent, the YSR Congress party's nominee Vanga Geetha, largely depends on her track record to defeat the actor-politician.



Pithapuram shot into limelight after the segment was allotted to Janasena as part of seat-sharing agreement of NDA and Kalyan, who belongs to the dominant Kapu community of the region, announced his candidature from it.

The move forced the ruling YSRCP to field its sitting Kakinada Lok Sabha member Vanga Geetha, who also belongs to the same forward community, to take him on. The seat allocation to Janasena did not go down well with the supporters of former TDP legislator from the segment SVSN Varma and they raised a hue and cry.

At one point of time, Varma was forced by his followers to contest as independent. However, TDP supremo N Chandrababu intervened and convinced the disgruntled leader

not to take such a step.

Varma later announced his support to Kalyan. The segment has approximately 2.35 lakh voters, of which Kapu community electors stand at 82,000, BC-79,000, SC-43,000 and the rest, others. Varma said as part of the seat sharing agreement among NDA partners, he has been working towards ensuring 100 per cent vote transfer to the Janasena leader.

He said he wanted the TDP chief to ensure taking up some of the projects in the constituency in lieu of his 'sacrificing' his seat. On a general allegation that the accessibility to Kalyan, if elected, will be an issue for common people, Varma said he will be managing in his absence and the Janasena leader will also frequently visit the segment.

"We have already sent messages to one lakh voters so far on the YSRCP government's failures and NDA's agenda. Another 60,000 voters will be touched by Pawan Kalyan in a roadshow on May 10. He had already held a rally covering over 30,000 fishermen in the segment," Varma said. He said Pawan Kalyan will take up the completion of Purushothapatnam lift irrigation project, if elected, as part of the commitment being given to people. Replying to a query, Varma said Kalyan will win with the highest margin of votes. Exuding confidence, he said the NDA expects more than 80 per cent of Kapus to vote in favour of Kalyan.

However, Geetha has a different version to present on Kapus voting en masse. Dismissing the

contention that the image of Pawan Kalyan would help him in the poll race, she said she also held several posts such as MLA and Rajya Sabha member and is close to the masses and enhanced the stature of Pithapuram.

"Yes. There are 80,000 Kapu voters in the constituency. I am confident that all the sections including Kapus will vote for me. If he (Pawan Kalyan) is Kapu, I also am Kapu," she said. When pointed out that Pawan Kalyan recently rented a house in Pithapuram in a bid to send a message that he would be with in public reach, Geetha said taking a house on lease does not necessarily mean that he will stay here.

As part of a seat sharing deal among NDA partner, TDP was allocated 144 Assembly and 17 Lok Sabha constituencies while BJP will contest from six Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly seats.

Janasena will contest two Lok Sabha and 21 Assembly segments. Pawan Kalyan unsuccessfully contested from Bhimavaram and Gajuwaka in the assembly elections in 2019. Elections to the 175-member state Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh are scheduled on May 13 and the counting of votes will be done on June 4.

Water woes and anti-incumbency fuel some hope for BJP in Rajampet

PNS ■ RAJAMPET

The arid plains of Rajampet, a drought-stricken region in Andhra Pradesh, have become a battleground where the ruling YSRCP government's perceived failure to address the severe water crisis is fueling an anti-incumbency wave, setting the stage for a potential political upheaval.

In this parched belt, where acute drinking water shortages and inadequate irrigation facilities have crippled economic growth and job opportunities, a perfect storm is brewing.

The BJP, bolstered by its alliance with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena coalition, is seizing the moment, capitalizing on the prevailing discontent to make inroads into this arid region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address an election rally in Kalikiri, Pileru assembly constituency, in support of BJP's Rajampet MP candidate, N Kiran Kumar Reddy, who was the former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

This underscores the saffron party's determination to quench the electorate's thirst for change.

From Rajampet in Annamaya district to Rayachoti in Kadapa, and Tamballapalle, Madanapalle, and Punganur in Chittoor, the



lack of water has become the primary concern for the electorate. Despite several projects being initiated, none have materialized, hampering economic activity and depriving the region of much-needed job opportunities.

Midhun Reddy, the incumbent MP and the YSRCP's floor leader in the Lok Sabha, acknowledges the water woes of the region but blames the TDP for the stalled projects. However, he promises to complete the projects if elected for a third term, asserting that about 50 per cent of the work has already been completed.

work has been completed, the rest will be finished in the next two years," Midhun said while he was on a door-to-door campaign.

The priority area is to implement the drinking water and irrigation projects, he added.

One of the major projects, the Avulapalli Reservoir project, envisioned as a panacea for the region's water woes, has been mired in controversy.

Land acquisition issues, legal battles with the National Green Tribunal, and inadequate compensation for displaced families have eroded the goodwill of the YSRCP government in at least four out of seven assembly seats in the Rajampet Parliamentary segment.

Land acquisition for the project, spanning a vast 1,522 acres, was underway until May last year when all work came to a grinding halt due to legal hurdles.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed a staggering Rs 100-crore penalty on the state government for alleged violations of environmental norms, casting a shadow over the project's future.

While the Supreme Court provided temporary relief by staying the NGT order pending appeal, it mandated the state to deposit Rs 25 crore with the Krishna River

Management Board (KRM), with the final amount subject to the court's judgment.

The uncertainty surrounding the project's fate has left the region's residents in limbo, their hopes for a reprieve from the water crisis hanging by a thread.

The BJP is pinning its hopes on Kiran Kumar Reddy, who resigned from the Congress in 2014 to protest the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh.

After his own political party failed to win any seats and was dissolved in 2018, Reddy rejoined the Congress briefly before switching to the BJP in April 2023, ahead of the elections.

"The BJP alliance with TDP and Jana Sena will help Kiran Kumar win. There are 100 per cent chances," says a resident of Rajampet, Syed Jalal.

Local BJP leaders are confident that the alliance with TDP and Jana Sena, coupled with Reddy's clean image and administrative skills, will help them secure the Rajampet seat.

They claim to have a vote share of around 10 per cent, while the TDP has 40 per cent, and Jana Sena has less than 5 per cent in the constituency.

There are 17 lakh voters in Rajampet Parliamentary segment. The polling for assembly and Lok Sabha elections is scheduled on May 13 in the state.

CAT revokes AB's suspension...

Continued from Page 1

However, in two days, the government placed him under suspension once again for speaking to the media violating service rules. The government suspended Venkateswara Rao on charges of corruption in purchase of security gadgets by the State government during the TDP regime. It was alleged that Venkateswara Rao's son was involved in the deal and garnered a huge amount of money.

He challenged the government's decision in the court and later in the CAT. The CAT found his suspension invalid and directed the State government to give him posting.

The CAT said that an all-India service officer cannot be suspended twice on the same charges.

Cong mindset 'racist'...

Continued from Page 1

"Congress feels those in northeastern India look like Chinese. Can the country accept things like this? Congress feels people in the south look like Africans, will they accept this," he asked, referring to Pitroda's controversial remarks.

He asked the Congress Chief Ministers of Karnataka and Telangana, Siddaramaiah and A Revanth Reddy respectively, if they would accept "such an accusation". He asked if DMK President and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, "who speaks of Tamil culture, such a serious allegation has been made--will DMK snap ties with Congress, for Tamil pride and the Tamil people."

"Do they have the guts?" In an obvious reference to Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Modi said the Congress feels that the people in the western parts of the country look like

Arabs. "I want to ask...do people of Maharashtra accept such language? Do north Indians look like White (people)... what has happened to the Congress party," he said. In an apparent reference to Rahul Gandhi, Modi implied Pitroda was "shehzada's philosopher and guide."

Modi further said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had recently talked about a "people of a particular colour in the US setting (exam) paper." He made similar comments about the same in India which Shehzade's guru has done. Both their comments are connected, and well thought out. He asked the Congress party not to ridicule Indians, even if it had no issues to talk about. "The country is listening to and understanding every divisive talk of Congress," he said and added the party should be punished.

