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If people vote for BJP, I will have to go back to jail: Kejriwal

A JOURNEY WITHIN AND BEYOND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

KC Venugopal: Kerala stands firmly with MAMMOOTY

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“CM Revanth Reddy has not yet started ruling but stated that the Lok Sabha elections were a referendum on his rule. Revanth Reddy should tell us to what he will do if results come against him. Revanth Reddy should stop mudslinging politics at least now and concentrate on the state's financial system. Surprising results would come on June 4 in Telangana. The BJP is going to emerge as an alternative to the Congress and BRS parties in Telangana. The BRS party is going to disappear”.

-G Kishan Reddy, BJP Telangana unit president chief

P4

DON'T MISS...

Trough runs from south interior ...

Thunderstorms with lightning and strong gusty winds (speed ranging from 40- 50 Kmph) are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days. A Meteorological Centre report here on Wednesday said that light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal ...

-PAGE: 4

Over a fifth of excess deaths..

More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heatwaves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990. India was followed by China and Russia, with each experiencing roughly 14 per cent and 8 per cent of these heatwave-linked excess deaths, respectively...

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IT industry veterans bat..

IT industry veterans N R Narayana Murthy and Kris Gopalakrishnan on Wednesday batted for increasing funding for research and higher academic institutes in the country by both the private and public sector, and stressed on the need for changing certain archaic things by bringing in innovative ideas in this regard. Speaking to reporters here, Gopalakrishnan, who is also the co-founder of IT major Infosys, said, "We also need to..."

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Sunrisers look to seal playoff ..

Masters of their own fate right now despite being erratic, Sunrisers Hyderabad will hope their destructive batting line-up delivers when they take on Gujarat Titans in pursuit of a playoffs berth in the Indian Premier League here on Thursday. Another win will be enough for Sunrisers to seal a playoff berth as they need only one point to ensure qualification. But the Pat Cummins-led side will also want to challenge for the top two spots, which is a possibility ...

-SPORTS

Violence unabated in AP; EC summons CS, DGP

Several leaders put under house arrest, Section 144 imposed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India, on Wednesday, took serious cognizance of the growing violent incidents in different parts of Andhra Pradesh even after two days of polling that concluded on Monday late night.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar has summoned State Chief Secretary KS Jawahar Reddy and Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta to New Delhi on Thursday to give a personal explanation as to why they allowed the law-and-order situation to go out of hand.

Several parts of Rayalaseema and Palnadu districts continued to witness violence for the third consecutive day on Wednesday. Incidents of violence were reported from Tadipatri in Anantapur district, Chandragiri in Tirupati district and Macherla and Narsaraopet in Palnadu district.

The EC has taken serious cognizance of the violent incidents and held discussions with the DGP. Senior police officials, along with



additional police forces were rushed to the affected areas. Several leaders were put under house arrest and Section 144 was promulgated. Police pickets were set up in 715 places.

The EC directed the Chief Secretary and the DGP to take all

steps to curb the violence. "The two officials were asked to come to Delhi and personally explain the reasons for the failure of law and order and administrative machinery," an official in the ECI said, adding that Rajiv Kumar is personally monitoring the situation.

Prohibitory orders imposed in Palnadu dist

Several incidents of post-poll violence and clashes between supporters of YSRCP and TDP reported

VIJAYAWADA: Post-poll violence in Andhra Pradesh forced the authorities to impose prohibitory orders in Palnadu and Anantapur districts as incidents of violence were reported from some other districts on Wednesday. The Election Commission of India has issued directions to Palnadu district authorities to impose Section 144 of the criminal procedure codes across the district and beefed up security. District Collector and Magistrate Shiva Shankar issued orders to the police for imposing Section 144, which prohibits public gatherings. Prohibitory orders will be in force in Narsaraopet Lok Sabha constituency, comprising Assembly segments of Macherla, Gurazala, Vinukonda, Sattenapalle, Pedakurapadu, Narsaraopet and Chilakaluripeta.

Continued on Page 2

Lapses during polls led to violence: Sajjala

- Transfer of officers at the last moment led to law and order issues
- Election Commission biased towards Opposition bloc

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, during a press conference held on Wednesday, addressed a range of critical issues on the polling day and the aftermath. He highlighted some key points and said that the Election Commission was biased and partial towards the Opposition alliance.

Sajjala said that anti-social elements are inciting violence against the YSRCP leaders and activists. He accused TDP of targeting poor and vulnerable sections of society during the polling and said that negligence by the police is clearly visible in the TDP-initiated attacks. "TDP resorted to violence to disrupt polling and obstruct votes from casting their vote to YSRCP."

He said that the Election Commission which should be impartial is biased towards the Opposition bloc. "The Election Commission should take responsibility for the incidents of violence and the failure of the police."

Continued on Page 2



Sajjala sees a landslide victory for YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP is heading towards a landslide victory for the second consecutive time, claimed party State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. In a chat with the media on Wednesday, Sajjala said that the voting percentage crossed an all-time high of 81.66 per cent, which is a good sign.

Continued on Page 2

Six persons burnt alive as bus collides with tipper lorry



PNS ■ BAPATLA

In a ghastly road accident, six persons were charred alive and 20 were injured when a private travel bus collided with a tipper lorry on the night of Tuesday at Eevuripalem village in Chilakaluripet mandal in Bapatla district of Andhra Pradesh. Chilakaluripet DSP Varma told the media that the private travel bus was going to Hyderabad from Chinaganjam with 42 passengers. The bus collided with a tipper lorry at around 2 am and flames erupted in the bus immediately.

Six persons, including the bus driver, tipper lorry driver and four passengers travelling in the bus, were charred alive in the flames. Three of the deceased belonged to one family.

Five of the deceased were identified as Uppugundur Kashi Brahmawara Rao (64) his wife Uppugundur Lakshmi (55) and their granddaughter Mupparaju Saisri (9), Hari Singh (Tipper driver, belonged to Madhya Pradesh) and Anji (35) bus driver.

Continued on Page 2

YSRCP WRITES TO ECI

Special Police Observer's 'biased conduct'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has filed a formal complaint with the Chief Election Commissioner concerning the biased conduct of the Special Police Observer in the Andhra Pradesh elections. In a letter written by Lella Appi Reddy, the State general secretary, grave concerns were raised regarding the actions of Deepak Mishra, IPS, Retd, who was appointed as the Special Police Observer for the general elections.

The letter highlighted several incidents indicating a clear bias towards the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and a disregard for neutrality and fairness in the electoral process. It was noted that since the arrival of the Special Police Observer in the State, multiple complaints have been lodged by

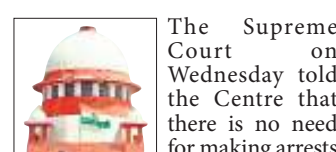
both YSRCP and TDP. However, district police chiefs have consistently favoured TDP's complaints, while neglecting those submitted by YSRCP, even responding sarcastically to YSRCP representatives.

Furthermore, implicit instructions and actions have led TDP activists to believe they have assurances from the police, resulting in compromised law enforcement during polling and post-polling, leading to law and order issues. These actions suggest that Deepak Mishra may be favouring the Telugu Desam Party at the behest of Sri Vishnu Vardhan Rao, IPS, Retd, who is associated with TDP.

In light of these concerns, YSRCP urged the Election Commission to promptly appoint a new Special Police Observer known for honesty and integrity, to ensure a level playing field for all parties involved.

Not necessary to make arrest in all GST cases: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Wednesday told the Centre that there is no need for making arrests in all Goods and Services Tax (GST) cases and that it can be done only if there is credible evidence and tangible material to prove culpability.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, which reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity and interpretation of provisions relating to the Customs Act and Goods and Services Tax Act, said the power of arrest is different from necessity of arrest.

"The legislation does not say that for completion of investigation you need to be arrested. It is not the object of the legislation."

Continued on Page 2

Jagan attends 'Purnahuti' of 'Rajasyamala Yagam'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy attended the Purnahuti ritual of the 41-day Rajasyamala Sahasra Chandi Yagam here on Wednesday. Vedic pundits Nallapaddi Sivarama Prasad Sarma and Gowravajula Nagendra Sarma conducted the Chandi Yagam.

In all, 45 Vedic scholars participated in the Yagam. The Chief Minister also participated in special pujas on the occasion. The priests blessed him and handed over theertham and prasadam.

Yagam organisers Arimanda Varaprasada Reddy, his wife Vijaya Sarada Reddy and Padamata Suresh Babu also participated in the event.

CAA gets rolling, 1st set of 14 people granted citizenship

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first set of citizenship certificates under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was issued Wednesday here to 14 people, nearly two months after rules under the contentious law were notified to grant Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from three neighbouring countries.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah termed it a "historic day", saying the decades-long wait of those who faced religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan is over. Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla handed over the certificates to the 14 people after their applications were processed online through a designated portal, an official spokesperson said.

This comes amid the general elections which started on April 19. The last phase of polling will be held on June 1 while



The CAA was enacted in December 2019 to grant Indian nationality to persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi, and Christian migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014.

the counting will take place on June 4.

The CAA was enacted in December 2019 to grant Indian nationality to persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi, and Christian migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014.

After the enactment, the CAA got the president's assent but the rules under which the Indian citizenship was granted were issued on March 11 this year after over a delay of four years. While granting the citizenship certificates, the home secretary congratulated the 14 applicants and highlighted the salient features of the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024.

Secretary Posts, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Registrar General of India, and senior officers were also present during the interactive session when the certificates were issued.

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AP EAPCET-2024 exams from today

Record number of 3,61,640 candidates have applied for the entrance test

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE) Chairman Prof K Hemachandra Reddy has said that the State has made elaborate arrangements to conduct the Andhra Pradesh Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test-2024 (AP EAPCET-2024) from May 16 to 23. For that, around 142 examination centres and another 49 regional centres have been arranged in the State, he said. For the convenience of students, two examination centres have been arranged in Hyderabad, and two centres in Nandyal changed, he added.

Addressing the media at the APSCHE headquarters at Mangalagiri on Wednesday, Prof Hemachandra Reddy said that this year, a record number of 3,61,640 candidates have applied for AP EAPCET. Of them, 1,80,104 candidates are girls and 1,81,536 are boys. As many as 22,901 more candidates have applied than last year. As per the



Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education Chairman Prof Hemachandra Reddy explaining the arrangements made for AP EAPCET-2024, to the media at his office at Mangalagiri on Wednesday

APSCHE headquarters at Mangalagiri on Wednesday, Prof Hemachandra Reddy said that this year, a record number of 3,61,640 candidates have applied for AP EAPCET. Of them, 1,80,104 candidates are girls and 1,81,536 are boys. As many as 22,901 more candidates have applied than last year.

an hour. Mobile phones, blue-tooth, calculators and other electronic goods are not allowed in the examination hall.

Reddy said that they have directed all District Collectors, SPs and Police Commissioners to take measures to conduct the examinations smoothly and peacefully. Also, they asked the APSRTC authorities to make necessary arrangements for buses for the candidates to reach the exam centres, he added.

Furthermore, he said that two examination centres in Nandyal were changed. RGMIT and Shantaram Engineering College are election strong rooms. So, these two centres have been changed. Sr

Historic voter turnout signals a crucial election

Alliance parties stress on growing anti-government sentiment, YSRCP claims burgeoning support for administration

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The voter turnout in the latest election has surged by over two percent compared to the previous poll. This notable increase has sparked a wave of interpretations and speculations across the political spectrum. Alliance parties are attributing the rise in polling percentage to a growing anti-government sentiment, while insiders from YSRCP argue that it signifies burgeoning support for their administration.

As drums echo across the electoral landscape, leaders from all parties are engaging in vigorous calculations, debating the distribution of votes. With

the Election Commission's ban on exit polls, field-level workers are being consulted to gauge the poll outcomes. Analysts are offering mixed reactions to the polling patterns, which extended into the late hours of the night.

Historically, rural areas have seen higher voter turnout compared to urban centres, a trend that persisted in this election. However, urban turnout has notably held steady this time. The ruling YSRCP is optimistic, citing high participation rates among elderly, disabled, and female voters, attributing this to the appeal of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's promises. Alliance parties, on the other hand, are confident that the increased turnout signals negative sentiment towards the incumbent government. They recall that despite a rise in polling percentage in the last election, NDA still secured a return to power, suggesting that higher turnout does not necessarily indicate a loss for the ruling party. YCP sources emphasise the enthusiastic response from beneficiaries of middle-class welfare schemes, confident this will translate into a favourable verdict, especially in rural areas. They assert that a significant portion of the electorate, including urban middle-class voters, remains supportive of their policies, which could offset any potential Opposition gains.

Six persons burnt alive as bus ...



Continued from Page 1

The bodies of the deceased burnt beyond recognition. As many as 20 bus passengers were injured in the accident and they were admitted to GGH in Chilakaluripet, Guntur and to a private hospital. Most of the passengers travelling in the bus were living in Hyderabad and they went to Chirala and Chinajangam to cast their vote in the elections.

The accident took place when they were going back to Hyderabad. Since the road is under construction, the vehicles were allowed to pass on a single lane road.

As the front portion of the bus was badly damaged in the mishap, the bus passengers could not escape resulting in the death of four bus passengers, the DSP said.

A fire tender went to the place from Chilakaluripet and extinguished the flames but by that time the bus was completely gutted.

Andhra Pradesh Governor S Anurag Kumar has expressed profound grief and anguish over the road accident in which six people were killed and 20 others were injured.

The Governor offered his condolences to the bereaved family members and instructed the officials to provide better medical facilities to the injured persons. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family.

The Chief Minister assured of extending all support to the family members of the deceased. Former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu also expressed grief and shock over the ghastly road accident and death of six people.

Tributes paid to Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 221st birth anniversary of Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton, the architect of Krishna and Godavari deltas, was observed on the premises of the Water Resources Compound in Vijayawada on Wednesday. Andhra Pradesh Water Users Associations' Federation president Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao and farmers' wing leader Kurra Narendra paid floral tributes to Cotton's statue.



Andhra Pradesh Water Users Associations' Federation president Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao and Kurra Narendra paying tributes to Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton in Vijayawada on Wednesday

Speaking on the occasion, Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao said that Sir Arthur Cotton constructed Anicut on River Godavari at Dhavaleswaram in 1852 and provided irrigation water for all crops in the Godavari delta region. For that, the people of the Godavari region treated Sir Arthur

Thomas Cotton as 'Bhageeratha' he said.

Later, he recalled that for the first time, Sir Arthur Cotton had interlinked the Delta system through canals and drainage systems. As a result, farmers are cultivating

Not necessary to make arrest in all GST ...

Continued from Page 1

It is not necessary for you to arrest in each and every case of GST. It has to be based on some credible evidence and tangible material," the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju.

The bench, which posed several questions to Raju on provisions of arrest under the GST law, said the legislation has itself kept liberty on a high pedestal and it should not be diluted. Raju said arrests are mostly made during the investigation as there can be no arrest after the probe in a case has been completed. "The arrest is not based on mere suspicion but when there are reasons to believe indicating commission of some grave offence," he said, adding that reasons to believe cannot be on strict interpretation of commission of offence.

"Adjudication must precede

arrest," the bench said, adding that it will examine the question of "reason to believe" and "grounds of arrest" under the Customs Act and the GST Act. The top court said while there were instances of high-handedness by the GST authorities, there were also cases of wrongdoing on the part of tax payers, and it will take into account all these aspects when giving its decision.

The petitioners who have challenged various provisions of the Customs Act and the GST Act have alleged gross misuse of arrest provisions under both the laws. They have claimed they are being threatened and coerced to pay liability without following the due procedure under the laws.

Section 69 of the GST Act deals with the powers of arrest, while section 104 of the Customs Act of 1962 allows an officer to arrest someone if they have reason to believe the

person has committed an offence. On May 9, the top court had told the Centre that any arrest under the GST Act should not be on mere suspicion but based on cogent material and in adherence to proper procedure.

It had said the material upon which an arrest is made should be verifiable by a magistrate. The court had earlier directed the Centre to not use "threat and coercion" during search and seizure operations against traders for recovery of GST and instead persuade them to clear the dues voluntarily. On May 2, the top court had asked the Centre to furnish details about the issuance of notices and arrests effected under the provisions of the GST Act, saying it may interpret the law and lay down appropriate guidelines to avoid harassment of citizens by depriving them of their liberty.

'Rising price of vote' sparks financial concerns among rural politicians

Voters demanding higher amounts, with figures surpassing Rs 1,000 per vote becoming increasingly common

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Historically, election campaigns in rural areas have operated on a relatively modest scale, with token sums exchanged for votes. However, the current scenario presents a stark departure from tradition, as voters are now demanding significantly higher amounts, with figures surpassing Rs 1,000 per vote becoming increasingly common. This unprecedented demand has placed immense pressure on candidates from major political parties, forcing them to tap into substantial financial resources to meet voter expectations.