Taking a dig at the YSR Congress government in Andhra Pradesh, Modi said it has betrayed people's trust

and alleged ministers were running 'rowdy raj' in the state. Stepping up the attack on the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government, Modi said it was due to the sand mafia to which the Annamaya Dam in the region breached damaging 25-30 villages and killing many. "Such a mafia is being helped by the government. Let me tell the mafia--the countdown for the YSRCP government's exit has started. The NDA government will give treatment to this mafia," he said. Modi said the people of Andhra Pradesh voted for the YSRCP government with great hopes and dreams, but the trust has been betrayed.

Listing out various infra projects being taken up in the Rayalaseema region, Modi said in the next five years, development will be at its peak and that the BJP has announced that bullet trains shall be a reality in southern India.

'Modi violating poll code, ECI guidelines'

CPI national secretary writes letter to ECI seeking action against PM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The flagrant violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and other directives of the Election Commission of India (ECI) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through his conduct as a daily affair is a matter of deep concern for a fair and free election in this democratic country, alleged Communist Party of India (CPI) national secretary Dr K Narayana.

Narayana complained to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar against PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday. Despite the total ban imposed by the ECI in this regard, Modi violated the guidelines, he said. Narayana addressed the media along with party State secretariat members Akkineni Vanaja and KVV Prasad at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Wednesday.

Midhun Reddy looking for a hat-trick win

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rajampet Parliament constituency is one of the key constituencies in Andhra Pradesh. MP PV Midhun Reddy of YSRCP is contesting again and hopes for a historic win for the third time in a row.

From NDA, former Chief Minister of united AP Nallari Kiran Kumar Reddy is contesting. He is contesting elections after a gap of 10 years. In the meantime, he left the Congress and joined BJP.

Rajampeta constituency comes under Chittoor and Kadapa districts covering Pileru, Punganuru, Madanapalle, Thamballapalle, Rayachoti, Rajampet and Koduru Assembly segments.

In Punganur Assembly constituency, Peddireddy Ramachandrarreddy (father of Midhun Reddy) who is the present minister in the Jagan Mohan Reddy Cabinet, is the YSRCP candidate. Sitting MLA and YSRCP Thamballapalle candidate P Dwarakanath Reddy is



the uncle of Midhun Reddy. On the other hand, Nallari Kishore Kumar Reddy (brother of Kiran Kumar Reddy) is contesting as TDP candidate from Pileru constituency. YSRCP is contesting in all the seven Assembly constituencies while in six constituencies, TDP has fielded candidates. Alliance partner Jana Sena is contesting in Koduru.

Senior YSRCP leader Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and Midhun Reddy have been given key responsibilities by the party high command to oversee the election campaigning in combined Rayalaseema and East and West Godavari districts.

Out of the seven Assembly segments, Pileru and Rajampet are expected to see tough fight to the ruling party. In the remaining five constituencies, it will be a cake walk for the party, say political analysts.

It can be recalled that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy addressed a public meeting with a huge gathering. The party leaders are concentrating on all the mandals and Midhun Reddy is closely coordinating with party local leaders. Sources say that in KV Palle mandal of the constituency, there is a split in the TDP vote bank Kamma community, and YSRCP is trying to turn the situation in their favour.

In Rajampet constituency, ZP Chairman and former MLA A Amaranath Reddy is the YSRCP candidate and the party is concentrating on all mandals.

PM Modi's public meeting was not up to the expectations of the NDA leaders in AP as Modi was soft towards the ruling party. He did not even mention the Super 6 and the welfare schemes of TDP-JSP.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Pratipada: May 08 08:51 AM to May 09 06:21 AM
Dwitiya: May 09 06:21 AM to May 10 04:18 AM
Tritiya: May 10 04:18 AM to May 11 02:50 AM
Nakshatram: Kritika: May 08 01:33 PM to May 09 11:55 AM
Rohini: May 09 11:55 AM to May 10 10:47 AM
Rahukalam: 1:48 PM to 3:24 PM
Yamagandam: 5:50 AM to 7:25 AM
Varjyam: 03:09 AM to 04:41 AM
Gulika: 9:01 AM to 10:37 AM
Ambitakalam: 09:41 AM to 11:10 AM
Ahhit Muhurtham: 11:47 AM to 12:38 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Isolated Thunderstorms
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 58%
Sunrise: 5:39 AM
Sunset: 6:29 PM
Updated: May 8, 2024 5:00 PM

Social media revolutionises election campaigns

Candidates utilise detailed voter databases to target individuals directly through messaging apps and social media accounts

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the past, election campaigns relied heavily on physical tools like party flags, banners, and campaign chariots, but with the dawn of social media, a seismic shift has occurred in the strategies employed by political parties. While traditional methods still hold sway, the digital realm has become a battleground for garnering voter attention and support.

Gone are the days of spending lakhs on physical campaign materials. Today, parties recognise the importance of technology in influencing voters. This dual approach sees major parties engaging in both traditional campaigning and leverag-



ing the power of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp.

The ubiquity of smartphones has democratised access to social media, with 95 per cent of the population owning a device capable of accessing these platforms. Even those unfamiliar with English are navigating these digital spaces, facilitated by the availability of social

media features on basic phone models. Political candidates now utilise detailed voter databases to target individuals directly through messaging apps and social media accounts. Specialised teams are employed to craft and disseminate tailored content, ranging from videos highlighting candidate strengths to critiques of opponents' weaknesses.

The sheer volume of content circulating on social media is staggering. From WhatsApp groups boasting thousands of members to leaders with extensive followings on various platforms, information flows ceaselessly, often blurring the lines between truth and falsehood.

Survey agencies rule...

Continued from Page 1

Some other agencies said that the TDP alliance will win in the elections and the alliance parties will get around 140 seats. There are allegations in the political circles that there are some 'paid surveys' to boost the prospects of some political parties. By going through the survey results, it is common to get a doubt about who is confusing whom. When some agencies said that the YSR Congress will win majority seats, the opposition parties are denying it. In the same way, if any agency says that the TDP alliance is going to get majority seats, the ruling YSR Congress is condemning it.

In addition to various survey organizations, the online betting agencies are also conducting surveys. The political parties are also conducting their own surveys to know about the political future of their parties. According to sources, the betting agencies are offering highest amount to punters who bets on TDP alliance. The betting agencies are offering less amount to the punters who bets on YSR Congress. Usually the betting agencies offer less amount to the political party which has winning chances, according to punters.

'Vizag has potential...

Continued from Page 1

But interestingly, Bharat said it was not possible to develop Amaravati as the capital city, as it required massive investments. Bharat went on to say that compared to Amaravati, Visakhapatnam has the potential to become the capital city. "It is a growth engine and has a lot of scope to be developed as a capital city in a short time. Amaravati is a 20 years story," he said, adding if Visakhapatnam was developed as the capital city, the revenue from the port city could be used to develop Andhra Pradesh more. He further said that as the debt burden of the State is already high, it is not prudent to take more loans to develop Amaravati as the capital city, which has no resources to generate revenue. In a way, Bharat has endorsed the three-capital concept of Jagan Mohan Reddy, who has declared his steadfast commitment to making Visakhapatnam the executive capital of the State.

Meanwhile, speaking to 'The Pioneer', YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu said that the opinion expressed by Bharat is the opinion of the people across Andhra Pradesh. He accepted that Vizag is the growth engine, which is a fact. Vishnu said that Chief Minister Jagan has been saying time and again that Vizag is ideal for executive capital, and governance can be started there with minimal investment of funds unlike huge investments in Amaravati.

PM Modi...

Continued from Page 1

Likewise, she questioned why the Amaravati capital city, whose foundation was laid by Modi did not see the light of day even after 10 years. She also pointed out the non-realisation of bifurcation promises such as the Visakhapatnam railway zone. Sharmila is contesting against her cousin Y S Avinash Reddy, the YSRCP candidate, for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat in the ensuing elections.

Communist Party of India (CPI), Congress and CPI (M) are INDIA bloc partners in Andhra Pradesh. Elections for the 175-member Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh are scheduled on May 13 and the counting of votes will be held on June 4.

Role of POs, APOs crucial in conducting free and fair polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has said that the role of the Presiding Officers (PO) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APO) is crucial in conducting the elections. He added that they should strive to hold the election peacefully.

He said elections are like an examination, so, POs and APOs should carefully read the hand book and be aware of the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines.

Balaji attended the training programmes for POs and APOs of Gudivada and Gannavaram Assembly constituencies held at their respective constituency headquarters on Wednesday.



Krishna District Collector DK Balaji addressing the training session for Presiding Officers and Assistant Presiding Officers in Krishna district on Wednesday

The training for Gannavaram segment POs and APOs was held at Usharama Engineering College at Telaprolu while the Gudivada segment's training was held at KRVNB Engineering College auditorium at Gudivada. Speaking on the occasion,

Collector Balaji said that all POs and APOs should reach their respective reception centres on time.

He made it clear that Divyangajans, pregnant women, cancer patients and those who have been sick for a long time are exempted from

the election duties. He said all the polling staff should not ask for exemption from the election duties for other health reasons.

Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma, Gudivada Returning Officer P Padmavati and others attended the programme.

87.61% students qualify in AP POLYCET-2024

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ch Nagarani, Commissioner, Technical Education, and Chairperson, Technical Education and Training Board, has said that 87.61 percent of the students qualified in the POLYCET-2024 entrance exam. The results were released on Wednesday at the office of the Commissioner of Technical Education, Amaravati.

Nagarani said that a total of 1,42,035 students appeared for the entrance examination and 1,24,430 qualified. Of the 56,464 girls who appeared for the exam, 89.81 percent passed. Among the boys, 85,561 appeared and 86.16 percent qualified.

The Commissioner explained that while the minimum qualifying marks for POLYCET pass is 30 out of 120 (25 per cent), SC and ST candidates are exempted from the minimum qualifying marks. Visakhapatnam district has



the highest number of 87.17 percent qualified candidates, while Alluri Sitaramaraju district has the lowest number of 70.46 percent. In cases of equal marks, a better rank will be allotted to the student who has secured more marks in mathematics.

Nagarani explained that if they have scored the same marks in mathematics, first chemistry and then physical

science will be taken into consideration. If they get equal marks in all three subjects, they will be given the same rank and seats will be allotted on the basis of class 10 marks at the time of admissions. If those marks are also the same, the decision will be taken on the basis of their date of birth.

Nagarani announced that the rank cards can be downloaded from the website and

the counselling dates will be released soon.

The academic year 2024-2025 will start on June 10. As many as 18,141 seats are available in 88 government polytechnics and 64,729 seats are available in 179 private polytechnics. Admissions to two, three and three-and-a-half-year diploma courses will be provided in 82,870 seats in 32 departments in 267 colleges.

Posani slams Chiranjeevi for canvassing for Pawan

YSRCP govt's welfare schemes bringing positive changes in the lives of people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Praising Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for successfully executing all the welfare schemes, APFDC Chairman Posani Krishna Murali said the YSRCP government deposited a whopping Rs 2.70 lakh crore into the bank accounts of beneficiaries without any hint of corruption or discrimination, during the last 59 months.

Addressing a press conference in Tadepalli on Wednesday, Posani said these welfare schemes have proved beneficial as they are bringing positive changes in the lives of the people. He hit back at the critics for finding fault with the DBT scheme and asked, "Don't we see the lives helping the have-nots in our society?"



What's wrong if the governance does the same?" He urged the detractors to stop misleading people about the welfare schemes of the current dispensation.

Targeting the previous TDP regime, Posani remarked that the Andhra Pradesh State incurred a huge revenue deficit during Chandrabab Naidu's

rule. The Opposition Leader had also promised the women voters that he would redeem the gold pledged by them in the banks if he returned to power in the 2014 elections, he said.

Turning his ire at the Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party, Posani said Chiranjeevi's Praja Rajyam Party (before merging with Congress) won 18 seats out of 294 Assembly seats during 2019 Assembly elections, however, the party and its leadership failed to discuss and address the people's problems in the State Assembly. How can the Megastar ask people to vote for his brother's Jana Sena Party in the May 13 elections? He wondered whether "politically retired" Chiranjeevi is now canvassing for his brother.

Battle for Bobbili: Welfare schemes, irrigation projects, jobs key issues

YSRCP's Sambangi Venkata China Appalanaidu faces TDP's RSVKK Ranga Rao

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Bobbili Assembly constituency is currently a battleground as the ruling YSRCP's Sambangi Venkata China Appalanaidu faces off against TDP's RSVKK Ranga Rao, popularly known as Baby Nayana. Both candidates are vying for the support of the diverse demographic composition of the constituency, with key issues such as welfare schemes, irrigation projects, and employment opportunities taking centre stage in the electoral discourse.

Bobbili constituency, encompassing Bobbili, Ramabhadrapuram, Badangi, and Therlam mandals, is characterised by its diverse demographic composition. However, the Koppula Velama community holds significant sway over the electorate, with the SC and Kapu communities also wielding considerable influence.



Sambangi Venkata China Appalanaidu, representing the ruling party and hailing from the Koppula Velama community, exudes confidence in his victory. He banks on a track record of implementing welfare schemes over the past five years. However, his opponent, TDP candidate Baby Nayana, is determined to clinch victory. Nayana aims to highlight

employment, exacerbated by the closure of industries in the Growth Centre due to increased power tariffs, remains a pressing concern. The agricultural community, grappling with irrigation woes, seeks assurance from candidates regarding the completion of pending irrigation projects and canal maintenance. Moreover, infrastructure deficiencies, such as dilapidated bridges, add to the constituents' woes, affecting daily commutes and economic activities.

Both candidates have articulated their campaign promises, with Baby Nayana pledging to address water scarcity, revive industries, and enhance employment prospects through regular job fairs. Meanwhile, Sambangi Venkata China Appalanaidu emphasises his commitment to completing pending projects and continuing welfare initiatives for the constituency's uplift.

Rs.1 cr unaccounted money seized from TDP leader's house

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Just six days ahead of the general elections, the flying squad of the Mylavaram Assembly constituency seized unaccounted money to the tune of Rs.1 crore from the house of TDP leader Aluru Suresh at Gollapudi on Wednesday.

Based on the information received from the Bhavanipuram police, the flying squad conducted checks on Suresh's house and found the money.

According to the officials, Aluru Suresh is a follower of TDP Mylavaram Assembly constituency candidate Vasantha Krishna Prasad. The TDP leadership kept the money at Suresh's house to distribute it to the voters a day before the polling.

The flying squad searched Suresh's house for several hours and did not allow anyone into the house.

The officials sent the total money in a big suitcase and handed it to the Bhavanipuram police.

1,128 C-Vigil grievances resolved in NTR district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao revealed that as many as 1,128 grievances out of a total of 1,131 were resolved through the C-Vigil since the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force in the district. The remaining complaints are in the progress stage and will be resolved soon, he said. In a press release issued here on Wednesday, the Collector stated that there were another 2,782 complaints resolved out of a total of 2,867 through the Voter Help Line, and National Grievance Services Portal (NGSP). All the 571 complaints that come to the Voter Helpline were resolved, he said.



Also, he said that the NGSP received a total of 911 grievances, of which 840 were resolved. Additionally, 46 out of 48 WhatsApp complaints, 82 of 87 Complaint Management System, and 14 out of 16 CEO emails were resolved in the district. They were concentrating on every complaint and trying to resolve them, he added.

Only INDIA bloc can ensure sensible rule in country: Valluru Bhargav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Congress party's Vijayawada Lok Sabha candidate Valluru Bhargav has stated that people are responding in favour of his party and its election manifesto for the general elections. If the people voted for the Congress party, it would give a sensible rule in the country, he said. Also, he added that if the INDIA bloc comes to power, it would be easy to implement the Special Category Status for the State.