Notably, the escalation in monetary demands extends

beyond parliamentary and legislative constituencies to local elections as well. Reports indicate that the price per vote in local contests has surged to unprecedented levels, with candidates grappling with figures ranging from Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,000 per vote. Such exorbitant demands have left rural political figures bewildered, as they navigate the complexities of financing their campaigns.

The implications of this trend are far-reaching, signalling a fundamental shift in the dynamics of rural politics. Previously accepted norms, such as distributing Rs 500 per vote, now seem inadequate in the face of height-

ened expectations. As candidates strain to meet these demands, some are resorting to extreme measures, such as mortgaging their properties to fund their campaigns. The financial burden doesn't end with vote-buying; candidates are also confronted with substantial campaign expenses, often exceeding Rs. 20 crore. This staggering figure has sent shockwaves through political leadership, highlighting the escalating costs associated with electoral politics in rural India.

Local politicians, grappling with inflated demands and mounting campaign costs, are confronted with existential questions about their future in politics. Concerns

CAA gets rolling, 1st set of 14...

Continued from Page 1

Home Minister Shah said the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian brothers and sisters who fled religious persecution in the three countries have started getting Indian citizenship and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fulfilled the promise made at the time of the country's independence.

"I express my gratitude to Modi for giving justice and rights to these people who suffered for decades. I also assure all my refugee brothers and sisters that the Modi government will give citizenship to all of them through the CAA," he said on X in Hindi. "Modi's guarantee...the guarantee of fulfilling promises."

The CAA rules envisage the manner of application form, the procedure for processing applications by the District Level Committee (DLC), scrutiny and grant of citizenship by State Level Empowered Committee (SLEC).

In pursuance of these rules, applications have been received attacked and a car and several from persons belonging to bikes belonging to TDP work- Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, ers were set on fire at Parsi and Christian community-Karempudi in the same district. ties from Pakistan, Bangladesh, The miscreants also attacked a and Afghanisthan who have police official, when he tried to entered into India up to stop them. TDP has blamed the December 31, 2014 on account YSRCP MLA from the of persecution on grounds of Machera constituency, Pinneli religion or fear of such persee-Rama Krishna Reddy, for the cution," the spokesperson said.

The DLCs chaired by Senior TDP candidate from Superintendents of Post or Chandragiri constituency Superintendents of Post as des-Pulivertu Venkata Mani Prasad ignited officers, on successful (Nani) was attacked by a mob verification of documents, have near Padmavati Mahila administered the oath of alle-University in Tirupati when he giance to the applicants.

After processing as per rules, strong room, where EVMs the DLCs have forwarded the were stored. Nani's gunman applications to SLEC headed by fired a round in the air to dis- Director (Census Operation), perse the mob and protect the Processing of application is TDP leader and others seated completely done through the online portal.

Lapses during polls led to ...

Continued from Page 1

It seems that this is the first time that the Election Commission is not acting independently in the democratic system. We request the Commission to act responsibly and take appropriate action on the incidents," said Sajjala.

He further said that Chandrababu is plotting to create anarchy in the State and the EC is requested to take steps to restore peace in the State. TDP is conspiring to create insecurity among the sincere officials. The ruling YSRCP feels that the Opposition is conspiring attacks during the counting on June 4.

TDP resorted to violence and riots in various places, including Macharala, Tirupati, Tadipatri, Palnadu, and others only to indulge in rigging, said

Sajjala, adding that complaints were lodged with the Election Commission and the Director General of Police regarding TDP attacks.

Sajjala pointed out that 29 officers were transferred, including 25 police officers, before polling without thorough inquiry and the officers had no proper knowledge of the situation of those places. He said that half of the officers who were on election duty and transferred belong to SC, ST and minority communities.

"Transfers were affected only on the complaint made by BJP State president Purandreshwari," he said, adding that the State DGP was transferred days before the elections and wondered how the new officer could handle the situation. One day before the elections

Nandyal SP was transferred and violence and attacks took place in the places the police officers were transferred.

Deepak Mishra, IPS, Retd, was appointed as the Special Police Observer for General Election in AP. Sajjala demanded an investigation by an independent agency into Mishra's actions and the alleged impact on violent incidents. In the case of stone attack on CM Jagan, Mishra was proactively involved in which statement should be noted in the case. Sajjala said that Minister Ambati Rambabu and Narasaraopeta MLA Gopireddy Srinivasa Reddy were house-arrested.

The YSRCP State general secretary said Chandrababu initiates attacks and violence and complains to the EC and DGP as he is losing patience to wait till June 4.

Prohibitory orders imposed...

Continued from Page 1

Police officials have warned that action will be taken against the gathering even of three or more persons. The authorities have banned rallies, meetings and processions till further orders. Palnadu district reported several incidents of post-poll violence and clashes between supporters of YSRCP and TDP.

The police also imposed Section 144 in Tadipatri of Anantapur district, which witnessed clashes between TDP and YSRCP supporters during the last two days. On Wednesday morning, the police resorted to lathi-charge to disperse mobs near the residences of former MLA JC Prabhakar Reddy and MLA Kethireddy Pedha Reddy. Both the leaders were taken to different places by

the police to defuse the tense situation in the town.

Meanwhile, an aide of former minister Bhuma Akhila Priya was injured in an attack by unidentified persons outside her residence in Allagadda town in Kurnool district late on Tuesday night. The assailants knocked down Nikhil by a car and later attacked him with knives. Akhila Priya, the TDP MLA candidate from Allagadda in Kurnool district. Following the incident, the police tightened security at the TDP leader's house.

Incidents of post-poll violence were also reported from Tirupati, Chittoor and Anantapur districts on Tuesday. Vehicles of TDP supporters were damaged allegedly by YSRCP workers at Velpur in Savalyapuram mandal in

Sajjala sees a landslide victory...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the percentage of women's votes has increased, which is good for democracy. Women and senior citizens were seen in serpentine queue lines right from the morning, which is a clear indication that people have shown interest to vote, that too in favour of YSRCP as the welfare schemes have paid off. He said that if the polling percentage is very high, it need not be anti-incumbency but pro-incumbency.

He made some interesting comments on the elections. Key Opposition leaders from the alliance bloc might lose the elections as the fight is stiff in Kuppam, Pithapuram,

Mangalagiri, Tekkali and other constituencies.

He said that the alliance did not campaign for Super 6 or Shanmukha Vyuham as they are not confident of implementing them and even the people of AP don't trust them. Instead, the Opposition bloc launched personal attacks against CM Jagan Mohan Reddy over 'false issues' like the Land Titling Act, which is not in force.

He also said that after the counting, some political parties in the State will see a worse phase.

Pointing to the Election Commission's pro-alliance attitude, he said that in a few places the YSRCP leaders were confined to their hous-

es. They were not allowed to go out and see the election process, but the alliance leaders were allowed to move freely. He said that the YSRCP leaders maintained restraint and did not react as many senior citizens, especially women, have come out for polling in good numbers.

It is observed that violence and attacks happened where the Election Commission of India has ordered for transfer of IAS/IPS officers based on the complaint of the Opposition bloc, which raises suspicion. He said that they will lodge complaints with the concerned officers and demand stern action against the culprits.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Vaishakha, Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Navami: May 16 06:23 AM to May 17 08:49 AM
Dashami: May 17 08:49 AM to May 18 11:23 AM

Nakshatram:
Purva Phalguni: May 16 06:14 PM to May 17 09:18 PM

Rahukalam: 10:36 AM to 12:12 PM
Yamagandam: 3:25 PM to 5:01 PM
Varjyam: 05:25 AM to 07:14 AM
Gulika: 7:23 AM to 8:59 AM
Amritakalam: 02:05 PM to 03:53 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms
Temp: 33°
Humidity: 59%
Sunrise: 5:47 AM
Sunset: 6:37 PM
Updated: May 15, 2024 5:00 PM

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Segments in Vijayawada city register average 71.13% polling

Remaining four constituencies located in the rural region registered 88.72 pc turnout

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada East, West and Central Assembly constituencies, purely urban areas in NTR district, have registered poor voter turnout in the recently concluded general elections. They registered an average 71.13 per cent polling. In the 2019 elections, the turnout was 66.46 per cent.

Meanwhile, the remaining four Assembly constituencies located in the rural region registered 88.72 per cent polling. This is 17.59 per cent higher than the polling in urban pockets.

According to the data available with the Election Commission of India (ECI), Vijayawada city has a total of 8,06,311 voters, of whom 5,73,576 cast their votes. Before the release of the election schedule, NTR District

Collector Dr S Dilli Rao conducted many awareness programmes for voters. He had aimed at 85 per cent voter turnout in this election.

Of the three Assembly segments in the city, Vijayawada Central has the highest number of voters, i.e. 2,77,724. Of this 2,05,501 votes were cast including 2,866 postal votes. The polling percentage is 73.99 per cent. It is 8.23 per cent and 8.79 per cent higher than the turnouts in 2019 and 2014 elections (65.73 and 65.20), respectively.

Also, in Vijayawada East, 1,96,176 votes were polled including 3,150 postal voters out of a total of 2,70,732 votes. The turnout is 72.49 per cent, which is higher than the previous polling percentage of 67.50. Similarly, in Vijayawada West, 1,71,899 voters cast their votes including 1,765 postal



ballot users, as against a total of 2,55,963. The turnout was 67.16 per cent. It is just 0.99 per cent higher than the 2019 elections.

91 PC POLLING IN JAGGAYAPET

Meanwhile, the remaining four constituencies,

Jaggayapet, Nandigama, Mylavaram and Tiruvuru, registered an average 88 per cent turnout. Of these four segments, Jaggayapet constituency registered the highest turnout of 91 per cent. As per the ECI data, Jaggayapet is one of the constituencies with the highest voter turnout in the

State.

According to the available data, 1,86,886 votes were polled in Jaggayapet including 2,311 postal votes. The polling percentage is 91 per cent, which is 1.47 per cent higher than the polling in the previous election. In Tiruvuru (SC) Assembly segment, 1,84,379 votes were polled against a total of 2,07,190, and the polling percentage is 88.99.

In Nandigama (SC) segment, 88.63 per cent turnout was registered. In this constituency, 1,82,121 voters cast their votes out of a total of 2,05,480. In Mylavaram Assembly constituency, as many as 2,43,023 voters cast their votes out of 2,81,732. The polling percentage is 86.26, which is 3.54 per cent lower than the previous elections' polling of 89.60 per cent.

Biodiversity Day celebrations to be held in Visakhapatnam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an effort to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity preservation, the Member Secretary of Andhra Pradesh State Biodiversity Board, BVA Krishna Murthy, announced that International Biodiversity Day celebrations will be organised in Visakhapatnam on May 22 and 23. The event, organised under the slogan "Be part of the plan," aims to emphasise the urgent need for biodiversity conservation in the face of increasing environmental challenges. To engage the public, especially the youth, various activities will be conducted, including exhibition stalls and Biodiversity Conservation Awards presentations.

Speaking during the unveiling of poster in Andhra University campus BVA Krishna Murthy said as part of the pre-celebration activities, on May 21, essay writing, drawing, and painting competitions will be held for students of classes 9-10 in the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam. These activities seek to instill a sense of responsibility towards biodiversity preservation among the younger generation. Krishna Murthy emphasised



the necessity of collective action in safeguarding biodiversity, emphasising its fundamental connection to the essence of life. The celebrations will feature a series of national-level activities, including a conference, exhibition, and a one-day national conference, co-organised by Andhra University (AU) in collaboration with the Department of Botany. Krishna Murthy pledged support for AU's biodiversity conservation initiatives, highlighting the multifaceted importance of preserving biodiversity for research, study, and environmental conservation. AU Vice-Chancellor Prof. PPGD Prasada Reddy announced plans for the establishment of a Biodiversity Park, aligning with the university's broader vision of fostering innovation and entrepreneur-

ship. This initiative complements AU's endeavor to establish a thousand startup companies under its platform, with 172 companies already housed in its Tech Hub.

Distinguished figures, including Registrar Prof. M. James Stephen and professors such as SB Padal, Sandhya Deepika, Ratnakumar, Balaram Padal, and Dr. Prakash actively participated in the event. Dr. Balaji was felicitated by the university for his pivotal role in advancing the cause of biodiversity conservation. The occasion not only signifies a significant milestone in the global drive towards biodiversity preservation but also underscores the proactive stance of Visakhapatnam and AU in advocating for environmental sustainability and innovation.

YSRCP writes to police chief seeking action against TDP violence

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party has written a letter to Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta to highlight the alarming increase in violent incidents perpetrated by members of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) against YSRCP party cadres and leaders since the announcement of elections in Andhra Pradesh on March 16.

Expressing deep concern, the YSR Congress Party has emphasised that the situation has reached critical levels, endangering the safety and well-being of

YSRCP members. Shockingly, there have been instances where law enforcement authorities either failed to intervene or, worse, sided with the perpetrators. Strongly condemning these acts of violence YSRCP has called upon the concerned authorities to swiftly and decisively address the safety and security of its members.

In response to these distressing developments, YSRCP urgently requested the Election Commission of India to take immediate and decisive action. Ensure the safety and security of YSRCP cadres and leaders by

providing adequate protection and deploying additional security personnel in areas prone to violence, the party urged the Commission. It also sought a thorough and impartial investigation into the incidents of violence and intimidation perpetrated by TDP members.

The party also urged to take appropriate measures to prevent further acts of violence and intimidation during the electoral process, including strict enforcement of the law and imposition of severe penalties on those found guilty of violating election laws.

Steps sought to release investment subsidy funds of Rs.1,294 cr

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham has written a letter to Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy seeking steps to credit the investment subsidy funds into the farmers' bank accounts. The Sangham stated that farmers have suffered severe losses due to drought, floods and heavy rains in the previous Kharif season.

AP Rythu Sangham general secretary KVV Prasad released the letter here on Wednesday. He said that Chief Minister YS Jagan

Mohan Reddy has released funds under the investment subsidy of Rs.1,294 crore. However, those funds have not been credited to the farmers' bank accounts so far.

Meanwhile, the general election schedule was released on March 16 and the Election Commission of India (ECI) directed the government to release funds after the polls. As the elections are over, the government should take steps to release the subsidy funds and to credit the same to bank accounts, he said.

Hyd suburbs in grip IPL cricket betting epidemic

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In the suburbs of Hyderabad city in Rangareddy district, a disturbing trend has emerged alongside the excitement of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Betting, once confined to urban areas, has spread to villages. A sizable section of youth got sucked into the evil of betting.

Reports from Ibrahimpatnam,

a constituency on the outskirts of Hyderabad, revealed the extent of the burgeoning betting culture. Villages like Manchala, Yacharam, Ibrahimpatnam, and Abdullahpurmet mandals have become hotspots for both online and offline betting activities.

According to sources, lakhs of rupees are changing hands daily, as youngsters are placing their bets in pursuit of easy money.

Padmavati Pariyanotsavams from May 17-19

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The three-day annual festival of Sri Padmavati Srinivasa Parinayotsavam will be celebrated in Tirumala from May 17 to 19.

The celestial wedding ceremony of Sridevi Bhudevi and Srinivasa are performed with great pomp at the Parinayotsava Mandapam in the Narayangiri Gardens every year.

In this three-day event, Sri Malayappa Swamy is wor-



shipped on Gajavanam on the first day, Aswa Vahanam on the second day, and on Garuda Vahanam on the last day.

TTD has cancelled Arjita Brahmotsavam and Sahasra Deepalankara sevas on these three days.

According to the Puranas, about 5000 years ago, that is, in the early days of Kali Yuga, Sri Maha Vishnu came to earth as Sri Venkateswara from Vaikuntha. TTD organises the Padmavati Parinayotsavam for three days, one day before and one day after every Vaisakha Shuddha Dashami Tithi in Narayangiri Gardens.

GT Ankurarpanam held

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Ankurarpanam fete was observed with religious fervour in Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple in Tirupati on Wednesday evening.

As the annual Brahmotsavam or scheduled to commence from May 16 onwards, the ritual of prelude was conducted.

The important days includes

Dhwajarohanam on May 16 in the auspicious Mithuna Lagnam between 8.15 am and 8.40am. Garuda Seva is on May 20, Rathotsavam on May 23 and Chakrasnanam on May 24. Devotional cultural programmes have been arranged to lure the devotees.

Both the senior and junior Seers of Tirumala, DyEO Shanti and others were present.



Commissioner inspects security at strongrooms

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna made a sudden inspection of the strong rooms, which are arranged at the Nova and Nimra Engineering Colleges at Jupudi of Ibrahimpatnam mandal in the district on Wednesday. He inspected the security arrangements of the strong rooms and the surrounding areas.