Valluru Bhargav participated in the 'Meet The Press' organised by the APUWJ Krishna Urban and the Press Club in Vijayawada on



Wednesday. He said that a sensible rule is only possible with the INDIA bloc under the leadership of the Congress party. He stated that under the special circumstances that prevailed in the State, Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated by the Congress party. After it came to power, BJP neglected the demand for SCS in the past 10 years, Bhargav said.

He said that the State would be developed along with the Special Category Status. Also, youth would get more employment opportunities in the State. However, BJP is ruling the country by intensifying communal, and religious disputes among the people. In this situation, people are to vote for the INDIA bloc candidates in the upcoming elections, he urged.

He said that Mallikharjuna Kharge, All India Congress Party president, Sitaram Yechury, CPM general secretary, and D Raja, the CPI general secretary would attend a public meeting in Vijayawada on May 10. The three top leaders would explain the BJP-led NDA government's misrule and the agenda of the INDIA bloc in this public meeting, he explained. Vijayawada Press Club president K Jaya Raju presided over the programme and APUWJ State general secretary Chandu Janardhan, Krishna Urban president Chava Ravi, Press Club secretary D Naga Raju and others were present.



Two girls drowned in tank

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Two teenage girls were drowned in an irrigation tank when they entered to wash clothes at Dondabanda village in Kanchikacherla mandal on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased Lakshmi (15) and Radha (14) entered an irrigation tank to

wash clothes. They slipped and drowned in the tank. The families of deceased girls migrated to AP from Odhisha and eked out livelihood by working as agriculture workers. The bodies of the two girls fished out from the tank and shifted to the GGH for post-mortem. The police registered a case.

NRIs from 15 nations uniting for Jagan

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Venkat S Medapati, NRI hailing from the USA, has affirmed that Visakhapatnam will indeed serve as the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh. Citing its cosmopolitan essence and well-established infrastructure, Medapati exuded confidence in the city's suitability for this crucial role. NRIs from more than 15 countries including USA, UK, Singapore, Canada and UAE converged in Vizag to rally behind Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's re-election campaign for his progressive agenda and welfare schemes.

During a gathering attended by intellectuals, businessmen, and educators, Medapati reiterated the people's support for Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, commending his visionary leadership and dedication to welfare initiatives. He emphasized the government's swift response during the COVID-19 pandemic, which garnered widespread recognition and appreciation. Amidst opposition attempts to spread misinformation, NRIs urged the people of



Visakhapatnam, particularly intellectuals, to disseminate accurate information regarding the state government's welfare schemes. He emphasised the importance of prioritising developmental efforts over considerations of caste, community, or religion. Professor Hanumanthu Lajapati Rai, former Vice Chancellor of Ambedkar University and convener of No-Political JAC,

praised Visakhapatnam's rapid growth trajectory, attributing it to the city's status as a vibrant port and industrial hub. Rai highlighted Chief Minister Jagan's visionary allocation of Rs 1.05 lakh crore to bolster connectivity, infrastructure, and industry, envisioning Visakhapatnam as a premier investment destination and a model city. Despite initiatives such as

Ease of Doing Business and single desk promotion, Lajapati Rai articulated that NRIs are unable to use the true potential for setting up industries in spite of the government facilitating 100 per cent reimbursement of stamp duty and land parcels on discounted rates. Rai stressed the need for NRIs to actively engage in the development of backward districts, advocating for partnerships to

empower local youth through skill development initiatives.

Lajapati Rai urged that NRI community to explore in Visakhapatnam's potential in various sectors, including tourism, film industry, and logistics, which has been underscored by Niti Aayog, with its abundant natural beauty, industrial prowess, and robust connectivity making it an attractive investment.

General Elections 2024 (Lok Sabha and APLA) चुनाव का पर्व DESH KA GARV

Documents that can be used as Proof of Identity at Polling Station

Election Date: 13th MAY, 2024

EPIC 1	Those electors who are not able to produce the EPIC can carry any of the following documents.
Aadhar Card 2	Smart Card 8 (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour)
MNREGA Job Card 3	Passport 9
Passbook (Issued by Bank / Post Office with photo) 4	Pension Document With photo 10
Health Insurance Smart Card (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour) 5	Service Identity Card (Issued to employees by Government/ Govt. PSUs/ Public Limited Companies) 11
Driving License 6	Official Identity Card Issued to MPs / MLAs / MLCs 12
Pan Card 7	Unique Disability ID (UDID) 13

Please Note:

- Photo Voter Slip can be used for guidance but not as an Identity Proof at Polling Station.
- Cell Phones and Electronic gadgets will not be allowed in the polling booth.

Call 1950 Toll Free

Scan here: www.voters.eci.gov.in

Chief Electoral Officer, Andhra Pradesh

Expedite steps at polling stations: DC

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar directed the election officials concerned to ensure that arrangements for polling should be completed expeditiously following the guidelines of ECI.

The Collector held a meeting with the Returning Officers, AROs, MPDOs and other officials here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector told them to take steps to provide all needed facilities to the polling stations. He said that the polling staff and officials would reach



the polling stations a day before the polling so that all arrangements for their accommodation must be made.

The Collector also directed them to complete the barricading, lighting arrangements and provide furniture to the polling

stations at the earliest. He said that the officials should take steps to regulate voters at the polling stations and ensure

that they stand in queue. A medical camp should be set up at the polling station and arrangements should be made to provide drinking water, he told them. He also asked them to set up a help desk at the polling stations and arrange slots for parking of vehicles.

"Sticks, bricks and construction material should not be found near the polling stations. Special drives should be taken up on May 10 and 11 to clean the polling stations," he ordered the officials. Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna and other officials were among those who were present.

YSRCP-TDP activists clash during voting from home

PNS ■ NARASARAOPEET

Two TDP activists were injured in a clash that took place between the YSRCP and TDP activists during voting from home at Madala village in Muppalla mandal on Wednesday.

Police said that the election officials conducted voting from home for voters above 85 years of age. Election officials went to the houses of voters above 85 years of age and made them cast their vote at their homes.



A large number of YSRCP and TDP activists gathered at the village.

However, during the voting from home process, a clash took place between the YSRCP

and the TDP activists as they pelted stones on each other. TDP activists Kanala Pulla Reddy and Ravipati Nageswara Rao suffered injuries in the stone pelting incident.

They were admitted to the area hospital in Sattenapalli. Later they were shifted to the GGH for better treatment. Sattenapalli TDP candidate Kanna Lakshminarayana visited the injured TDP activist in the hospital and infused them with confidence stating that they would stand with them.

Jagan Reddy should be voted to power to implement welfare schemes: Bharat Ram

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

YSRCP MLA candidate Margani Bharat Ram reiterated that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is committed to the welfare of the poor and he always strives for their uplift. He appealed to the people to give him one more opportunity to serve the people and implement the welfare schemes.

Rajahmundry MP and City MLA candidate Margani Bharat Ram has speeded up his election campaign touching every locality. He interacted with many people and elicited their views and problems. He toured in the 6 and 49 wards on Wednesday where he received overwhelming response from the denizens. Addressing them on the occasion, Bharat Ram TDP chief and former Chief Minister was the Chief Minister for 14 years and Opposition leaders for 15 years but he failed to understand what the people want from the government.



"Jagan Mohan Reddy during his marathon Padayatra knew the problems and grievances of people and he has taken steps to resolve them after assuming charge as Chief Minister. Jagan Mohan Reddy has earned goodwill of the poor and they are ready to elect him for the second time as the Chief Minister," Margani Bharat Ram made it clear.

Only the Jagan Mohan Reddy headed government can provide a welfare govern-

ment, he said, adding that welfare and development is possible only with Jagan Mohan Reddy. Bharat Ram warned people that if Chandrababu Naidu is voted to power, the implementation of welfare schemes would be stopped.

"In 2019, Chandrababu Naidu made many accusations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and he even abused him personally. Now Naidu is praising the Prime Minister and aligned with the BJP. The people of the state

should keep in view the double standards of Naidu," he said and described him as an opportunistic politician.