After the completion of the general election polling, all Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trials (VVPAT) of the Vijayawada Lok Sabha and



NTR Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna speaking to the officials on security arrangements at the Nova Engineering College at Jupudi on Wednesday

all seven Assembly constituencies were stored at the Nova and Nimra Engineering Colleges at Jupudi. Also, the

police made the security arrangements for these strong rooms with the Central and Armed forces under the surveillance of CC cameras.

During the inspection, Police Commissioner Ramakrishna enquired about the security arrangements and routes. He gave necessary instructions regarding the security of the strong rooms. He inspected the routes from the main gate to the strong rooms.

Speaking on the occasion, Ramakrishna said that security personnel should be alerted until the completion

of the counting at the strong rooms. Officials should take the necessary steps with no untoward incidents. He said that a three-tier security system was arranged for these strong rooms. DCPs K Srinivasa Rao, Adhiraj Singh Rana, ABTS Udaya Rani, K Chakravarthi, T Harikrishna and others accompanied Commissioner Ramakrishna.

NTR Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna speaking to the officials on security arrangements at the Nova Engineering College at Jupudi on Wednesday.

Verdict will be in favour of poor: Nagarjuna Election was a battle between the poor and the capitalists

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Merugu Nagarjuna has said that the election verdict, which will be revealed on June 4, will be a slap on the face of capitalists (TDP-alliance). Speaking to the media persons at the party's central office on Wednesday, Nagarjuna said that the election result will be unprecedented and the ruling party will once again win a landslide victory. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will take oath as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh again.

He said that CM Jagan has been telling from the beginning, this election was a battle between the poor and the capitalists. Leaders like Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan, BJP, Congress and Communists are on the side of



capitalists. The people have owned CM Jagan and the State will witness a historic victory in a few days. He thanked all the people on behalf of YSRCP as YSRCP will register a landslide victory in the election on June 4.

Minister Nagarjuna said that

BC, minorities and the poor are being attacked by the TDP mobs. They attacked a BC woman in Konidela of Palnadu district for voting for YSRCP. Attacks were also carried out on the houses of poor and marginalised communities in Macherla. In Chilakaluripet a SC person's house was vandalised because he was a YSRCP agent. Stones were pelted on the houses of Dalits in Muppalla of Sattenapalli Constituency. In Pedakurapadu Kambhampadu, the TDP attacked the SC and ST people terrorizing them. Chandrababu ignited unrest with a unique conspiracy everywhere in the State, alleged the minister.

The minister said everyone knows that Chandrababu is always against the poor and behind the attacks, when the

poor YSRCP supporters attended CM Jagan's Siddham programme the TDP plotted a plan and attacked. He said during the polls, the police officers worked like TDP activists in many places. On the one hand, not a single policeman went to the places where the attacks took place and the YSRCP leaders were kept under house arrest. The police even restricted the YSRCP leaders from coming close to polling booths, but TDP candidates and their leaders were left unchecked.

No matter how many conspiracies the Opposition plan, the YSRCP will win the elections once again and after coming to power an inquiry will be called and action will be taken as per law, said Minister Nagarjuna.

Narsapur Assembly segment records highest polling

PNS ■ NARSAPUR

The Narsapur Assembly segment under Medak Lok Sabha constituency is ahead of other Assembly segments in achieving a record polling of 84.25 per cent on Monday last. The Assembly segment ranked number one in Telangana as far as voting percentage is concerned.

This is attributed to sensitisation of voters by officials, civil society organisations. The enthusiasm of voters showed no signs of waning since the last Assembly elections held in November 2023. During the Assembly elections the constituency achieved second rank at the state level by achieving 88.10 per cent voter turnout.

In 2018 Assembly elections, the Narsapur Assembly constituency recorded 90.53 poll

per cent, ranking number three in the State.

The Assembly segment during the last Lok Sabha elections recorded a poll percentage of 77.29.

Because of sweltering heat, the officials apprehended that the voting percentage will go down. As the temperature cooled towards the end of the evening, everyone heaved a sigh of relief. All over the constituency, the voters were seen standing in front of the polling booths since morning. The first time voters took part in the democratic process with enthusiasm and also female voters. As part of the SVEEP programme, government officials and civil society organisations have created voter awareness in all towns and villages.

The awareness programmes helped improve the voting percentage.

Grand celebrations mark Fatima Mata Festival



PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In a magnificent display of communal harmony, the Fatima Mata Mary Church in Patimapur village under Kothur mandal witnessed a vibrant celebration of the Mary Mata festival. The event held on Wednesday drew people from all walks of life, regardless of religion.

MLA Veerlapalli Shankar, representing the constituency, took part in the festival. Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the historical significance of the church. Shankar emphasised the pivotal role mothers would play, underscoring the importance of Mother Mary, referred to as Maria Mata in the local tradition. He noted that the annual festival, known as the Fatima Mata Tirunalla Mahotsava, is celebrated with great fervour, paying homage to Mother Mary.

The MLA stressed the festival's message of unity and harmony, irrespective of caste, religion, or race. He urged everyone to live as children of God, receiving blessings to lead peaceful lives.

Father of irrigation, champion of Godavari anicut: Sir Arthur Cotton

It is the considered opinion of the entire farming community and irrigation engineering fraternity of southern India that Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton, 'father of irrigation' in pre-Independence India, remains the only unbiased Britisher who had adopted Indian culture to serve the common people and uplift their living conditions. He steadfastly developed irrigation in Godavari, Krishna, Pennar and Cauvery deltas, making anicuts across these rivers an enduring reality.

Sir Arthur Cotton was a true Christian, who believed deeply in the Bible. His motives, pursuits and interests were all coloured by his deep study of the Bible. He was born on 15th May, 1803 to Henry Calvery Cotton and Matilda Lockwood. He was very much influenced by his mother Matilda, who moulded him with cardinal virtues. Arthur Cotton soon became a good thinker and administra-

tor. He came to India at the age of 16 years and then joined the East India Company in 1819. He was selected to work in the Madras Presidency in the PWD Chief Engineer's Office and was later appointed as assistant to Capt. Fullerton, the then Superintendent Engineer/Tanks Dept. in 1822. He supervised the restoration of many minor irrigation tanks -- the only source of irrigation in Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Tanjore districts. After eight years of service, he was conferred the rank of Captain and entrusted with the task of suggesting measures for augmenting water supply in the Cauvery basin. He made recommendations to enhance irrigation from 6 lakh acres to 10 lakh acres by proposing an Anicut across the Cauvery. Ultimately the Cauvery delta became the rice bowl of the region and paved the way for building many such anicuts in

Sir Arthur Cotton was determined to find a permanent solution to famines and formulated an Anicut proposal during 1844-45 at a cost of only Rs.12 lakh and recommended it to the East India Company Hqs in London for approval. The East India Company approved the Godavari anicut proposal on December, 23rd, 1846. Thanks to Sir Arthur Cotton's involvement, the anicut was completed by 1852.

south India.

In 1832, he moved to Vizagapatnam (present-day Visakhapatnam), where he got involved in the construction of St John Church. During his stay in Vizag, he studied the sea erosion problem faced by townsfolk and ultimately suggested and built series of groynes, thus preventing sea erosion. This paved the way for building Vizag harbour and today's Visakhapatnam Port.

Although mentally strong, Sir Arthur Cotton used to fall

ill frequently. He married Elizabeth Learmonth, against her father's wish due to his frail health. Elizabeth was firm, impressed by his novel service, cherished ideals, and his dedication to people. He used his engineering skills entirely in the service of people. It was he who proposed the Godavari anicut near Dowlaisharam, moved by the plight of thousands of people due to severe famine in Godavari districts. He could not bear the sight of women walking miles togeth-



NANDIRAJU RADHAKRISHNA
Veteran Journalist

er to fetch drinking water due to drought and ground water depletion.

Sir Arthur Cotton was determined to find a permanent solution to famines and formulated an Anicut proposal during 1844-45 at a cost of only Rs.12 lakh and recommended it to the East India Company Hqs in

London for approval. The East India Company approved the Godavari anicut proposal on December, 23rd, 1846. Thanks to Sir Arthur Cotton's involvement, the anicut was completed by 1852. The present Godavari Barrage, built just upstream of Anicut and duly named after him, is a great tribute paid to him by the people of Godavari delta.

KIND HEARTED TO LABOUR FORCE

Sir Arthur Cotton struggled day in and day out in the construction of the anicut at a time when there was no established communication, machinery and equipment available, except 10,000-strong labour force at his disposal. He ensured fair wages and medical facilities to the labour and was always kind-hearted towards them. Upon completion of the Godavari Anicut in 1852, he became the Chief Engineer in the Madras

Presidency. The construction of the Gannavaram aqueduct of the Godavari delta system in 1852 was a milestone in his career as it not only improved irrigation but also facilitated communication to the Godavari central delta. The erstwhile Bezwada anicut on the Krishna River was also his invention and it was he who got the proposals approved in 1850.

Thomas Cotton was given the title 'Sir' by the British Queen in 1861 and conferred the title of 'Knight Commander of the Star of India'. He was also a good writer. He wrote many books, including *Salt Tax-Luxury Tax on Poor, Tungabhadra works, Madras public works, Study of living languages, Indian economy and How to prevent Drought.*

He lived a simple life and was honest to the core. He lived in a rented building after retirement in 1860. He dared to criticise the British

Crown against salt tax. He lived a robust life for 96 years, breathing his last on July 24th, 1899.

The Sir Arthur Cotton Museum, inaugurated by former chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh Nadamuri Tarakarama Rao on 1988 February 25, today serves as a great place to educate people on how the great engineer constructed the mighty anicut across Godavari river and converted the lands of East and West Godavari Districts as fertile lands. Many models collected from various places and projects are also exhibited in the Museum to attract visitors and educate them about irrigation works. This museum draws many students of engineering. It is monument to a great engineer, who piously carried on his shoulders the weight of the needs of others, with other men's sorrows affecting him as though they were his own.

Discharged from hospital, Nani alleges attack was preplanned

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Telugu Desam party leader and Chandragiri Assembly constituency candidate Pulivarthi Venkata Mani Prasad, known as Nani, who was injured in an attack on him by the alleged YSRCP activists, was discharged from hospital on Wednesday. Some miscreants who were said to be the YSRCP activists attacked Pulivarthi Nani when he came out of Padmavathi Women's University after examining the safety of EVM strong room. The miscreants hurled stones on his car and smashed windscreens with logs.



Nani suffered injuries in the attack and he was admitted to a private hospital. Talking to the media here on Wednesday, Pulivarthi Nani said that the attack on him was preplanned. He said that an attempt was made on his life but luckily he escaped.

He said that the culprits fled to Pondicherry and YSRCP leader Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy is extending patronage to them. "My gun-

man Dharani told me that the attackers shouted 'kill him', a by-election will be held". Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy under the frustration orchestrated the attack on me from Ongole," he lashed out, adding that the YSRCP leaders resorted to such violence as they understood that they were going to be defeated in the election. The TDP leader said that about 40 miscreants

attacked him and one of them wielded a sword and another wielded a hammer.

One of them hit on his shoulder, the TDP leader explained. The windscreen of his car was smashed when he was in the car. "My gunman Dharani saved my life. Otherwise, I would have been killed.

When my gunman was resisting the miscreants, my

children took me from my car and sent me in another car. This all took place in about 20 minutes," the TDP leader narrated. Pulivarthi Nani said that he had informed the Chandragiri DSP about the attack but no police personnel came to the place. "We suspect that the police officials might have got information about the attack on me but they did not respond intentionally," he slammed. He regretted that when he was in hospital, the police resorted to lathi charge on his followers.

Meanwhile, Pulivarthi Nani's wife Pulivarthi Sudha staged a dharna in front of the Tiruchanur police station near here on Wednesday in protest against the inaction of police. She said that her husband narrowly escaped an attempt on his life.

"The SP sent me a message that we should be silent till June 4 since they can not touch Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy till then. But what we demand is the arrest of those who attacked my husband," Sudha said.

12 students injured as college bus collides with tipper lorry



PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

As many as 12 students of a private educational institution were injured when the college bus collided with a tipper lorry at Bodasingipet village in Gajapathinagar mandal on Wednesday. Police said that Centurion University bus was dropping the students after college. When the bus reached Bodasingi Pet village on NH26, it collided with a tipper lorry which came in the opposite direction. Police said that 12 students were injured in the accident. One girl student was injured critically. The bus driver was also injured in the incident. The injured students were admitted to the GGH in Gajapathinagar. The vehicular traffic on the highway was disrupted due to the accident and a large number of vehicles stranded either side of the road.



2,600 voter awareness programmes conducted in Eluru

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector and District Election Officer V Prasanna Venkatesh said that over 2600 SVEEP programmes were conducted across Eluru district in order to create awareness among voters and make them exercise their right of vote in the election.

Voter awareness programmes including 'Systematic Voters Education Electoral Participation (SVEEP)' conducted in the district contributed to significantly increase the voting percentage in the 2024 General election held on May 13, the Collector said.

In the 2019 General election 83.75 voting percentage was recorded in the 7 assembly constituencies in Eluru district. In the 2024 elections, the voting percentage increased to

84.82 percent along with the postal ballot. 'Extensive SVEEP programs in Eluru district with public participation contributed to this record voting. The SVEEP Nodal Officer & District Grama Panchayat Officer Tutika Srinivasa Viswanadh said that the Voter Turnout Implementation Plan-2024 (TIP-2024) held for 90 days to create awareness among voters in the district with the aim of increasing the voter turnout in the 2024 elections and appointed DGPO as SVEEP Nodal Officer and monitored entire programs through the Control Room.

DGPO Srinivasa Viswanadh said extensive SVEEP programs were implemented in Eluru District and awareness programs were conducted among the voters in 7 constituencies this includes setting

up Booth Level Association Groups (BAG), at promotion of Chunav Patashala at Booth levels among tribal and rural voters, setting up Campus Ambassadors, folk programs called Kalajatha organized in 547 Grama Panchayats, setting up extensive literacy camps, awareness seminars in urban areas to remove urban empathy, discussion forums with Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Mukha Mukhi (face-to-face) programs with first-time fresh voters contributed in increasing of polling percentage. The Collector appealed to 16,37,430 voters with the slogans of "Randi.. Kadali Randi" Vote is not only our right' It is our responsibility.

As the call went viral on all social media, a large number of voters exercised their right to vote, the DGPO said.

Elaborate security provided to EVM strongroom: SP

PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Superintendent of Police S Sathish Kumar said elaborate security has been provided to the EVM strong room. The SP, who reviewed the situation with sub-divisional officer K Hanumantha Rao on Wednesday, said that the strong rooms, where the EVMs were preserved, were provided a strict surveillance. The SP said that a three tier security was provided to the EVM strong room and entry to the JNTUK campus was strictly restricted.

SP Sathish Kumar said any one from the public or the elected peoples' representatives had to obtain permission from the Security in-charge at the entry point and also the concerned security officer and prohibitory orders under section 144 were in force in the JNTUK area.

Bhuma Akhila Priya's body guard critically injured in attack

PNS ■ NANDYALA

Poll violence continued on the third day also at various places including in Nandyala, Anantapur and Palnadu districts. Unidentified miscreants attacked Nikhal, the body guard of former Minister and Telugu Desam party leader Bhuma Akhila Priya in Allagadda.

Police said that in the wee hours on Wednesday. The miscreants hit Nikhal with a car in which he was thrown off from the road. Later three miscreants chased him. He escaped from them by running away from the place and entered Akhila Priya's house.

However, he suffered grievous injuries as he was hit by a speeding car. Police said that previously, victim Nikhal thrashed TDP leader AV



Subba Reddy during the padayatra of TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh. Growing a grudge on Nikhal, the followers of AV Subba Reddy attacked Nikhal, Bhuma Akhila Priya alleged.

The Allagadda police registered a case against AV Subba

Reddy and four others in connection with the attack on Nikhal. Meanwhile, the injured Nikhal was admitted to the GGH in Nandyala. The entire incident was captured by CCTVs. The police examined the CCTV footage and were carrying out the investigation.

Kishan sees deep financial crisis ahead in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Party Telangana unit president G Kishan Reddy sees deep financial crisis ahead in Telangana as the Congress government, like the erstwhile BRS dispensation, has been spending unnecessarily without thinking about the future of the state.

Addressing media persons at Delhi on Wednesday, Kishan Reddy alleged that AICC former president Rahul Gandhi had forgotten the assurances given in the past. Hence, the Congress chose to give new assurances during the Lok Sabha elections.

Kishan Reddy demanded TG Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to spell out how he would mobilize financial

resources, considering his boast that he would not compromise on the implementation of assurances given to people by the Congress party.

Kishan Reddy said, "CM Revanth Reddy has not yet started ruling but stated that the Lok Sabha elections were a referendum on his rule. Revanth Reddy should tell as to what he will do if results come against him. Revanth Reddy should stop mudslinging politics at least now and concentrate on the state's financial system."

Kishan Reddy said that surprising results would come on June 4 in Telangana.

The BJP would emerge as an alternative to the Congress and the Bharat Rashtira Samithi parties in Telangana. Kishan



Reddy opined that BRS would cease to exist as a party.

The BJP Telangana unit president said that CM Revanth Reddy and BRS working president KT Rama Rao were competing with each other in spreading falsehood

about BJP's stance on the Constitution and reservations. However, people stood by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kishan Reddy said.

He said, "People laughed at Revanth Reddy's statements. They did not believe in the lies of the Congress and BRS parties."

The MIM's attitude that they would be key players regardless of who wins in Telangana turned out to be a positive factor for BJP. Silent revolution would be seen in Telangana and BJP would certainly win double digit seats. The wish of Modi becoming Prime Minister again is seen in the rural Telangana and youth, women, farmers and new voters unilaterally stood by the BJP."

Purandeswari pays tributes to Sir Arthur Cotton

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

BJP state president Daggubati Purandeswari paid tributes to Engineer Sir Arthur Cotton who constructed the Dowleswaram barrage across the river Godavari near here, on the occasion of his 221st birth anniversary, she garlanded the statue of Sir Arthur Cotton at the barrage.

She recalled the services of Sir Arthur Cotton to India during British rule as an engineer on the occasion.

Rajahmundry YSRCP MP Candidate Dr.Guduri Srinivas also paid rich tributes to Engineer Sir Arthur Cotton by garlanding the portrait of Arthur Cotton. Meanwhile, in Kakinada, Engineers from all



wings paid glowing tributes to the memory of Sir Arthur

Cotton at a meeting held at the Institute of engineers here

on Wednesday to mark his 221st birth anniversary.

JNTUK Registrar Prof L Sumalatha attended the meeting as the chief guest jointly organized by the JNTUK, Institute of engineers Local center and retired irrigation engineers association. Retired superintendent engineer N Arjunarao attended as the Guest of honour. Institute of engineers Kakinada local center chairman and School of Food technology and Biotechnology head Dr M. Ramesh has chaired the function.

Prof Sumalatha said that future engineers should emulate Sir Arthur Cotton and take up programmes aimed at benefiting the society. The bar-

rage constructed across the river Godavari by Sir Arthur Cotton has brought lakhs of acres in both the Godavari districts into assured irrigation thereby changing the entire economy of the region driving away the recurring drought. It is highly admirable that Sir Cotton ventured to construct the barrage when there was not much technological knowledge, Sumalatha explained. Institute of engineers local center secretary Dr V Jaya Prasad, Retired irrigation engineers association president N Krishna Rao, Secretary V Krishna Rao were among those who spoke recalling the yeomen contribution of the engineering legend.

Trough runs from south interior Karnataka to east Vidarbha: Met

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms with lightning and strong gusty winds (speed ranging from 40- 50 Kmph) are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days.

A Meteorological Centre report here on Wednesday said that light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next

seven days. Rainfall occurred at one or two places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema and dry weather prevailed during the last 24 hours.

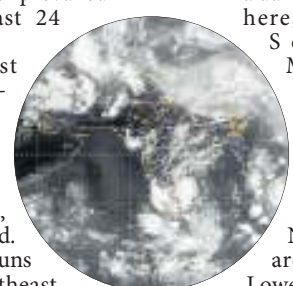
The highest maximum temperature of 39.7 degrees Celsius was recorded at Tirupati in Rayalaseema, the report added.

The trough runs from the southeast Arabian Sea & adjoining Kerala to Marathwada and now runs from South Interior

Karnataka to east Vidarbha at 0.9 km above mean sea level, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that South West Monsoon is very likely to advance into South Andaman Sea, some parts of Southeast Bay of Bengal and Nicobar Islands around May 19.

Lower tropospheric Southerly / South-westerly winds prevail over Andhra Pradesh.



INDIA CORNER

Woman stabbed to death over rejection of love proposal in Karnataka

Just weeks after college student Neha Hiremath was stabbed to death by her former classmate, a 21-year-old woman was murdered inside her house by an acquaintance here for allegedly rejecting her love proposal on Wednesday. Vishwa alias Girish Sawant, 23, knocked on the door of Anjali Ambiger's residence at Veerapur Oni area here at around 5.45 am. When she opened the door, Girish stabbed her to death with a knife and fled the place, a senior police officer said, adding that her sister was a witness to the brutal murder. A case of murder under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code has been registered against the accused, police said, adding that teams have been formed to nab him. Neha Hiremath, 23, was stabbed to death by her former classmate Fayaz Khodunak inside her college campus in Hubballi on April 18. "Girish was harassing my sister Anjali for sometime now. He expressed his love to her but my sister declined."



Close shave for two cops as naxalites trigger IED blast in Chhattisgarh

Two police personnel had a narrow escape on Wednesday when Naxalites detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, an official said. The incident took place near Somanpalli village on Kutru-Farsegarh road when Farsegarh police station's SHO Akash Masih and constable Sanjay were heading in a car to Bijapur town for a government work, he said. "When the vehicle was near Somanpalli, Naxalites triggered the blast causing damage to the bonnet of the car. None of the two occupants was harmed in the blast," he said. A joint team of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force and Farsegarh police was out on an area domination operation in the area when the incident occurred, he said. After being alerted, security personnel rushed to the spot and a combing operation was launched in the area, he added.



Brain dead subedar's organs give new lease of life to three ill soldiers

Three critically ill soldiers have got a new lease of life, thanks to the family of a retired subedar which took the decision to donate his organs after he was declared brain dead following a brain stroke. After the subedar's death on Tuesday, the harvested organs were airlifted by the Indian Air Force to Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi. The organ retrieval and transplant team of Army's Command Hospital, Chandimandir performed a multi-organ harvest procedure on the 70-year-old subedar, a resident of Palampur in Himachal Pradesh, according to an official statement here on Wednesday. He had served for 30 years in the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles of Indian Army, it said. "He was declared brain dead in the ICU due to brain stroke. The next of kin of the deceased decided to donate the liver, kidneys and cornea, which has given a new lease of life to three soldiers, who were critically ill," the statement added.



PoK is part of India, we will take it: Amit Shah

PNS ■ SERAMPORE (WB)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday referred to protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and said "PoK is part of India and we will take it". Addressing a rally in Serampore, Shah said. At the same time, peace has returned to once trouble-torn Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir "now echoes with slogans of Azadi and protests. "After the abrogation of Article 370 by the government in 2019 peace has returned to Kashmir. But now we witness protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Earlier slogans of Azadi were heard here, now the same slogans are heard in PoK. Earlier stones were pelted here, now stones are pelted in PoK," he said. Hitting out at Congress lead-



ers for not supporting the demand of taking over PoK, Shah said, "Congress leaders like Mani Shankar Aiyar say it should not be done as they have an atom bomb. But let me say this Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is part of India and we will take it." Shah said the present Lok Sabha elections are about "choosing between corrupt leaders of INDI alliance and honest

politician Narendra Modi, who despite being Chief Minister and then Prime Minister never had an allegation of single paisa against him." "It's a fight between the 'Chinese guarantee' of the INDI Alliance and the concrete promises of Modi ji. It's a fight between infiltration and the guarantee of citizenship under the CAA. It's a fight between 'Vote for Vikas' and 'Vote for

Jihad! The choice is yours," he said. Dubbing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as "Hirak Rani" in an apparent reference to the film "Hirak Rajar Deshe" by Oscar-awarded filmmaker Satyajit Ray, Shah said, "Satyajit Ray was a great artist and filmmaker. He made a movie - Hirak Rajar Deshe. It was quite a famous movie." "But when Mamata ji came to power, Satyajit Ray was not there, otherwise, he would have made a movie named 'Hirak Rani', instead of 'Hirak Rajar Deshe', Mamata Banerjee is the Hirak Rani," he said. "Bengal is the land which gave us Vande Mataram and the national anthem Jana Gana Mana and played a key role in Bengal's freedom struggle. Both the communists and the TMC tried to end nationalism and patriotism in Bengal," he said.

SC to hear ex TN minister Senthil bail plea today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned till May 16 the hearing on the bail plea of former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate last year in a money laundering case. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan deferred the matter after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the court that he had to appear before a special bench which is hearing a challenge to penal provisions of the Goods and Services tax (GST). Senior advocate Aryama Sundaram, appearing for Balaji, urged the bench to hear the matter saying that the former minister has undergone a bypass surgery and has been in custody for over 300 days. The bench, however, said, "We are not impressed with your submission that because he is in custody for 300 days he should be given priority."

India asks Iran to release 40 Indian seafarers from custody

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has asked Iran to release nearly 40 Indian seafarers who were detained from four different merchant ships seized by the Persian Gulf country over the past eight months on different charges, sources said on Wednesday. Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal made the request during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran on Monday. Sonowal was in Tehran where India signed a 10-year contract to operate the strategic Iranian port of Chabahar that will help expand the trade with Central Asia. Following a request of Iranian side, a meeting was held between Sonowal and Abdollahian where bilateral issues were discussed, sources privy to the development said. During the meeting,



Sonowal requested Abdollahian to release all Indian seafarers who are in Iranian custody. Abdollahian said Tehran is positive on the release of the Indian seafarers but it is getting delayed as legal procedures have to be followed, the sources said. The sources said the Indian seafarers were working in four ships -- Steven, Global Cherylyn, Margol and MSC Aries -- which were seized by Iran over the past eight months on different charges. According to the sources,

Steven was seized by the Iranian Coast Guard on September 12, 2023, for "smuggling" and the crew were also detained. There were nine Indian crew members on board and it has come down to six now after three of them, along side two other nationals, were taken away by Iranian authorities on April 24 and their whereabouts are still unknown. Iran is yet to give consular access to the Indian seafarers of the ship and the Indian Embassy in Tehran is in regular touch with Iranian authorities, the sources said. Another ship, Global Cherylyn, was seized on December 11, 2023 at Bandar Abbas with 20 Indian crew members and one Bangladeshi. Consular access to the crew was given on March 12, 2024. The vessel was seized on charges of "fuel smuggling". The issue was raised with the Iranian Embassy and authorities in Tehran.

FOREST FIRES ISSUE

SC slams Uttarakhand for "lackadaisical" approach, calls chief secretary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Slamming the Uttarakhand government for its "lackadaisical" approach in controlling forest fires, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the state's chief secretary to personally present himself before it on May 17 to give explanation, including on utilisation of funds and vacancies in forest department.



Terming it a "very sorry state of affairs", the apex court said the state was just trying to find some excuse or the other. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai directed that the staff and vehicles of the forest departments of states shall not be requisitioned for election purposes or any other purposes like the 'Char Dham Yatra'.

"We are at pains to say that the approach of state of Uttarakhand in controlling the fires is, to say the least, lackadaisical. Though action plans have been prepared and finalised, no steps are being taken for implementation of the same," said the bench, also comprising Justices SVN Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta. The top court was hearing

a plea on raging forest fires in Uttarakhand. The bench said when funds from the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) were available and also sanctioned by the central authority, it saw no reason as to why only Rs 3.41 crore out of the Rs 9.12 crore was utilised for forest related activity in Uttarakhand in 2023-24. The bench observed it also saw no reason as to why the balance amount was not utilised for forestry. "Another issue that needs to be addressed is with regard to huge vacancies in the forest department of the State of Uttarakhand," it said. The bench noted that one of the grievances raised by the state was regarding failure of timely disbursement of the national disaster management fund or state disaster management fund. "We fail to understand as to how state could have grievance with regard to the disbursement of state disaster management fund in as much as it is within the domain of the state to disburse the said funds," it said.

ED nabs Jharkhand Min Alam in money laundering case

PNS ■ RANCHI

The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday arrested Congress leader and Jharkhand Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam in a money laundering case, official sources said. The 70-year-old was taken into custody at the agency's zonal office here under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after about six hours of interrogation on the second day of questioning, the sources said. He was grilled by the federal agency Tuesday for over nine hours and his statement was also recorded. The agency had last week arrested Alam's personal secretary and state administrative service officer Sanjeev Kumar Lal (52) and the latter's domestic help Jahangir Alam (42) following the seizure of more than Rs 32 crore cash from a flat linked to them. The money laundering investigation pertains to alleged irregularities and payment of "bribes" in the state rural development department. While seeking the remand of the two arrested persons, the ED had informed a special PMLA court here that Lal collected "commission".

EC operating under Modi's directions: Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister on Wednesday labeled the Election Commission (EC) as a "puppet" operating under the directives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Addressing an election rally at Chinsurah, Hooghly district, Banerjee criticised the EC for scheduling the polls over a period of two months, alleging that this decision favoured the saffron party while disregarding the hardships faced by the common people due to excessive heat. "The Election Commission is a puppet and operates according to Modi's directions. Poll is being held for two-and-half months, have you (poll officials) ever realised the struggle of the common



people," Banerjee said. Accompanying the party's Hooghly nominee actress Rachana Banerjee, the CM accused Modi of violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by allegedly announcing plans to expand the Ayushman Bharat Yojana to cover senior citizens over 70 years of age during the ongoing elections.

Nadda: Mamata pursuing appeasement politics

PNS ■ RAGHUNATHPUR (WB)

Accusing West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee of compromising on the issue of infiltration and appeasing minorities, BJP chief J P Nadda said during the decade-long reign of the TMC in the state, one scandal after another has plagued West Bengal. Speaking at an election rally in support of the party's Purulia candidate Jyotirmoy Mahato, Nadda said while the INDIA bloc was rooting for a 'majboor' (weak) govt at the Centre, people of WB have made their choice clear for a 'majboot' (strong) government.

Need to have more doctors, hospital beds to achieve healthcare vision 2047: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is a need to increase the number of qualified doctors to more than 50 lakh and also add 30 lakh more hospital beds in the country in order to achieve India's healthcare vision 2047, according to a report. The increase in the number of doctors and beds in hospitals would help India get closer

to the average of developed countries, as per a FICCI-EY Report titled 'Decoding India's Healthcare Landscape'. India has witnessed a significant increase in the number of medical colleges and MBBS seats, addressing the growing demand for healthcare professionals, it said. The number of registered allopathic doctors witnessed substantial growth, rising from

6,60,801 in 2005 to 13,08,009 such doctors in 2022, the report said. Similarly, the bed capacity in government hospitals across India has consistently grown from 4.7 lakh beds in 2005 to 8.5 lakh beds in 2021. The report also highlighted the importance of having 100 per cent health insurance coverage for the country's population.

If people vote for BJP, I will have to go back to jail: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said he will have to go back to jail, if people vote for the BJP, as he urged the electorate to choose INDIA bloc candidates. INDIA bloc parties AAP and Congress are contesting the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi in an alliance. While holding a roadshow in Model Town in support of Congress' Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha poll candidate JP Agarwal, Kejriwal gave the slogan "Jo kare Kejriwal ko pyaar woh kare Modi ko inkaar (those who love Kejriwal reject Modi)". "I have come straight from jail to be amongst you. These people (BJP) put me behind bars and I missed you a lot. I love you a lot. I know that even you love me a lot. I am a small person. Ours is a small party with governments in Delhi and Punjab," Kejriwal said. "I was wondering why I was put in jail. What is my fault? These people are quite powerful," he said. The chief minister said his



"fault" was providing good education to children, building good schools for them, opening Mohalla Clinics and arranging for free medicines for people. "Now, they are saying I will have to go jail again. It is in your hands whether I go to jail. If you choose lotus (the BJP's symbol), I will have to return to jail. If you choose INDIA bloc candidate, I won't have to go to jail," the AAP national convener said. "When you go to vote, you have to think whether Kejriwal should go to jail. Jo kare Kejriwal ko pyaar woh kare Modi ko inkaar," he said. He sought support for Agarwal and said this time, the AAP and the Congress are contesting in an alliance. Kejriwal alleged that efforts were made to break him while he was in jail "but because of the blessings of Lord Hanuman, I stayed strong". The chief minister, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi liquor policy case, was released from Tihar Jail on interim bail granted by the Supreme Court.

Over a fifth of excess deaths linked to heatwaves

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heatwaves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990. India was followed by China and Russia, with each experiencing roughly 14 per cent and 8 per cent of these heatwave-linked excess deaths, respectively. The study, led by Monash University, Australia, found that heatwave-linked excess deaths accounted for about a third of all heat-related deaths and 1 per cent of total deaths globally.