Taking a dig at the Adireddy family, people of the area knew how the Adireddy family had earned hundreds of crores of rupees. Bharat Ram appealed to the voters to elect him and Rajahmundry city MLA and assured them of serving better. He also highlighted his achievements as an MP of Rajahmundry constituency.

House of YSRCP leader hosting HM attacked

PNS ■ ELURU

Tension prevailed at Nallajerla as some TDP activists allegedly attacked the house of former ZPTC Subramanyam where Home Minister Taneti Vanita was having dinner on the night of Tuesday and vandalized furniture and smashed windscreens of vehicle and also damaged the sound system of a campaign vehicle.

The violence incident took place on the night of Tuesday when the Home Minister halted her campaign to have dinner in the house of the YSRCP leader. Some TDP activists allegedly attacked the house. They damaged furniture, smashed the windscreen of a vehicle and damaged the sound system of a campaign vehicle. They wielded sticks and pelting stones created a panicky situation at the house where the Home Minister was staying for about 15 minutes.



The YSRCP activists clashed with the thrown pelting TDP activists in which seven activists of both the parties suffered injuries. SP Jagadish rushed to Nallajerla and visited the place. The police registered cases on the incident, examined the CCTV footage and detained some activists.

Responding to the incident, Home Minister Taneti Vanita said that when she was in YSRCP leader Subramanyam's house, the TDP activists damaged furniture and vehicles.

She alleged that TDP candidate Venkata Raju was among those who attacked the house. With the defeat of fear, the TDP activists attacked the house, she slammed.

Eight trainee IPS officers put on election duty

PNS ■ KAKINADA

As many as eight trainee IPS officers were sent for election duty in Kakinada district under the directions from the state police headquarters.

The trainee IPS officers reported to the district Superintendent of Police, S Satish Kumar at the district police office on Wednesday.

All of the IPS officers are undergoing training at the Sri Sardar Vallabhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad.

SP Sathish Kumar explained to them the district topography, geographical conditions, and social and political situations, enabling them to have an idea on the region for performing their duties effectively. SP later told the media that the eight IPS trainee officers' services would be utilised for election duty in various places in Kakinada and Peddapuram police sub-divisions.

Revanth Reddy an accidental CM: Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

Kishan Reddy said that the Congress' campaign stating that the BJP would scrap reservations failed to impress people.

The people are condemning the falsehood being spread by the Congress. The beneficiaries of reservations are extending sup-



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

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

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

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

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

Parties target diverse voter groups

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the political climate heats up in Andhra Pradesh, political parties are intensifying their efforts to appeal to a wide range of voter demographics. Recognising the significance of each vote, prominent contenders like the YSRCP and the TDP-BJP-Jana Sena alliance are strategically targeting various communities, religious groups, and professional associations.

Caste and religious affiliations hold considerable influence in elections, prompting parties to woo these groups by promising enhanced representation and addressing specific concerns. Notably, settlers in urban centers like Visakhapatnam, originating from diverse regions within the State, are receiving focused attention from political entities, especially from the northern coastal districts of Vizianagaram and Srikakulam.

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

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

Name and address of candidate: **RAGHURAMI REDDY SETTIPALLY**, Door No.2/84-A, A. Nakkaladinne Village, Chapadu Mandal, YSR District, Andhra Pradesh.

Name of political party: **YUVAJANA SRAMIKA RYTHU CONGRESS PARTY**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **Legislative Assembly**
*Name of Constituency: **133 - Mydukur Assembly Constituency**

I, **RAGHURAMI REDDY SETTIPALLY**, a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and date	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Mydukur	FIR No. 436 dated 21.08.2018	Final Report filed	143, 186, 153, 353, 355, 506 r/w 149 of IPC
2	Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Mydukur	FIR No. 191, dated 22.06.2016	Final Report filed	189, 506 r/w 34 of IPC
3	STC No.1/2023, Spl. Court for the Trial of Criminal Cases relating to Elected M.P.s and M.L.As for the state of A.P., RPF, Kadapa	Crime No.8/2022, RPF, Kadapa	Trial started	146, 147, 172-A of Railways Act
4	Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Mydukur	FIR No. 418, dated 8-8-2018	Final Report filed	341, 188 r/w 34 of IPC

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl. No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum punishment imposed
1	Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Kadapa, 18-11-2014	Wrongfully restraining any person, fine of Rs.400/-	Fine of Rs.400/-

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAS, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency

Note: 1. The particulars regarding criminal cases pending against the candidate shall be in bold letters.
2. The matter in newspapers shall be published in font size of at least 12.

Sd/-
Raghurami Reddy Settippally

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

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

Name and address of candidate: **K.V.USHA**

Name of political party: **YSRCP**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **AP LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION-2024**
*Name of Constituency: **158-PENKONDA ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY**

I **K.V.USHA** (name of candidate), a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases

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

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

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

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

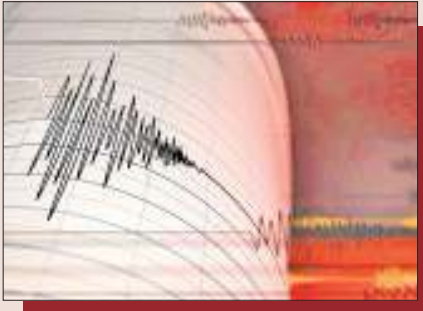
Note:- 1. The particulars regarding criminal cases pending against the candidate shall be in bold letters.
2. The matter in newspapers shall be published in font size of at least 12.
3. Details should be given separately for each case in separate rows.
4. If a candidate is contesting an election on the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

Sd/-
K. V. USHA

INDIA CORNER

Two tremors of below 4 magnitude recorded near Talala town in Gujarat

A tremor of 3.7 magnitude hit Talala, a town in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district, on Wednesday afternoon, which was soon followed by another tremor of 3.4 magnitude, the Institute of Seismological Research (ISR) said. The 3.7 magnitude tremor was recorded with its epicentre around 13 kilometres from north-northeast (NNE) from Talala in Saurashtra region of the state at 3.14 pm, the ISR said in its report. At 3.18 pm, another tremor of 3.4 magnitude hit with its epicentre 12 km NNE from Talala, it said. No damage to life or property was reported, the district administration said. A 7.7 magnitude earthquake with its epicentre in Kutch shook Gujarat on January 26, 2001. It was the third largest and second most destructive in India in two centuries. A large number of towns and villages in the district suffered almost complete destruction, killing around 13,800 people and leaving 1.67 lakh injured.



Five arrested for gangrape of 15-year-old girl in MP

Five persons were arrested on Wednesday for alleged gangrape of a 15-year-old girl in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district, police said. The incident had taken place under the Kotwali police station limits on Monday evening when the girl was returning from a coaching class. The arrested men were identified as Aishwarya Nidhi Gupta (36), Saleem Qureshi (22), Kailash Panika (29), Saleem (18) and Afzal Ansari (28). All five were booked for rape under the relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, said Superintendent of Police Kumar Prateek. Earlier, Kotwali police station in-charge Raghendra Tiwari had told reporters that the accused accosted the girl when she was chatting with a friend on her way back from the coaching class. They asked the two girls why they were standing there, threatened them, and started shooting their video.



Sibal to contest polls for SC Bar Association president's post

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal has announced his candidature for the post of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president, elections to which are slated to be held on May 16. A Harvard Law School graduate, Sibal was the additional solicitor general of India during 1989-90. He was designated as senior advocate in 1983. Between 1995 and 2002, the former Union minister served three times as the SCBA president. SCBA Honorary Secretary Rohit Pandey said the veteran lawyer is contesting for the post of the president. Senior advocate Adish Aggarwala is currently the president of the SCBA. The top court had earlier directed that some posts in the executive committee of the SCBA be reserved for women members. A bench of justices Surya Kant and K V Vishwanathan had said it is of the view that the SCBA is a premier institution and is an integral part of the highest judicial forum of the country.