Researchers also found that of the overall 1.53 lakh excess deaths occurring every summer, close to half came from Asia and more than 30 per cent from Europe. Further, the largest estimated death rates (deaths per population) were seen in regions with dry climates and lower-middle incomes. The findings are published in PLoS Medicine. "During the warm seasons from 1990 to 2019, heatwave-related excess deaths accounted for 153,078 deaths per year, a total of 236 deaths per ten million residents or 1 per cent of global deaths," the authors wrote. For the study, the researchers used data from



the UK-based Multi-Country Multi-City Collaborative Research Network that included daily deaths and temperatures from 750 locations across 43 countries. Comparing the decade up to 2019 with that up to 1999, the duration of heat waves each

year was found to have extended from 13.4 to 13.7 days on average around the world, with average ambient temperature warming by 0.35 degrees Celsius every decade. The researchers said that while previous studies have quantified excess deaths due to heatwaves locally, they have

not compared these estimates across the globe over a prolonged duration. "Heatwaves are associated with substantial mortality burden that varies spatiotemporally (with space and time) over the globe in the past 30 years," the authors wrote. The findings show that government actions taken to enhance health sector adaptation and resilience can have potential benefits, the authors said. They called for a "comprehensive approach" tackling not only immediate health risks during heatwaves but also implementing long-term strategies to minimise vulnerability and inequalities across communities.

Cong veteran Kamla Beniwal dies, condolences pour in

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Veteran Congress leader and former governor of Gujarat Kamla Beniwal died at a private hospital in Jaipur on Wednesday. She was 97. Beniwal was admitted to the hospital after a brief illness. One of her family members said the funeral will be held on Thursday. Apart from Gujarat, she also served as governor of Tripura and Mizoram. A seven-time MLA, Beniwal also remained the deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, apart from holding other positions



in the state government and the Congress party. Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, former chief minister Ashok Gehlot and other leaders condoled the

demise of Beniwal. Mishra expressed grief on the demise of Beniwal and prayed for peace to the departed soul. In a post on X, the chief minister wrote, "The news of the demise of Dr Kamla Beniwal, former governor of Gujarat and former deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, is extremely sad. My condolences are with the bereaved family." Speaker of Rajasthan assembly Vasudev Devnani said recalled Beniwal was a "good administrator and public representative".



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Eating gold

Already costly, food items to be dearer on the back of heatwave, poll expenditures

With wholesale inflation hitting a 13-month high of 1.26 per cent in April and the mercury poised to peak in the next two months, stubbornly rising food prices are worrying many a family across the nation. This rise was driven as both food and fuel became dearer. Interestingly, India's retail inflation, measured by the consumer price index (CPI), fell to an 11-month low of 4.83 per cent year-on-year in April 2024, compared to 4.85 the previous month. The Reserve Bank of India primarily considers retail inflation when formulating monetary policy. However, for the average person, the rise in WPI is concerning as it is primarily influenced by food items, both processed and unprocessed, as well as manufactured goods. India is experiencing an ongoing heatwave, which is expected to affect vegetable prices. WPI inflation is forecast to increase to 2-3 per cent in May 2024; it is expected to spiral up and reach its peak in June 2024. WPI food inflation, which includes primary food articles and manufactured food items,



increased for the third consecutive month to an eight-month high of 5.5 per cent in April (compared to 0.4 per cent in April 2023), driven by both manufactured food products (reaching a 15-month high of 1.2 per cent) and primary food articles (reaching a four-month high of 7.7 per cent).

The increase in WPI inflation in April was attributed mainly to fuel and food items. However, there is a silver lining as the outlook for food inflation has improved due to expectations of a normal monsoon, which is anticipated to boost agricultural production. Additionally, commodity prices have rebounded on hopes of increased demand from China. Since it is an election

year, there is an automatic push to prices based on market speculation and uncertainty over continuation of governance policies, not to mention that the cost of election is recovered from the common man via higher prices. The funding of political parties by corporates and traders often reflects in the spiralling prices, pre- and post-elections. Logistic bottlenecks, labour shortages and increased transportation costs, thanks to oil prices, all contribute to the overall inflationary pressures, amplifying the challenges faced by food producers and consumers alike. Amid the backdrop of escalating food prices, election discussions revolve around economic policies and their impact. High prices and employment concerns loom large as hot topics, reflecting the broader sentiment of economic anxiety among voters. Generally, the ruling party bears the brunt of inflation as people hold it responsible for not keeping the prices in check. Effectively managing inflation entails employing a comprehensive strategy that harmonises short-term interventions with enduring structural changes. Swift actions, like directed subsidies and mechanisms for stabilising prices, can provide temporary respite to consumers contending with rising food expenses. Until that happens, we can happily fulfil our tax obligations by paying through our nose. Indeed, inflation is taxation without legislation!

PICTALK



BSF personnel with a youth cycle rally to raise awareness for water, education and clean environment, in Dinajpur PTI

Embracing the joys and wisdom of age

Amidst serene nature, I pondered time's fleeting nature and shifting age perspectives, inspired by three chance encounters

I spent a memorable week in the mountains last year. Crisp and importantly clean mountain air, long walks along jungle trails, beautiful sunrises and sunsets and views of snow-capped peaks in the distance, were only a few of the bonuses that the place offered.

It was during this trip that three different people, in their way, tried to put us at ease, by referring to the facilities that they offered for the comfort of senior citizens. I would have bristled indignantly at a reference to my advancing age until only a couple of years back. Now I was not offended.

I remember an incident about 25 years back. One evening, a younger engineer, recruited through campus placement and working with me, remarked, "Sir, I am amazed by your energy. You work so hard and such long hours even at this age."

At 40, I could not take the Statement as a compliment that he had intended it to be and quipped rather caustically, "What do you mean



by this age? I am still young." I would love to see his face today if someone were to remark to him about his age.

I completed 60 five years back. That was the time I realised the benefits that I was entitled to as I booked my air or train ticket at a discount. I could conveniently travel in the metro trains sitting comfortably on the seats meant for seniors, till someone older than me, or at least someone who looked older than me, came and stood near

me. Old habits die hard. I would offer my seat to the more needy or gallantly offer the seat to a much younger woman since that is what I was taught. But chivalry still had limits. I was not prepared to be called an old man or even an uncle by the younger people. Till we faced the onslaught of something terrible four years back - covid. It invaded our lives like nothing we had witnessed in our lifetime. I too had my share of the dread that many might have

BJP retains control, INDIA gains ground



SIDHARTH MISHRA

The Opposition's revival from near-disarray presents a formidable challenge but may fall short of the impact needed to dislodge the BJP-led NDA

With phase four of the polling over, we are more than halfway through the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. There is no denying that the opposition INDIA bloc, led by the Congress, has been able to create a perspective that it isn't a one-sided battle and the fight was on all the seats.

The usual gimmicks of stock market predictions and illegal 'satta' gambling forecasts have started to emerge on social media and private WhatsApp groups. However the underlying message is that come what may, the BJP shall be able to form the Government. This probably emerges from the faith the BJP supporters have in the abilities of Prime Minister Narendra Modi being a leader with gargantuan mass appeal. However, there is also no denying the fact that the opposition was in tatters when the poll campaign started but by the passing of time have been able to create an image of a close fight, which in the end could prove to be just a mirage. Nevertheless, the Congress campaign in the 2024 polls, whatever the results, would remain an area of discussion among the political scientists in the times to come.

Congress's poll preparation could be said to have begun from the conclave it had at Udaipur in 2022. The declarations at the 'Udaipur Shivir' talked of building a vibrant organisation. This came in the backdrop of desertions plaguing the party especially from their most prominent leader Rahul Gandhi's coterie. In 2022, when the Congress met in Rajasthan, one right decision it took was to hold the polls for the post of the president of the All India Congress Committee. It did activate the party and in Mallik arjun Kharge, the party has found a good campaigner, who not only campaigns hard but makes a lot of sense with what he says. Strategically, unlike the Vidhan Sabha polls held some months back in the four States, the leadership has consolidated on the



alliance despite the initial hiccup caused by its very convener, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar walking out of the formation. Though some point out that Kharge and not Nitish was foisted as the chair of the alliance, as given his track record, Nitish's opposition to the BJP was always suspect. The second move by Congress has been to channel the strength of the alliance partners to keep itself afloat. To this end, the Congress is contesting just 328 seats this time, much lower than what it had contested in the 2019 polls. Last time it had contested 421 seats. The party would have contested 330 seats this time but for the rejection of the papers of its candidate in Surat and its candidate withdrawing in Indore. This means that the Congress in INDIA has created an alliance base that is much wider than that of the United Peoples Alliance (UPA). This also means that the party has shrunk from the position of a dominant



THE CONGRESS CAMPAIGN IN THE 2024 POLLS, WHATEVER THE RESULTS, WOULD REMAIN AN AREA OF DISCUSSION AMONG POLITICAL SCIENTISTS IN THE TIMES TO COME

partner to a senior partner with some other members of the bloc like the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab not even entertaining an alliance. Those in charge of the alliance forgoing the party claim that the grouping this time is much more pragmatic than in 2019. The case in point is Uttar Pradesh. The party went into the 2019 polls all by itself. With no major allies and up against the BJP and the SP-BSP alliance, Congress contested 67 of the State's 80 seats. It could win only one: Sonia Gandhi in Rae Bareilly. This time in alliance with the Samajwadi Party it's contesting just 17 seats, down by 50 seats. People close to poll planning, point out that it has been done to conserve the party resources for more realistic contests. Similarly West Bengal, after contesting 40 seats in 2019 is contesting just 14 seats this time giving the remaining seats to the alliance partner - the Left parties. Similar arrange-

ments have been made in other States. Now how would that affect the final results? The BJP in 2024 wants to equal the performance of the Congress in 1984 when it got more than 400 seats. What's not to be forgotten is that those 400 seats came as a harvest of the sympathy wave in the favour of the party following the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. What makes BJP in 2024 different from Congress in 1984 is that it has delivered on its ideological agenda thus the cadre commitment would be there. Based on that the saffron party has expanded its poll machinery. This could work both ways, if there is an undercurrent, it would bring bonus points and if there is voter indifference, the performance should not fall below, as they say in commerce, the reserve price.

(The writer is the author and president, the Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ESSENCE OF RAM RAJYA

Madam — Apropos the news article "Ram Rajya will begin in the country now, doesn't mean theocratic State: Rajnath Singh," published on 14 May, this is my response. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remarks on the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the concept of Ram Rajya reflect a perspective blending faith with civic duty. Singh emphasises that Ram Rajya isn't about establishing a theocratic State but fostering a sense of responsibility among citizens. His call for a return to the essence of politics, where words align with actions, resonates with the public disillusionment with political rhetoric. Singh's stance on the triple talaq issue underscores a commitment to gender equality transcending religious boundaries. His assertion reflects a broader narrative of social justice and protection of vulnerable individuals, regardless of religious affiliation. As he seeks reelection, Singh's emphasis on fulfilling electoral promises underscores accountability in governance. His track record in Lucknow adds weight to his assertion, aligning action with words. Overall, Singh's discourse encapsulates a nuanced understanding of governance, intertwining religious symbolism with practical governance and societal welfare.

Vihaan Sharma | Kolkata

KEJRIWAL'S GUARANTEE

Madam — It refers to the article "Kejriwal's bail: Unveiling political prophesis post-release," published on 13 May. Most of the AAP's guarantees require more funds since most are a burden to the State exchequer. Free electricity, the MSP guarantee, the scrapping of the magnifier and the creation of two crore jobs need heavy payout from the State exchequer. Finding funds without taxing the people is not possible in today's situation. The six guarantees of the Congress remain to be implemented in Karnataka and Telangana. Guarantees have become political stunts during elections. Furthermore, during the last 2019 gener-

Triangular contest in Ladakh



Apropos the news article "Ladakh stands alone in Lok Sabha roll call," published on 13 May, this is my response. The political landscape in Ladakh has dramatically shifted, morphing a once two-way battle between the BJP and Congress into a three-way challenge. The emergence of local alliances and the entry of an Independent candidate complicates the electoral dynamics, adding layers to an already complex scenario. The contest reflects the region's aspi-

rations and frustrations, particularly regarding Statehood and constitutional status. The BJP's incumbency faces scrutiny, with discontent palpable over unmet demands. Meanwhile, Congress positions itself as a champion of local interests, leveraging historic ties and promising to address grievances.

The involvement of grassroots movements and renowned figures underscores the grassroots activism shaping Ladakh's political narrative. The electorate's choice will influence not just parliamentary representation but also the trajectory of regional autonomy and development. As the campaigns intensify, candidates grapple with reconciling national agendas with local exigencies, emphasising dialogue and resolution of longstanding issues. Ultimately, Ladakh stands at a crossroads, poised to redefine its political identity through this pivotal electoral battle.

Dhruv Malhotra | Mumbai

al election, Kejriwal said that that would be the last election if Modi is returned to power. It was Indira Gandhi who included the words socialism and secularism in the preamble of the Constitution. So the charge Modi will not hold elections or tamper with the constitution is without substance and a repeat of what was said in 2019. Furthermore, many politicians, actors and so-called social workers said in 2014 and 2019 that if Modi wins the elections they will move out of the country. Still, they are all here enjoying the fruits of freedom. On corruption, first, let Kejriwal come clean on the Delhi liquor gate scam.

N R Ramachandran | Chennai

PARAG'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

Madam — Apropos the news article "Home Turf: Rajasthan Aim to clinch a playoff berth in Parag's 'Royal' Homecoming," published on 14 May, this is my response. Riyan Parag's journey from the northeastern corner of India to becoming a cricketing sensation embodies hope and perseverance. His anticipated return to Guwahati, backed by a

robust performance, not only fuels the Rajasthan Royals' playoff dreams but also marks a milestone for cricket in the region. Parag's stellar season, coupled with the strategic investment made by the Royals, highlights the potential lying dormant in lesser-explored cricketing territories.

The upcoming matches against Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders hold more than just playoff implications; they symbolise the rise of a new cricketing stronghold. While Parag's emergence steals the spotlight, it's crucial to acknowledge the collective effort of the team. Sanju Samson's leadership and consistent batting form, alongside the solid bowling unit, underscore the Royals' strength as a cohesive unit. As cricket enthusiasts, witnessing Parag's ascent not only inspires but also reshapes the narrative of cricketing talent in India, extending its reach beyond conventional boundaries.

Ishita Kapoor | Ahmedabad

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FIRST COLUMN

HARNESSING THE POWER OF RESOLUTION

Achievers propel success with determination and humility



RAVI VALLURI

Successful completion of a task releases endorphins in the body which act as a tonic and an analgesic. "Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other," said Abraham Lincoln. Resolution is the positive intent, resolve or aspiration to give a hundred per cent to achieve the targeted goal. Before treading the path, one should remain grateful and blessed for the abundance provided by nature. Half the job gets done by feeling the blessings.

Effort, skill and courage are prerequisites for brewing this heady cocktail. Achievers tap the potential from the depths of their minds and hearts and conquer the fear of failure in the process.

The mind is that element of a person that enables him to be aware of the world and its myriad experiences to think positively and to feel the faculty of consciousness simultaneously purging negative thoughts in the bargain. One must dream big, even if ideas may appear outlandish to become high-end achievers and ensure to never kill an idea, however witless it may appear on the surface. That is the Audacity of Hope. Be it a Mandela, a Modi, or an Obama.

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires," writes William Arthur Ward. Successful individuals foster friendships and build trust. There is no deficit in trust. They respect colleagues and only symphony is orchestrated in the environment. There is no room for any cacophony.

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar always differentiates between mere hearing and the art of listening. Listening is a trait of a humble person; while hearing is the character of a brusque and an inaccessible person. An achiever is available to all his followers 24*7, 365 days a year. Achievers are adaptable to new ideas, thought processes, abstractions and intentions. Their minds are not closeted by achievements or failures of the past and continuously live in the present moment. This is the trademark of their personality.



Those who are high achievers are not driven by amassing wealth. Such trailblazers and trendsetters are continuous learners. Leadership implies 3Ls for them. These are learned, learn some more and learn even more. Top-grade sportsmen, artists and scientists are compulsive learners and are humble about their achievements. There is only one path from the top and that is downhill. High-end achievers never believe that they have reached the summit or the pinnacle or that they are too powerful.

Such a conjecture smacks of capriciousness and arrogance and that would be their nemesis. Every successful career is a lesson in humility. Rewards and recognition are meant to act as motivators, not create a glass ceiling of conceit.

Achievers are surrounded by positive-oriented people and positive thoughts, as negative emotions are a big drain on resources. It is important to ascertain positive feedback and build on the synergy of the group. Understanding group dynamics is an important physical and psychological tool. They glean synergies of any joint venture. Achievers always work with teams and individuals who share their values, they possess long-term vision inherently and believe in themselves and the set goals. They direct the wind and the sails. Such people need to build on their strengths and those of the organisation. It is essential and paramount to prioritise targets, the mission and vision Statements, identify a self-list and focus on projects that can be delegated.

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way," says John C Maxwell.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Electric tractors for electrifying agriculture



AS MITTAL

These technological marvels promise not only to rejig farming practices but also to mitigate the industry's environmental footprint

Climate change is an issue of utmost importance that the world is currently facing and it is a challenge that is complex and multifaceted. Particularly the agriculture sector is vulnerable, as greenhouse gas emissions are being released into the atmosphere, causing extreme weather conditions such as heat waves and floods. This is directly impacting crop productivity and farmers' livelihoods, which is a significant threat to global food security. To counter this challenge, we must adopt environmentally friendly cultivation and processing methods. Electric tractors are one of the globally emerging excellent alternatives for future farming. It can reduce farming costs and zero emissions effectively addressing the issue of a sustainable environment and reducing our dependence on imports of crude oil.

As the world's largest tractor manufacturer, India sells over 1 million tractors annually. However, the adoption of electric tractors has been slower than other electric vehicles (EVs) like two-wheelers, three-wheelers, passenger cars and electric buses. It's time to take action and promote electric tractors. This will foster an environment for mass adoption and position India as a global exporter of electric tractors. To achieve this, we must integrate electric tractors into incentivised EV policies. It's unacceptable that no incentives are being offered for electrifying tractors.

Electric Tractors Could be Fetched in FAME-3 Scheme: The FAME-2 scheme (April 2019-March 2024) was a central Government subsidy that aims to promote the Fast Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME). The scheme ended on 31st March, with a total outlay of Rs 10,000 crore to support the production of 7,000 electric buses, half a million electric three-wheelers, 55,000 electric passenger cars and one million electric two-wheelers. However, the scheme excludes electric tractors, which means that manufacturers cannot significantly reduce the cost of producing electric tractors.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries has recently proposed the FAME-3 scheme, which has an outlay of Rs 12,600. The scheme is expected to be implemented after the Lok Sabha elections. Farmers are hoping that the scheme will include electric tractors, which will reduce their costs significantly. With a subsidy of up to Rs 2.4 lakh (capped at 40 per cent of the tractor's base price), the burden of high purchasing costs on farmers will be greatly reduced.

To promote the use of electric vehicles, several States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh offer concessions or a waiver on the road tax between 50 per cent and 100 per cent. Other States, including Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, offer direct cash incentives on top of the road tax waiver through a similar approach to the central FAME scheme. The incentives range from Rs 2,500 to Rs 10,000 and the subsidy cap ranges from Rs 60,000 to Rs 2.5 lakh, depending on the battery capacity. Punjab and Haryana offer incentives (up to 40 per cent of the ex-showroom price) for e-tractors in their EV policies. Other key agricultural States should consider following this approach to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Rationalisation of Taxes: Tax rationalisation has proven to be an effective way of promoting electric vehicles through discounted taxes and insurance fees. The existing fiscal incentives provided for zero-emission



THE ADOPTION OF ELECTRIC TRACTORS PRESENTS A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIA TO ENHANCE ITS ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY, PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN ACHIEVING NET-ZERO EMISSIONS, STRENGTHEN THE RURAL ECONOMY AND SHAPE A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FARM FUTURE

motor vehicles should be extended to zero-emission tractors as well. While electric vehicles are charged a reduced GST of 5 per cent, e-tractors are still taxed at the same rate as diesel tractors, which is 12 per cent. Additionally, electric vehicles receive a 15 per cent discount on third-party insurance premiums, whereas this provision is not available for e-tractors. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) has analysed that reducing the GST to 5 per cent or even nil and providing discounted insurance would reduce the cost gap between electric and diesel tractors by almost 40 per cent.

Infrastructure Development: Investing in charging infrastructure for electric tractors, especially in rural areas, is crucial for the rural economy to meet India's development goals by 2047. Using corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for this purpose and establishing a charging station network with incentives will ensure widespread accessibility and convenience for farmers.

To increase demand for electric tractors, it's important to introduce them into custom hiring centres for agricultural machinery. This will help farmers experience the benefits of electric tractors and mitigate challenges related to charging and maintenance.

R&D Investments & Training: Allocating funds for research and development in electric tractor technology can lead to innovation, efficiency improvement and cost reduction. Encouraging collaboration between Government agencies, agricultural research institutions such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and the manufacturers would speed up technological advancements in the sector. Developing and certifying testing and quality assurance standards for electric tractors can attract manufacturers to this sector, addressing supply-side constraints. Institutes

like the Central Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institute can set manufacturing, operational and performance standards for various electric tractors based on power output, design and usage purposes. Training and skill development initiatives for farmers, technicians and service providers on electric tractor operation, maintenance and repair are crucial. Empowering stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills will facilitate the transition to electric tractors and ensure their effective use in agricultural operations.

Zero Emissions in Electric Tractor: A study by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, reveals that the agriculture sector in India is responsible for almost 14 per cent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions, with diesel-powered machinery playing a major role. However, electric tractors could be a solution to these challenges.

Currently, most tractors used in India are powered by diesel, which accounts for approximately 7.4 per cent of the country's annual diesel consumption, equivalent to the amount consumed by buses. While incentives have been introduced to encourage the electrification of buses, no such incentives have been introduced for tractors.

The adoption of electric tractors presents some challenges, such as the initial cost, infrastructure development and promoting their use among farmers. Diesel-powered machinery, notably tractors, accounts for approximately 12-15 per cent of the total cost of agricultural production, which varies by crop type and geographical region. However, electric tractors have many advantages, including zero-emission and a reduction in fuel and maintenance costs due to having fewer moving parts.

According to a study by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), electric tractors could reduce

maintenance costs by up to 40 per cent over their lifetime, providing a more reliable, environment friendly and cost-effective option for farmers. The Way Forward: India's tractor manufacturers have developed advanced technology and moved beyond incentives to introduce electric tractors. However, the primary challenge at present is the cost. On-road zero-emission electric tractors cost 40 to 50 per cent more than diesel tractors. This high cost could deter farmers, even though electric tractors are more cost-effective when used in the field. Urgent support from the Government is needed in the early stages of the market to bridge the cost gap between e-tractors and diesel-driven tractors.

Central and State-level incentives would send a positive signal to the industry to invest more in zero-emission tractors. Additionally, this aligns with India's goal of improving air quality and energy security and has the potential to boost India's tractor exports. Countries such as the US, Europe, Japan and Canada have implemented strict regulations for tractor emissions and have expressed interest in decarbonising farm machinery.

The global electric tractor market is projected to grow from USD 0.7 billion in 2024 to USD 3.4 billion by 2030, presenting a strategic opportunity for India to leverage its manufacturing capabilities. It can enhance its economic competitiveness, play a pivotal role in achieving net-zero emissions, strengthen the rural economy and shape a sustainable and resilient farm future.

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

AI is revolutionising sustainable, tech-driven farming

By harnessing data-driven insights, AI empowers farmers to optimise resource allocation, mitigate environmental degradation and enhance crop yields

Artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture is expected to increase dramatically food waste, climate change and other issues lead approximately one billion people to remain hungry and malnourished even though the globe produces enough food to feed everyone. With 9.7 billion people expected to inhabit the planet by 2050, the agriculture sector is under increasing pressure to provide food with less resource use and less environmental effect. Thankfully, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture has promise for revolutionising food systems and mitigating the world food issue. AI can assist farmers in making data-driven choices, optimising resource consumption and minimising envi-



PRERNA NEGI

ronmental effects by analysing data from several sources. According to a World Economic Forum analysis, integrating AI into agriculture might result in a 60 per cent reduction in the use of pesticides and a 50 per cent reduction in water usage.

Market demand analysis is an essential component of contemporary agriculture. In addition to analysing meteorological data and satellite

photos, AI can assist farmers in choosing the best crop to produce or sell and offer insightful advice on when to plant and what kind of crop to grow. It is possible to forecast market demand for certain crops while optimising profitability by examining data patterns. Farmers may reduce the likelihood of crop failures by using forecasting and predictive analytics. This will create software applications that analyse fruits and vegetables and offer information on their quality, freshness and size using artificial intelligence (AI) and computer vision methods. In addition to identifying flaws and illnesses in crops, these AI technologies allow farmers to take preventative action before the crops are impacted. Artificial

Intelligence (AI) can assist in the production of crops that are more weather and disease-adapted by gathering data on plant growth. Scientists can use AI to find the best-performing plant kinds and cross-breed them to make even more superior hybrids. AI systems are capable of reliably estimating missing nutrients and performing chemical soil analysis.

One of their products, Nutrient Scanner, gathers information from soil samples and gives farmers precise estimations of the nutrients that are lacking and the general condition of the soil. This enables farmers to optimise crop growth and minimise environmental impact by modifying irrigation schedules and fertiliser applications. AI

can monitor the State of plants to spot and predict diseases, identify and remove weeds and recommend effective treatment of pests.

It can also suggest the most effective treatment for pests, reducing the need for broad-spectrum insecticides that can harm beneficial insects and lead to pesticide resistance. Farmers find it difficult and time-consuming to estimate crop growth and maturity, but AI can complete the work accurately and swiftly. Farmers can accurately forecast when crops will achieve ideal maturity by monitoring and tracking crop changes with the use of AI-powered gear, such as sensors and image recognition tools. According to studies, the accuracy rate attained by employing AI to forecast crop

maturity was greater than that of human observers. Farmers may benefit from large cost savings and better revenues as a result of this improved precision. Farmers can precisely track the amount of water and nutrients in the soil by integrating sensors and AI systems.

Deploying devices that detect several factors such as temperature, pH levels, nutrient content and soil moisture might be part of the sensor-based soil monitoring process. These sensors relay data back to AI systems, which process it, evaluate it and advise farmers on the best ways to handle their crops in light of the soil conditions they have discovered. AI-powered technologies can help farmers identify plant illnesses and insects faster

than people can. For instance, an AI-powered system might identify an aphid infestation on a strawberry field, transmit the information back to the farmer's Smartphone and then recommend the best course of action.

Through a linked sprayer, the device could even automate the spraying of pesticides if necessary. AI technology can be used to automate insect or weed control. Robotic weeding is supposed to be extraordinarily accurate with the use of computer vision, saving 90 per cent of pesticide use. These solutions use data analytics to determine how much pesticide is required for each field based on information about crop type, soil condition and field history. In the upcoming years, artificial

intelligence (AI) in agriculture is expected to increase dramatically since it can completely transform the industry by boosting efficiency, decreasing waste and raising crop yields. The market for AI in agriculture is likely to develop rapidly, with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 35.6 per cent expected to see the market size rise from \$2.35 billion in 2020 to \$10.83 billion by 2025, according to research by Markets and Markets. This will lead to more informed decision-making and improved crop yields, essential for addressing the global food security challenge.

(The writer is research Scholar, Department of Agronomy, SGRR University, Dehradun; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold jumps Rs 450; silver surges Rs 900

Gold price jumped Rs 450 to Rs 73,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a rally in precious metal rates internationally, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,950 per 10 grams in the previous close. Silver price also surged by Rs 900 to Rs 86,900 per kg. In the previous session, it had ended at Rs 86,000 per kg. Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,400 per 10 grams, up by Rs 450 amid a positive trend in the overseas markets, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Globally, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,365 per ounce, up by USD 26 from the previous close. Gold rose during European trading hours on Wednesday, buoyed by a weak US dollar and falling bond yields, Gandhi said. Silver also quoted higher at USD 28.80 per ounce. In the previous session, it had ended at USD 28.35 per ounce.



FA Airlines to buy regional airline FlyBig

Mumbai-based FA Airlines is set to acquire regional carrier FlyBig, according to sources. FlyBig has four planes in its fleet. Incorporated in 2022, FA Airlines is focused on the aviation sector. The sources said an initial pact has been signed between the two entities for the deal. Once the transaction is complete, FlyBig's fleet will be expanded by more than 20 aircraft, they added. Fauzia Arshi, an entrepreneur from the film industry, is the Managing Director of FA Airlines. India is one of the world's fastest-growing civil aviation markets and domestic air traffic is on the rise. During the January-March 2024 period, airlines carried 391.46 lakh passengers, as per official data. At present, there are at least six scheduled regional carriers -- Alliance Air, FlyBig, Indigo Air, Star Air, Zoom, and Fly91. There are six scheduled domestic airlines in the country Air India, AIX Connect, Vistara, IndiGo and SpiceJet.



LIC shares rally over 6%; mcap climbs Rs 37,159 cr

Shares of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) on Wednesday jumped more than 6 per cent after the firm said Sebi has granted an additional 3-year time till May 16, 2027, to comply with the 10 per cent public shareholding norm. The stock rallied 6.31 per cent to settle at Rs 989.80 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 7.31 per cent to Rs 999.15. On the NSE, it jumped 6.33 per cent to Rs 990 per share. The company added Rs 37,159.36 crore taking its market capitalisation (mcap) to Rs 6,26,048.27 crore. In volume terms, 7.77 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and over 76.37 lakh shares exchanged hands on the NSE during the day. Currently, the government holding in LIC is 96.50 per cent, while public holding is 3.50 per cent. "Securities and Exchange Board of India vide its letter dated May 14, 2024, has conveyed its decision.



PM's active role responsible for infrastructure sector turnaround: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi active role and personal monitoring is responsible for the turnaround of the infrastructure sector, which suffered due to policy paralysis during the UPA regime, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday. In a contrast to the previous regime, the current government under the leadership of Modi has spearheaded a shift towards prioritising infrastructure development and capital expenditure with an aim to bolster the Indian economy. Taking a dig at the Congress-led UPA regime from 2004-2014, she said, "@INCIndia-led UPA (2004-14) wasted India's economic growth potential and left it among the 'Fragile Five' economies without focus-



In a contrast to the previous regime, the current government under the leadership of Modi has spearheaded a shift towards prioritising infrastructure development and capital expenditure with an aim to bolster the Indian economy.

ing on effective infrastructure development. Under UPA, almost all aspects of India's economic needs were mismanaged or ignored." The UPA government's noticeable and deliberate neglect of infrastructure creation not only denied India much-needed roads, railways, power, etc, but it also compromised India's long-term economic potential, she said in a post on X. "The UPA government's term was replete with examples of decision stasis. Cost overruns, stalled projects and lack of timely approvals were common between 2004-14," she said. However, she said, "Prime Minister Modi's active role has made the infrastructure turn-

around possible. PM has personally monitored the progress of projects, even those launched earlier, through the PRAGATI platform. "This led to the successful completion of long-delayed projects. Through 43 PRAGATI meetings, PM Modi has reviewed projects worth Rs 17.36 lakh crore." Pointing out that infrastructure spending not only boosts GDP growth through its multiplier effects on consumption and investment, but also improves the long-term efficiency of the economy by reducing logistical constraints, she said, adding that a NIPFP study points out that every rupee directed towards capital expenditure in India increases economic output by Rs 4.8. The share of capex in total expenditure dropped sharply

under the UPA from 23 per cent in 2003-04 to an average of 12 per cent between 2005 and 2014, she said. "It is also unwise to expect that @INCIndia would have learnt from their mistakes. INCIndia returns to their neglect of Capex and infrastructure. The 2024 Budget presented by the Congress government in Karnataka slashed the share of capital expenditure in total spending by 28 per cent," she said. Imagine the opportunity cost lost due to Congress not investing adequately in capital expenditure, Sitharaman said. "Our government significantly increased the outlay for capex. As a proportion of total expenditure, Capex rose to over 21 per cent in 2023-24, compared to just 12 per cent in 2013-14," she said.