Maldives aims to deepen partnership with India

PNS ■ MALE

Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer on Wednesday left for India on his "very first bilateral official visit", the maiden high-level visit from Male since bilateral ties came under severe strain after President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader, assumed office six months ago. During his visit from May 8 to 10, Zameer will meet with Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar and hold discussions on deepening and expanding the longstanding partnership between the Maldives and India, the foreign ministry here said in a statement. This is Foreign Minister Zameer's first official visit to India since assuming office. "Departing to New Delhi on my very first bilateral official visit. Looking forward to meeting my counterpart Minister of External Affairs, Dr. @DrJaishankar, and discuss deepening and enhancing



cooperation between #Maldives and #India for the mutual benefit of our peoples," Zameer said in a post on X. The bilateral ties came under severe strain after Muizzu insisted on the withdrawal of nearly 90 Indian military personnel operating three aviation platforms in the island nation. India has already withdrawn most of its military personnel. President Muizzu had set May 10 as the

deadline for the exit of all Indian troops from his country. On Monday, Muizzu's spokesperson announced that 51 Indian military personnel have left the Maldives and confirmed that the rest would leave the island by May 10 as agreed by the two countries. The ties strained further after three Maldivian deputy ministers made derogatory remarks against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media after Modi posted photos and video of the pristine Lakshadweep Islands on India's west coast on January 6 on his X handle. The Maldivian government suspended the three ministers after opposition leaders slammed the "appalling language" used by the officials against the Indian leader. The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and occupies a special place in its initiatives like 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the 'Neighbourhood First Policy' of the Modi government. "The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and Foreign Minister Zameer's visit is expected to lend further momentum to the bilateral cooperation between the two countries," the Ministry of External Affairs said in New Delhi on Tuesday.



AAP leader Sisodia's judicial custody extended

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday extended till May 21 the judicial custody of AAP leader Manish Sisodia in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended Sisodia's custody after he was produced before the court through video conference on the expiry of his judicial custody granted earlier. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had on March 9 last year arrested the former deputy chief minister of Delhi in the liquor policy case. Sisodia was arrested by the CBI earlier in its ongoing investigation of a case related to the alleged irregularities in the framing and implementation of the excise policy.

Forest fires: SC pitches for preventive steps

Says cloud seeding, depending on rain god no solution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said cloud seeding or "depending on rain god" is not the answer to the raging forest fires in Uttarakhand and that authorities will have to take preventive measures to tackle the problem. The Uttarakhand government apprised the apex court about the steps taken to control the forest fires and said 0.1 per cent of the wildlife cover in the state was on fire due to such incidents. The state government told a bench of Justices B R Gava and Sandeep Mehta that since November last year, there were 398 forest fires in Uttarakhand and five people were killed in such incidents. Deputy Advocate General of Uttarakhand Jatinder Kumar Sethi told the court that all the fires were man-made. A total

of 388 criminal cases have been lodged in connection with the forest fires, he said, adding that 60 people have been named in those. "People say that 40 per cent of Uttarakhand is on fire, whereas 0.1 per cent of the



During the hearing, the bench told the state's counsel, "Cloud seeding or depending on the rain god is not the answer. He (applicant) is right in saying that you have to take preventive measures." The state government placed before the bench an interim status report containing details of the various steps taken by authorities to deal with forest fires. Sethi said helicopters of the Indian Air Force were also pressed into service to extinguish the fires. "What is the number of human lives lost?" the bench asked. The counsel said five people were killed due to the forest fires. The bench sought to know how many animals were killed in such incidents. The counsel said he will get the information and apprise the court.

Shah accuses Rahul of pushing Pakistan's agenda

Says he will be defeated in Raebareli

PNS ■ LAKHIMPUR KHERI/HARDOI/KANNAUJ (UP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday accused Rahul Gandhi of pushing Pakistan's agenda and said the Congress leader would be defeated in Raebareli after which he should settle down in Italy, the only place left for him. Hitting out at the INDIA bloc, he said leaders of opposition parties did not attend the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple and warned that they would put a "Babri" lock at the temple if they came to power. "They might be afraid of their vote bank, we are not. Not only did we get the Ram Temple built, Modi also built the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor that was destroyed by Aurangzeb," he said. "All of you know who comprises their vote bank. Uttar Pradesh will never support those who shy away from Lord Ram's work," the Union minister said. He also claimed that if the opposition wins the elections,



crackers will be burst in Pakistan. Accusing the Samajwadi Party (SP) of being a dynastic party, the senior BJP leader said the opposition party's chief Akhilesh Yadav is contesting from Kannauj, his wife Dimple Yadav from Manipuri, Aditya Yadav from Budaun, Akshay Yadav from Firozabad and Dharmendra Yadav from Azamgarh. "Once their children become mature, they will contest from all 80 seats. They are not well-wishers of the Yadav commu-

'BJP paying money to buy votes'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged that the BJP is paying money to people to buy votes. Speaking at an election rally at Arambagh in support of Trinamool Congress candidate Mitali Bagh, Banerjee alleged that the saffron party is paying money to the extent of Rs 5,000, Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 to people to purchase votes. "The BJP leaders at present are former CPI(M) 'harmads' (anti-socials). If you don't want



a reign of terror to usher in, then refrain from voting for the BJP", she said. Banerjee said this election is to change the power equation in Delhi. "This power equation in Delhi has to be altered and change has to be brought in", she said. The TMC supremo said the BJP is in the habit of "defaming" the people of Bengal.

K'taka minister rejects demand for CBI probe in cases against Prajwal

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara on Wednesday turned down former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy's demand for a CBI probe into the sexual harassment case against JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna. He said the state government's CID is competent enough to investigate the case. "Kumaraswamy had raised over 100 questions. I cannot answer all of them. He had asked



for the CBI probe, which we will not do. The SIT is competent. I have said that we will get a proper investigation done," the Home Minister said. According to Parameshwara, three people have been arrested so far in a case related to kidnapping of a woman, who is a mother of three, in which Holenarasipura JD(S) MLA and Prajwal's father H D Revanna is also an accused and presently in the jail serving the judicial custody.

Cong tries to divide people over colour, region: Smriti Irani

PNS ■ AMETHI (UP)

Union minister and BJP candidate Smriti Irani Wednesday attacked the Congress on its leader Sam Pitroda's alleged racist remarks and alleged that it (Congress) tries to divide the countrymen on the basis of who is of which colour and who belongs to which region. Pitroda, who is the chairperson of the Indian Overseas Congress, is reported to have said the "people of the east look like the Chinese and those of the south look like Africa". Another disgusting truth has come to light today that this party (Congress) tries to divide the countrymen on the basis of who is of which colour and who belongs to which region and dares to insult them, Irani said while talking to reporters here. She also accused the

Congress of always dividing the country in the name of religion and caste. The remarks made by the Congress leader today are not only condemnable but also reflect the thinking of Rahul Gandhi and his family towards our nation, she said while reacting to Pitroda's alleged remarks which have kicked up a row. In a podcast, Pitroda said, "We have survived 75 years in a very happy environment where people could live together, leaving aside a few fights here and there... We could hold the country as diverse as India together. Where people in the east look like the Chinese, people in the west look like the Arabs, people in the north look like, maybe, white and people in the south look like Africans."



'Childhood inactivity leads to heart enlargement'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Being sedentary or performing little activity in childhood is associated with heart enlargement, which progressed with an increase in time spent sitting or being inactive, according to new research. An excessive increase in heart mass and size, known as left ventricular hypertrophy, is a known risk factor for heart attacks, stroke and premature death in adults. However, light physical activity of about three or four hours a day, including running errands and playing outdoor games, was found to reverse the increase in heart mass, with more of such activity being associated with better cardiac function, according to researchers who observed child and adolescent partici-



pants for 13 years. "There is growing evidence that childhood sedentariness is a health threat that needs to be taken seriously," Andrew Agbaje, a physician and an associate professor of clinical epidemiology and child health at the University of Eastern Finland, said. "There must be a paradigm shift in how we view childhood sedentariness, as the mounting evidence is pointing at a ticking time bomb," Agbaje, the author of the study published in the European Journal of Preventive Cardiology, said.