Senior officials of India and the UK held negotiations last month on the outstanding issues of the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) and the work is in progress to iron out the differences. According to the commerce ministry, the Indian team visited London from April 16-19 for negotiations. "The teams have made good progress and work is in progress in resolving pending issues. Chapter-wise textual negotiations are nearly closed and schedules on goods and services are at an advanced stage of negotiations," the ministry said. The ministry, however, did not disclose further details. So far, 13 rounds of talks have been completed. The 14th round started in January. There are 26 chapters in the agreement, including goods,

India-UK trade pact: Work in progress to resolve pending issues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance). The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23 from USD 17.5 billion in 2021-22. On the India-European Union (EU) trade pact,

services, investments, and intellectual property rights. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates,

and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance). The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23 from USD 17.5 billion in 2021-22. On the India-European Union (EU) trade pact,

Sensex snaps 3-day winning run on selling in HDFC Bank, RIL

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its three-day winning run, benchmark Sensex declined by 117 points in a volatile trade on Wednesday due to selling in index heavy-weight shares like HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and TCS. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 117.58 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 72,987.03. During the day, it lost 281.95 points or 0.38 per cent to 72,822.66. The broader Nifty dipped 17.30 points or 0.08 per cent to close at 22,200.55. The index oscillated between a high of 22,297.55 and a low of 22,151.75 in day trade. From the Sensex pack, Tata Motors, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Hindustan



Unilever, Nestle and Titan were the major laggards. In contrast, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and HCL Technologies were among the major gainers. "The market witnessed a sideways movement throughout the day as the emotions

of investors were impacted by the election-led jitters. FIIs continued to remain in the selling mode; however, domestic investors were largely concentrated on stock-specific picks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

FICCI and IESA sign MoU to foster innovation

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote innovation, support the semiconductor and electronics industry, and strengthen supply chains. The MoU, signed on April 14, establishes a framework for long-term collaboration between the two organisations. "This collaboration will

focus on establishing a joint task force on semiconductors and future critical technologies. The core objective of this MoU is to conduct technology consultative roundtables and foster business partnerships," said S K Pathak, secretary general of FICCI, in a press release. Ashok Chandak, president of IESA, expressed optimism during the MoU signing and said, "By leveraging IESA's domain expertise and FICCI's influential member network, we are poised to significantly increase investments from Indian conglomerates in the semiconductors and electronics sectors."

'India has a strong mechanism to prevent dumping of goods'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has a strong institutional mechanism to prevent dumping of goods from China, which may resort to this practice following the US proposal to hike duties on certain Chinese goods like electric vehicles, an official said on Wednesday. According to a report of think tank GTRI, the escalation of the trade war between the US and China may push Beijing to dump goods in the Indian markets. The US on Tuesday announced plans to slap new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, advanced batteries, solar cells, steel, aluminum and medical equipment -- an election year move that is likely to

increase friction between the world's two largest economies. "We have our DGTR system, we have our effective anti-dumping system. So, in case somebody wants to dump it, we have all the institutional mechanism to look at it. We will do that accordingly," the government official said. The DGTR (Directorate General of Trade Remedies) is an investigation arm of the

commerce ministry that deals with anti-dumping duty, safeguard duty, and countervailing duty. These duties are trade remedy measures, provided under an agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to its member countries. The official said countries want to cut down their dependency on China, particularly for important sectors like mobility by enhancing their capacities and the same policy is being followed by India. "We are also building up our capacities. We are also taking various measures so that India should not have to depend on one country source for important sectors like vehicles," the official added



Increasing penetration of top brands to create more retail jobs: Experts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

As many top brands, both domestic and global, are expanding their footprint deeper into the country, industry experts believe it is likely to create a surge in job opportunities in the retail sector in smaller cities. Experts also mentioned that there is a significant pool of untapped talent ready to cater to retail expansion in smaller cities. "We anticipate around 25,000-30,000 permanent and temporary jobs to be cre-

ated in the retail sector over the next 12-18 months, and this number will grow incrementally on an annual basis. Interestingly, there has been an increasing demand for retail jobs with around an 18-20 per cent uptick in job applications over the last 12 months," Randstad India Director, Professional Talent Solutions, Sanjay Shetty told PTI. Moreover, he said, with the entry of major domestic and international retail brands including apparel, F&B, FMCG, among others into tier-II and III cities,

there is a growing appeal for non-metro areas amongst retailers, indicating a substantial potential for employment generation in these regions. "With companies increasingly setting up operations in smaller tier II and III cities, there is a significant pool of untapped talent ready to cater to retail expansion. Previously, most retail jobs were concentrated in metros, leading to the migration of talent from tier II and III cities in search of employment opportunities," Shetty said.

Exports up to \$35 bn ; trade deficit widens to 4-month high at \$19.1 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports rose by 1 per cent to USD 34.99 billion in April even as the trade deficit widened to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion during the month, according to government data. Healthy growth in sectors such as electronics, chemicals,



petroleum products and pharmaceuticals has helped in registering positive growth

in exports despite global economic uncertainties. Imports also increased by 10.25 per cent to USD 54.09 billion in the month under review from USD 49.06 billion in April 2023 due to a significant jump in gold imports. The imports of precious metals more than doubled to USD 3.11 billion in April this year. Crude oil imports rose

by 20.22 per cent to USD 16.5 billion. Trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, in April 2023 stood at USD 14.44 billion. The previous high in the deficit was recorded in December 2023 at USD 19.8 billion. In March 2024, the outbound shipments dipped to USD 41.68 billion from USD 41.96 billion a year ago.

GOVO targets to be a Rs 1,000 cr company in FY28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Audio electronics brand GOVO targets to be a Rs 1,000 crore entity by FY2027-28, a top official of the company said on Wednesday. The Bengaluru-based audio electronics brand, established in 2022, clocked a revenue of Rs 100 crore in FY2023-24, GOVO CEO and Co-founder Varun Poddar said. "So in FY24, we closed at around Rs 100 crore and we grew around six times, seven times from what we were last year and our goal for the next three years is to go to a thou-

sand crore top line with a 15 per cent to 20 per cent market



share. In FY27-28, we are targeting to be a thousand crore company," he told PTI in an interaction. When asked about factors

fueling growth, he said that the company plans to expand the category, increase its market share and go for premiumisation in the category. GOVO also plans to add more products and more segments in the near future, he added. "We have a robust in-house customer service team. We are very closely in touch with all our customers, constantly taking their feedback, constantly taking those feedbacks and then taking those feedbacks and taking whatever corrective actions are required," said Piyush Jalan, CEO, GOVO.

IT industry veterans bat for more funding for research

PNS ■ BENGALURU

IT industry veterans N R Narayana Murthy and Kris Gopalakrishnan on Wednesday batted for increasing funding for research and higher academic institutes in the country by both the private and public sector, and stressed on the need for changing certain archaic things by bringing in innovative ideas in this regard. Speaking to reporters here, Gopalakrishnan, who is also the co-founder of IT major Infosys, said, "We also need to increase our funding for research, both from private and public...more is needed. Look at US universities -- MIT, Harvard, Stanford, etc -- they



Concurring with him, Murthy said there is a need to change some of the archaic things; for example even today an entrepreneur cannot donate shares to academic or research institutions.

get endowments worth billions of dollars, so I hope that our alumni will contribute more to our institutions." "Today our institutions are primarily dependent on government funding...I want to see more industry participation also," he said. Concurring with him, Murthy said there is a need to change some of the archaic things; for example even today an entrepreneur cannot donate shares to academic or research institutions. Lots of innovations are taking place in the corporate world, they are needed even in the academic institutions, he said and added, "If a young entrepreneur gives some shares, we don't have to assume

that all of them will fail. So once the government starts looking at these innovative ideas that prevail in the industry, things will happen." Entrepreneurs will not have much money, but they can give shares, Murthy, who is also Infosys co-founder, said and added, "Once the company achieves certain growth they (institutions which were given shares) will get a dividend, which will itself be very significant and they will keep multiplying value. So, even educational institutions will have to look at what our future will be 20 or 50 years from now." Gopalakrishnan too said: "Some of our premier institutes will have to look at things like holding equity."

what's brewing?

Cannes 2024 kicks off with Greta Gerwig heading the jury

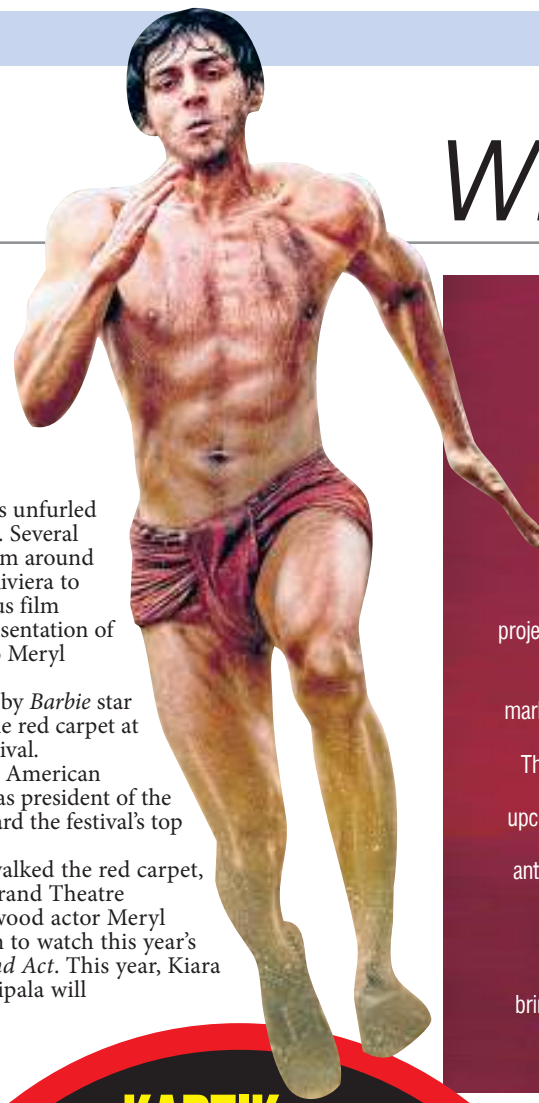


The 77th Cannes red carpet was unfurled in France on Tuesday, May 14. Several celebrities and filmmakers from around the world travelled to the French Riviera to attend one of the most famous film events. It began with the presentation of an honorary Palme d'Or to Meryl Streep.

The feature film jury, led by Barbie star Greta Gerwig, posed on the red carpet at the 77th Cannes Film Festival.

Greta Gerwig is the first American woman filmmaker to serve as president of the Cannes jury, which will award the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or.

Meanwhile, celebrities walked the red carpet, entering the sumptuous Grand Theatre Lumiere to honour Hollywood actor Meryl Streep before sitting down to watch this year's opening movie, *The Second Act*. This year, Kiara Advani and Sobhita Dhulipala will join Cannes veteran Aishwarya Rai at the famous film festival. Aditi Rao Hydari will also represent India at the festival!



KARTIK AARYAN SURPRISES IN 'LANGOT'!

The excitement to see Kartik Aaryan in a never-before-seen avatar in this extraordinary tale is palpable at every corner. *Chandu Champion*, jointly produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and Kabir Khan, is among the biggest releases of the year. The first-look poster is absolutely unexpected, shocking, and unique, which no one saw coming. It has stayed true to all the anticipation. In the poster, Kartik Aaryan is seen as the wrestler wearing a langot. The poster gives a very massy approach to the film. He is appearing confident, and he bares it all, making this an exciting first look in recent times. Jointly produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and Kabir Khan, *Chandu Champion* is set for a June 14, 2024 release and is poised to leave an indelible mark on the hearts of audiences worldwide.

IT WAS A WORKING BIRTHDAY FOR BABIL KHAN!

Actor Babil Khan, renowned for his performances in acclaimed projects such as *Cala*, *Friday Night Plan*, and *The Railway Men*, celebrated his 26th birthday yesterday. Instead of taking a day off, Babil is marking the occasion by doing something that he loves the most—working. This year, Babil has chosen to spend his special day in the dubbing studio, working on his upcoming project. While the specifics of this new project are under wraps, fans are eagerly anticipating yet another exceptional performance from the talented actor. As Babil Khan turns a year older, his fans and colleagues alike extend their warmest wishes, looking forward to the continued brilliance he brings to the screen. Happy Birthday, Babil! May this year bring you even more success and satisfaction in all your creative endeavours.

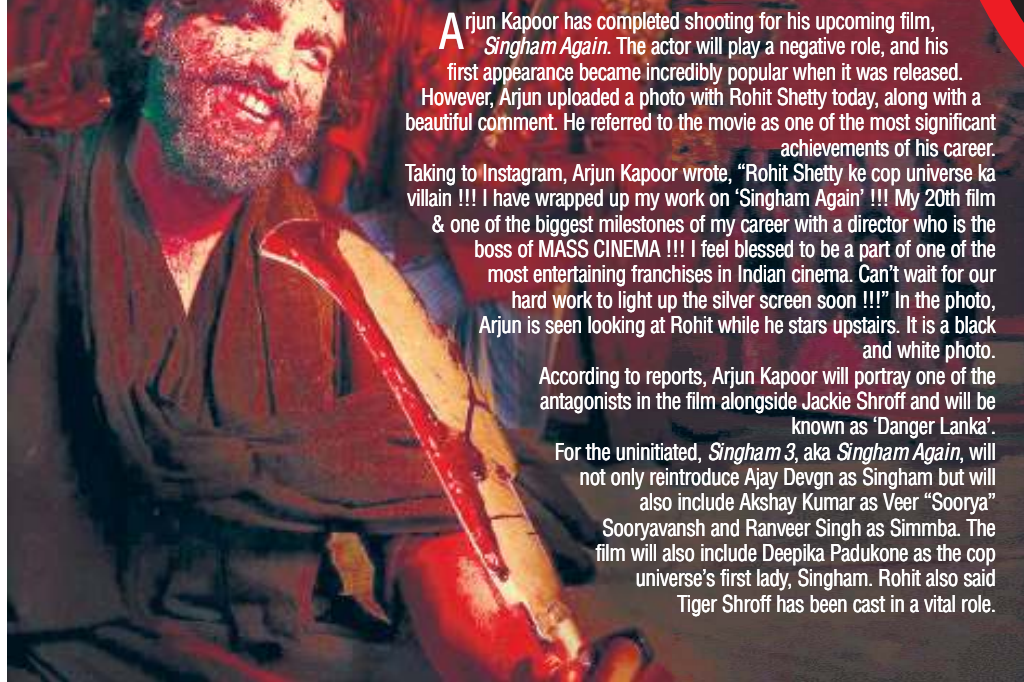


The popular series *The Summer I Turned Pretty* 3 is delayed by a year



The highly anticipated third season of *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, a popular young adult romance drama, has been delayed by a year. The series, based on Jenny Han's popular books, has had two successful seasons thus far. And, while fans had hoped for a third season this year, it appears improbable. But it's not all terrible news; the announcement included one piece of good news. The series became a summer hit immediately after its premiere, propelling its performers, Lola Tung, Gavin, and Christopher, to stardom over the course of the summer. The books also have a loyal following, which adds to the excitement. Jenny Han will make her directorial debut with the third season of *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. Han is the author of the books with the same title that serve as the foundation for the television show.

Arjun Kapoor wraps *Singham Again* shoot



Arjun Kapoor has completed shooting for his upcoming film, *Singham Again*. The actor will play a negative role, and his first appearance became incredibly popular when it was released. However, Arjun uploaded a photo with Rohit Shetty today, along with a beautiful comment. He referred to the movie as one of the most significant achievements of his career. Taking to Instagram, Arjun Kapoor wrote, "Rohit Shetty ke cop universe ka villain!!! I have wrapped up my work on 'Singham Again'!!! My 20th film & one of the biggest milestones of my career with a director who is the boss of MASS CINEMA!!! I feel blessed to be a part of one of the most entertaining franchises in Indian cinema. Can't wait for our hard work to light up the silver screen soon!!!" In the photo, Arjun is seen looking at Rohit while he stars upstairs. It is a black and white photo. According to reports, Arjun Kapoor will portray one of the antagonists in the film alongside Jackie Shroff and will be known as 'Danger Lanka'. For the uninitiated, *Singham 3*, aka *Singham Again*, will not only reintroduce Ajay Devgn as Singham but will also include Akshay Kumar as Veer "Soorya" Sooryavansh and Ranveer Singh as Simmba. The film will also include Deepika Padukone as the cop universe's first lady, Singham. Rohit also said Tiger Shroff has been cast in a vital role.

The first teaser for *Megalopolis* is here



Acclaimed director Francis Ford Coppola has finally unveiled the first teaser trailer of his highly anticipated release, *Megalopolis*, a multi-starrer that is being led by the versatile Adam Driver. The scale at which the film is mounted appears huge and majestic. The Coppola-directed film will premiere at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival on May 17. The released trailer has no definite backstory, which is a good thing because most of the audience will be walking in blind to see the cinematic spectacle. There are various clues that the film was inspired by Roman fables. Coppola appears to have attempted to draw influence from the past while also incorporating elements of creativity and innovation into the present, set in America. It has properly been called Coppola's most ambitious undertaking to date! Aside from Driver, the picture also stars Aubrey Plaza, Shia LaBeouf, Jon Voight, Jason Schwartzman, Laurence Fishburne, Kathryn Hunter, Grace VanderWaal, and Dustin Hoffman. The release date for *Megalopolis* has yet to be confirmed.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



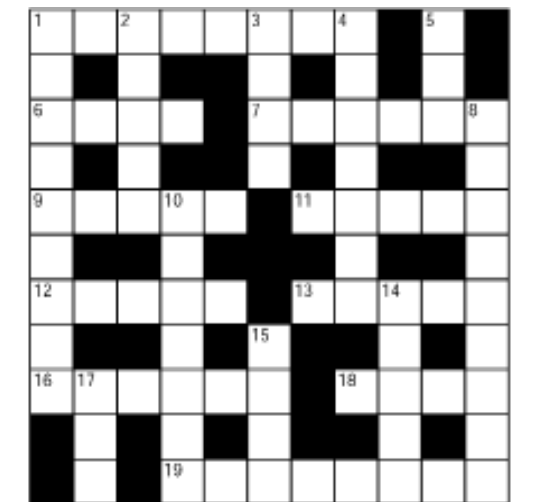
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

7				4				
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Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Train stops
- Tumble over and over
- Young cows
- A tall type of building
- A feeling of rage
- One third of twenty-one
- Instructions for cake making
- The part along the side or end of something
- Always ready to give away or share what you have
- Complete quiet
- Tell a fib
- People unknown to you
- The late part of the day
- A machine that can record television programmes
- A type of blood vessel
- Poole

DOWN

- A thing with handles for carrying an injured person
- Let
- Say this when you get hurt



Vijayawada

the pioneer

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Thursday
May 16, 2024

Philosopher, author, and founder of PrashantAdvait Foundation, Acharya Prashant, speaks to *The Pioneer* over an exclusive chat for our weekly segment of Community Wise, discussing the genesis of how the organisation was created, its vision, and more.