For the study, the researchers followed nearly 1,700 children from the UK's University of Bristol's 'Children of the 90s cohort' from age 11 until 24 years. At the start of the study, the children spent about six hours a day performing sedentary activities, which increased to nine hours a day as they became young adults. The participants wore accelerometer devices (for tracking movement) on their waists at ages 11, 15, and 24 years for a duration of 4-7 days and had echocardiography measurements taken of their heart structure and function at ages 17 and 24 years. Other aspects like lifestyle factors and socio-economic status were also analysed, along with fasting blood samples for cholesterol, glucose, insulin and C-reactive protein -- an indicator of inflammation. The researchers found that over a period of seven years, during which the adolescents grew into young adults, the heart enlargement associated with the increase in sedentary time contributed 40 per cent to the total increase in heart mass. Being sedentary or inactive was found to increase heart mass, regardless of obesity or elevated blood pressure status. The team also found that light physical activity over the entire follow-up period reduced the increase in heart mass by about half. "Light physical activity is an effective antidote to sedentariness. It is easy to accumulate three to four hours of physical movement daily.

'PM not speaking on basis of facts'

PNS ■ RAE BARELI

Asserting that people of the country want change and are fed up of being "lied" to, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been "using his imagination a lot" in his speeches of late and not speaking on the basis of facts. Her remarks came a day after Prime Minister Modi claimed the Congress will reverse the Supreme Court verdict on the Ram temple if voted to power just like its landmark 1985 ruling in the Shah Bano case was overturned by the Rajiv Gandhi government as part of the party's appeasement politics. In an exclusive interview with PTI while on the campaign trail in Uttar Pradesh's Rae



Bareilly from where her brother Rahul Gandhi is contesting the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress general secretary challenged the prime minister to speak on issues of unemployment, price rise and farmers' plight. Asked about her assessment of the ground situation after three rounds of the seven-phase polls, Priyanka Gandhi said, "My assessment is that people are wanting change. Everywhere I go I get the sense that people are fed up now of being lied to, they are fed up with the level of discussion that is taking place in the media and on political stages."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The name game

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

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



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

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

Tasks for new regime in turbulent times



KS TOMAR

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

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

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

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

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



departure from the earlier training provided by India and the United States. Ahead lies the crucial task for New Delhi to formulate an ambitious and practical long-term plan to counter China's advancements in "new productive forces," a term coined by President Xi Jinping. This involves focusing on economic development through innovation in advanced sectors.

China's aim to surpass the United States in the production of advanced science and technologies poses challenges for India as well. Therefore, India must intensify its efforts to support the United States in its global technology coalitions with allies like Japan, Australia and India, along with the CHIP Alliance, while fostering deep bilateral partnerships in emerging critical technologies.

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

2000 to 2021, underscores the risks associated with this debt dependency. Despite facing economic collapse, Pakistan remains indebted to China, highlighting the potential peril of falling into a debt trap.

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

Abeyardera thanked India for saving his country from the 'blood path' hence China stands exposed in the eyes of the people of this country.

India's relations with Bangladesh remain strong, exemplified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts. During a joint event on November 23, 2023, Modi referred to India as Bangladesh's largest development partner, emphasising mutual benefits.

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

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



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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Insights into India's growing heart health crisis



NAVEEN BHAMRI

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

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



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

looked or misattributed to other causes. Nevertheless, recognising the significance of symptoms and promptly seeking medical attention is critical in mitigating the progression of the disease. For individuals diagnosed with aortic stenosis, heart valve replacement surgery often becomes a necessary course of action. This surgical intervention aims to repair or replace faulty heart valves, restoring proper blood flow and alleviating symptoms. According to a report by GlobalData, approximately 69,592 heart valve surgeries are conducted each year in India.

The heart's proper function relies on valves, ensuring blood flows in one direction. When valves malfunction, surgery becomes necessary to repair or replace them. This may involve fixing leaflets that don't open wide enough or don't close tightly, ensuring blood flows properly through

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

Addressing aortic stenosis early, especially in patients with multiple co-morbidities, is crucial for improving outcomes and enhancing quality of life. (The writer is Senior Director and Head of Interventional Cardiology at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi; views are personal)

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLL BATTLE CONTINUES

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

Anika Patel | Kolkata

CORAL CRISIS

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

More allegations against Kejriwal



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

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

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

Aaradhya Sharma | Mumbai

EMPOWERING WOMEN

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

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

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

Vihaan Singh | Ahmedabad

Kabir Malhotra | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

PROFOUND INFLUENCE OF HABITS

Habits sculpt our lives by fostering discipline and perseverance



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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



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

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

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Rationalise regulations for e-commerce



UTTAM GUPTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Empowering rural women through the 'Umeed' scheme

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

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



MANIMA AKHTAR

In December last year, Mission Director JKRLM, Indu Kanwal Chib, while sharing the JKRLM Vision

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

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

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



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

scheme?" resident Zareena Akhtar, aged 23, responded that within their community, the only scheme recognised is the Anganwadi Scheme (ICDS), highlighting a significant gap in knowledge and accessibility to Governmental initiatives beyond this singular program.

There is also a lot of fear among the people of the village as well - both women and men. They have the fear of failure - what if they will not succeed in their endeavour? Salma Akhtar, 19, from Baila, confirms the notion. She expressed fears about potential repercussions and uncertainties associated with loan acquisition under the scheme. There is a need to dispel the

apprehensions lingering in the hearts of these women and endeavour to convey to them that this scheme is not a threat, but rather a boon. They need to be assured that this initiative can usher positive transformations into their lives. They must be made aware that this scheme is tailored specifically for women and designed to work towards their financial freedom.

According to Naima Akhtar, the Cluster Head of the Umeed Scheme in Mandi Tehsil, the Government has allocated decent funding under this scheme for women to benefit from it. "I urge other women who may be unaware of this scheme to join us. Numerous individuals, both men and women,

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

(The author is grassroots writer from Poonch, J&K; views are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

16th Finance Commission invites views from public on ToR

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



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

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



Zomato starts crowd-supported weather infrastructure network

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



Gold falls Rs 150; silver slumps Rs 300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

RBI Guv discusses ways to scale up UPI ecosystem

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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



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

RBI lifts ban on boarding of customers on Bob World app

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

To spend 50 pc on renewable energy projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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



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

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

ON DAY 1 OF OFFER

Aadhar Housing Finance IPO receives 43 pc subscription

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



Framework of state mining index to be finalised soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



Reliance acquires step-down subsidiary for Rs 314 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Air India Express to curtail flights amid cabin crew shortage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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



Niharika NM to attend Cannes for third consecutive year

The prestigious Cannes Film Festival is set to witness a familiar face yet again as Niharika NM prepares to attend the iconic film festival for the third consecutive year. Niharika has become a staple at the world-renowned festival, captivating audiences and fashion enthusiasts alike with her appearances. Having made her debut in Hollywood with her cameo in Netflix's widely popular series *Big Mouth* alongside Megan Thee Stallion, Jordan Peele, and Padma Lakshmi earlier this year, she is set to take the global stage yet again at the Cannes Film Festival.

Her splendid selection of outfits at the Cannes Film Festival last year further solidified her status as a fashion icon, turning heads and garnering praise from critics and fans alike. Following on from last year, she will be dressed in outfits from the top-most designers from India and the world over, like Indonesia, New York, London, Lebanon, and Australia.

Reflecting on her past Cannes experiences, Niharika shared, "Being invited to witness the grandeur of the Cannes Film Festival for the third time feels lovely. For the film enthusiast in me, it's like a dream I don't wake up from. I'm looking forward to experiencing cinema at its finest yet again."

Having worked with the crème de la-crème of the Indian film industry, right from Aamir Khan to Mahesh Babu, from Yash to Priyanka Chopra, Niharika has stamped her authority through her shareable videos.

'We are now swinging back a bit to lean on sequels,' says Disney CEO Bob Iger



Marvel has released various movies since *Avengers: Endgame* to keep its fan base engaged. However, since the end of the *Infinity Saga*, only a few of these titles have garnered positive feedback. Among the well-received films are *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*.

The shows *WandaVision*, *Loki*, and *What If...?* have captivated audiences. Bob Iger has finally taken measures to create a new strategy.

Many Marvel fans have expressed concerns that recent stories lack the impact of previous ones. Previously, Marvel Entertainment made only 1-2 films per

year, each with a solid story, interesting adversaries, and memorable scenes. Now, Disney CEO Bob Iger has made an important choice about the future of MCU programming.

Bob Iger recently held a press conference and informed the media that they will now release two good Marvel movies a year, or a maximum of three. They will also cut down on the number of TV series that stream on Disney+, with just two series instead of four every year. Iger told the media the decision is "a vestige of basically a desire in the past to increase volume. We stem from a desire in the past to increase volume. We are slowly going to decrease volume." The Disney CEO added that he's working hard with the studio to reduce output and "focus more on quality content."

Bob Iger added that they're going to balance the number of sequels released. However, he further stated that these sequels add a lot of value. "We had gone through a period where our original films in animation were dominating. We are now swinging back a bit to lean on sequels," Iger commented.

Met Gala 2024: Did Kendall Jenner-Bad Bunny rekindle their romance?

Rumours have all been round, claiming that Kendall Jenner and Bad Bunny have rekindled their romance following the Met Gala 2024. The supermodel and the musician were reported to have been dating since February 2023, with allegations of their breakup emerging around December 2023. However, it appears that old love does die hard. The two were spotted snuggling up at the Met Gala after-party, reigniting speculations about their affair. Following photographs of the

couple following the 2024 Met Gala, people are hoping for reconciliation. At a Met Gala afterparty, the ex-couples were seen seated next to each other, smiling and chatting. Jenner appeared to lean in close to Bad Bunny, implying that they were still attracted to each other.

Fans were under the notion that Jenner and Bad Bunny would reconnect when the time was perfect. There "isn't any negativity between them, and they still want the best for one another," the source added.



Ananya Pandey in *Bad Newz*, will do cameo

Ananya Pandey is about to score a career victory with a cameo appearance in the upcoming film *Bad Newz*. Directed by Anand Tiwari and produced by Dharna Productions, the film stars Vicky Kaushal, Triptii Dimri, and Ammy Virk.

Bad Newz, which is set to hit theaters on July 19, 2024, is said to star Ananya as a well-known film star. According to reports, her character will have a pleasant and fascinating relationship with Triptii Dimri's portrayal of a chef. Filming for Ananya's role has already begun, with a scene shot last month at a five-star Juhu hotel. The sequence featured her character's arrival, complete with a swarm of paparazzi and fans, followed by another scenario filmed with Triptii. An additional shoot day is set for May 13, 2024, to complete Ananya's part of the film. While the actual narrative of *Bad Newz* remains unknown, an earlier source stated that the film's plot could concentrate on heteropaternal superfecundation, a rare occurrence in which twins are created by separate fathers.

Pushpa Pandey is back on the sets of *Jolly LLB 3*

Huma Qureshi has joined Akshay Kumar on the set of *Jolly LLB 3*. The actor will reprise her role as Pushpa Pandey in the film. The film is currently being shot in Ajmer.

Akshay Kumar captured stunning images of Huma Qureshi as she joined the cast of *Jolly LLB 3* as Pushpa Pandey. She uploaded two images of herself taken by the actor and revealed her involvement with the production. Sharing the photos, she wrote, "Pushpa Pandey is backkkkk and looking pretty in Pink #JollyLLB3 Clicked by the one and only @akshaykumar #pushpa #pink #onset @kangratalkies #nofilter needed when ur happy #blessed (sic)." Akshay Kumar and Huma

Qureshi have an intriguing on-screen chemistry in *Jolly LLB 2*, which adds dimension to the story. Kumar's portrayal of Jolly, the street-smart lawyer, is balanced by Qureshi's performance as Pushpa, a supporting and strong-willed figure who sticks by Jolly through it all.

Their interactions are full of comedy, warmth, and genuine camaraderie, which enhances the overall viewing experience. Akshay and Huma have a captivating chemistry that strengthens the plot in this courtroom drama, making *Jolly LLB 2* a pleasurable watch for audiences. Huma Qureshi most recently appeared in *Tarla*.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



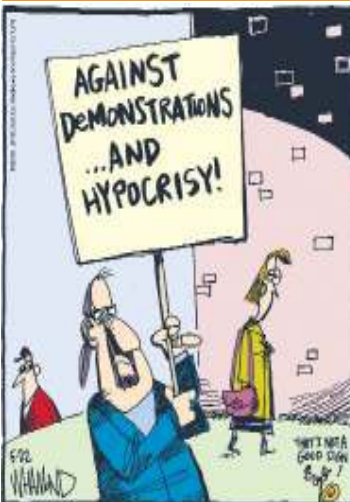
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



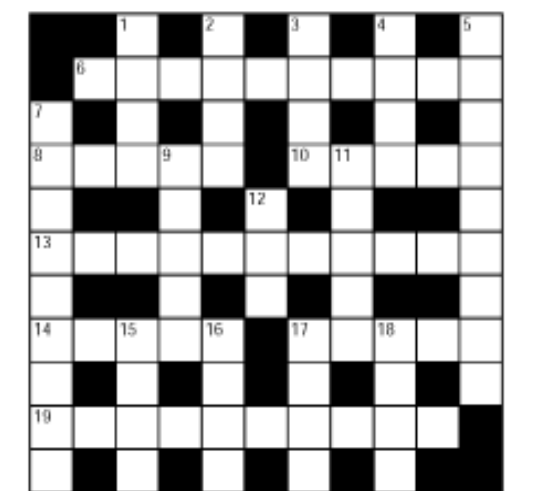
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

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

DOWN

- 1 Fog
- 2 Skinny
- 3 Molten stuff from a volcano
- 4 Closed
- 5 A large reptile with a long body and sharp teeth

SOLUTION



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Embracing the Bengali spirit and preserving its heritage in Hyd

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

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

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

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

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

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

Hyderabad community, fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

SHIKHA DUGGAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

Well, who wouldn't want to

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



Mental health conditions manifesting to chronic pain

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

SOME COMMON SOMATIC SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE:

- Chest heaviness and palpitations (rapid heart-beat)
- Increased muscle tension leading to non-specific pains in the body, muscle stiffness, or even soreness
- Unexplained or sudden headaches, known as tension headaches
- Gastrointestinal distress such as indigestion, stomach aches, nausea, diarrhea, bloating, or even irritable bowel syndrome
- Heightened pain sensitivity due to lowered pain threshold, amplifying pain perception from existing conditions or causing various physical pain without a clear cause
- Sleep disturbances such as disrupted sleep patterns, insomnia, and poor sleep quality further exacerbate physical symptoms and contribute to overall discomfort and fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Profuse sweating, especially in the palms,

- underarms, or forehead
- Shaking or trembling in hands, legs, or other body parts
- Constant fatigue or exhaustion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

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

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

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



RESURGENT RCB TAKE ON ERRATIC PBKS IN BATTLE OF SURVIVAL

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

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



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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

OTHER SPORTS

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

AP ■ GENEVA

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



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

Brazil bid highest for hosting 2027 Women WC

AP ■ LAUSANNE

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



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



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

K. RAMYA SREE

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

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

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



our director. I have done soft roles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brahmanandam signs a film with his son

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



Chandra Bose honoured with the Swara Sahitya Kalanidhi title

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

Prasad

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

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

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



tollywood

Aadi Sai Kumar, Anup Rubens do music sittings in Goa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Bhaje Vaayu Vegam releasing on May 31

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

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

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

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

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

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



Celebrating the charismatic journey of Vijay Deverakonda

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KAJAL LAUNCHES LYRICAL VIDEO OF NIJAMA PRANAMA FROM SATYA

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

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

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

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