A journey within and beyond social transformation

SHIKHA DUGGAL

As a child, the founder of the PrashantAdvait Foundation was an avid reader! So, Acharya Prashant's father's library contained a diverse mix of literature, including spiritual ones. Texts like the *Upanishads* helped him branch out organically and multi-directionally. He wanted to know and deeply valued the words of those who did. Education at IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad, a brush with the Indian Civil Service, and several years of corporate experience provided vital insights into how the world works. And the world, as he discovered, had too much suffering, ugliness, and ignorance. As a young guy, he did not enjoy and saw the shape of things and wanted to change it.

Spirituality, in virtually any form, fosters resilience and helps people see their problems in a different light. One way to conceptualise spirituality is as a sense of belonging to something greater than oneself. Within the framework of organised religions, it refers to the sense of belonging to a world that a higher power created and loved, and that's what this foundation does.

Sharing a little about the genesis of how the organisation was created, the spiritually minded founder continues, "At 25, I created a leadership course that combined wisdom and spiritual reading and offered it in several top management institutes. I taught on weekends with my corporate employment. This training led to the establishment of Advait Life Education, which eventually became the PrashantAdvait Foundation."

Scientific investigation and spiritual exploration complement one another. The foundation believes that the material truths of life reveal the spiritual

truth. So they prioritise scientific rigour in addressing global issues. Spirituality does not contradict science but rather transcends it. "Our global volunteers help spread teachings. They play an important role in a variety of channels, including social media and releases. Our volunteers in information technology have created an in-house learning portal and mobile app with a massive reservoir of resources from diverse wisdom traditions around the world."

Throughout history, humanity has tended to operate from its primal bodily center. Despite the availability of great works of wisdom, the human ego misinterprets them and uses them for personal gain. Although the foundation has made significant progress in the outside world, they still maintain an animalistic and ignorant mindset within themselves. He further discusses how the foundation aims to develop a "new humanity" and the main concepts and practices that will help achieve this vision: "The new humanity understands that pursuing exterior growth without internal illumination leads to failure. Self-awareness, compassion, and discretion must evolve with science and technology. Our temperament should align with scientific principles, just as we consume scientific products. Unbiased inquiry involves exploring all areas of life, including relationships, aspirations, and value systems."

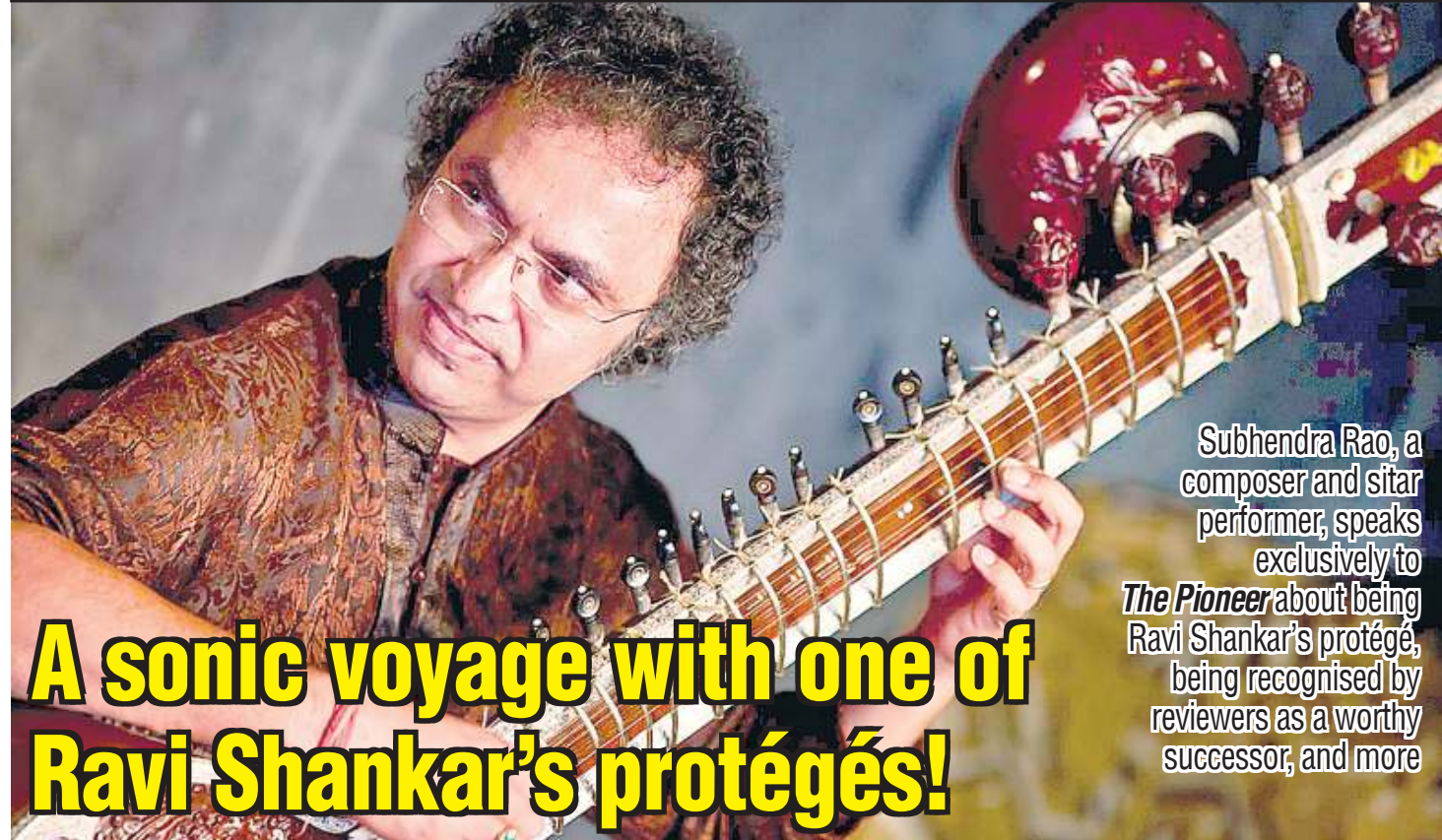
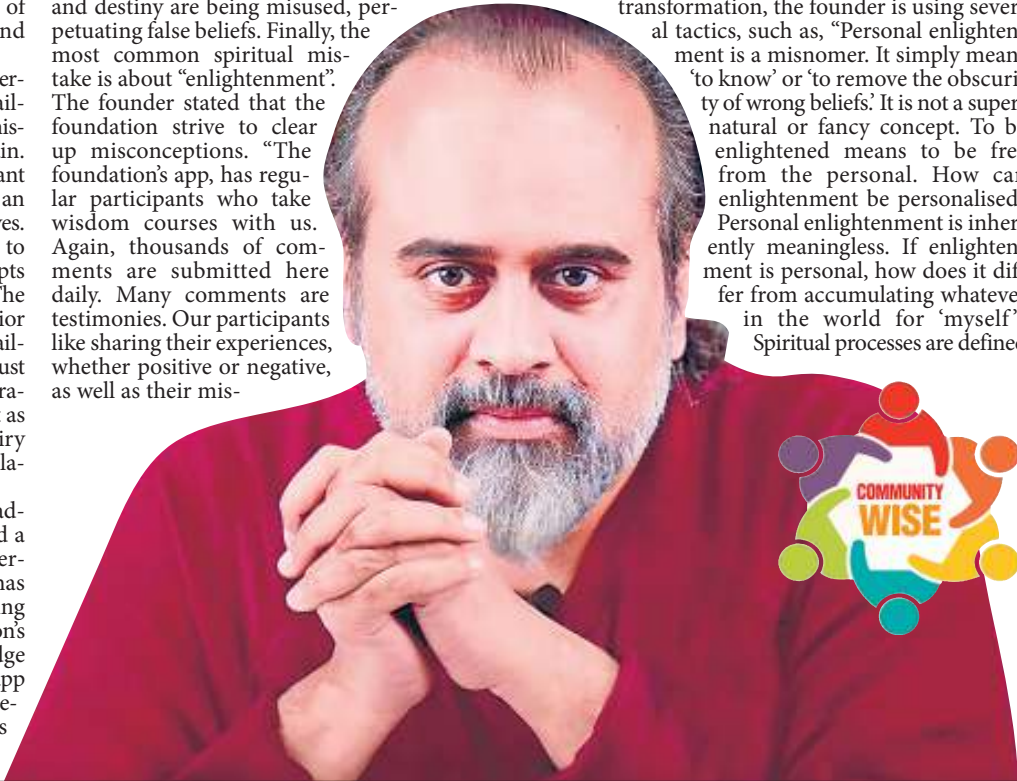
The foundation's use of technology has broadened its reach to a global audience and fostered a lively community of learners. So, you're wondering how? Let us get to know: "The foundation has accounts on multiple social media sites, providing global reach to various audiences. The foundation's YouTube channel is the world's largest knowledge channel. The foundation has created a mobile app that provides a more comprehensive learning experience for participants. Our instructional sessions

are mostly delivered through the app, which has received over a million downloads."

Most spiritual words and phrases have lost their original meaning. Popular spiritual beliefs such as meditation, devotion, *karma*, and rebirth are often misinterpreted and harmful. Basic phrases such as God, love, attention, success, freedom, faith, and destiny are being misused, perpetuating false beliefs. Finally, the most common spiritual mistake is about "enlightenment". The founder stated that the foundation strive to clear up misconceptions. "The foundation's app, has regular participants who take wisdom courses with us. Again, thousands of comments are submitted here daily. Many comments are testimonies. Our participants like sharing their experiences, whether positive or negative, as well as their mis-

conceptions and realisations. Transformative experiences often involve getting an understanding of important concerns for a full life, while others describe breaking free from old habits and identities." There is evidence of widespread change in people's lives!

Balancing individual enlightenment and social transformation, the founder is using several tactics, such as, "Personal enlightenment is a misnomer. It simply means 'to know' or 'to remove the obscurity of wrong beliefs.' It is not a supernatural or fancy concept. To be enlightened means to be free from the personal. How can enlightenment be personalised? Personal enlightenment is inherently meaningless. If enlightenment is personal, how does it differ from accumulating whatever in the world for 'myself'?" Spiritual processes are defined



Subhendra Rao, a composer and sitar performer, speaks exclusively to *The Pioneer* about being Ravi Shankar's protégé, being recognised by reviewers as a worthy successor, and more

A sonic voyage with one of Ravi Shankar's protégés!

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Have you ever wondered who orchestrates the symphony of strings that crosses cultures and borders? Meet Subhendra Rao, a virtuoso whose sitar strings tell stories of melody. Rao's musical journey began in Mysore, where he was mentored by the renowned Ravi Shankar. But his journey is more than just mastering notes; it's one of love, dedication, and a drive to reimagine classical music's resonance in a worldwide context. Ready to go on a sonic journey with this virtuoso?

Subhendra Rao and his wife embarked on a musical journey, conjuring harmonies that go beyond mere notes and creating stories that speak to the spirit. In their joint symphony, creativity knows no limitations as they mix intellect, passion, and a shared vision, like *Yathra* and *The Red Flower*. He explains, "In recent years, my wife and I have collaborated on the majority of my works. We brainstorm ideas together, undertake extensive research, and constantly generate new thoughts. Even during practice sessions, ideas flow continuously. We strive to make music that is consistent with our selected topics. Every piece of music, in my opinion, must tell a story, whether it be one of loss, happiness, or joy. That is the beauty of music: it allows us to convey anything."

On a melodious trip that crosses countries, he becomes immersed in a tapestry of varied musical partnerships. "For example, I recently had the privilege of playing with an orchestra band. The composition was not mine; it belonged to my guru. It was a nice experience. I have cooperated with Chinese musicians on one of my tunes. In addition, I got the opportunity to collaborate with Israel's *East-West Orchestra*. These interactions, in which we both give and learn, are extremely memorable."

Along with his wife, he became an ambassador for a musical revolution, passionately fighting for the incorporation of music into educational systems. For them, music isn't just a cultural artifact; it's a dynamic force that breathes life into learning. "I believe Indian classical music has always evolved, making it relevant

to current day. It is not stagnant; rather, it adapts to the times while maintaining its traditions without being rigid. My wife and I are big advocates for incorporating music into the educational system."

He goes on to argue that music is often disregarded in schooling, yet he believes it holds the secret to promoting harmony and peace in society. Every kid should have access to quality music education from a young age, as it not only promotes artistic expression but also improves learning in other disciplines such as math and science. In its early years, music was more than just an art form; it was also a comprehensive teaching instrument. He explains that as an artist, inspiration can come from anywhere, including nature and movies. Whether it's a play, a movie, a picture, or nature's beauty, each has enormous creative potential. Even simple things, such as the sound of birds tweeting, can provide inspiration.

Drawing connections between the alchemy of chemistry and the artistry of music, he enters the domain of fusion with a scientist's curiosity and a musician's passion. "As a chemistry student, fusion teaches us that when two elements join to form a third chemical, it takes on properties from both, resulting in something new. Similarly, in music, fusion strives to harmonise disparate traditions. This fusion, which can also be seen as collaboration or experimentation, necessitates a thorough understanding of each tradition involved. I am continually pushing the frontiers of fusion, hoping to produce novel and exciting musical experiences."

In the grandeur of the Sydney Opera House, where the air crackles with expectancy and every note hangs suspended in the ether, his sitar strings on an unexpected journey of their own. In a twist of destiny evocative of a theatrical script, he reveals, "At the Sydney Opera House concert, I changed my sitar strings the day before to guarantee everything went properly. However, five to seven minutes into the concert, my primary string snapped, prompting a brief delay as I gathered my composure. Then, during the concert, I heard an unusual sound, and upon further inquiry, we discovered that the tabla player's tabla had cracked. Fortunately, we had an extra tabla on hand.

Despite these obstacles, the show carried on, but in the second half, the replacement primary string on the sitar broke again. It was an unusual experience, but the chance to sing at the Sydney Opera House is a genuinely wonderful memory."

He and his wife founded the Subhendra and Saskia Rao Foundation too, in the symphony of education, striking a chord far beyond the classroom walls. He says, "The credit goes to my wife, who created India's first instructional music curriculum for young learners, offering an organised framework for them to study. In 2015, we established it with the notion that music is everyone's birthright. We hoped to make music more accessible to everyone through outreach projects. We eventually developed a private company that served hundreds of thousands of children. The greatest joy comes when pupils say that music is their favourite subject. After all, we play music, and it should be enjoyable for pupils."

Success is not found only in the spotlight, but also in the quiet hours of practice. With sage wisdom and maestro insight, Rao dispels the myth that the stage is the ultimate destination for young artists, saying, "In any profession, particularly music, success is founded on practice. When parents inquire about their children's stage preparation, it is critical to clarify that performing on stage is a byproduct of constant practice and should not be the primary objective. The essence is to appreciate the music while refining one's talents. The stage comes easily after devotion and hours of practice; it should not be the first goal when starting."

Music crosses all boundaries, reverberating across continents and civilisations with universal resonance. He claims, "Music truly is a worldwide language, as I witnessed firsthand during a performance in Brazil last year. Many in the crowd were hearing this music for the first time, and due to language barriers—I do not speak Portuguese, and other attendees do not understand English—music became our main method of contact. After the concert, when people shared their emotions, whether via tears or through interpreters, it was a tremendously touching experience unlike any other I'd had."

How to decide: implant vs. flap breast reconstruction surgery?

Breast reconstruction surgery after a mastectomy or breast removal operation is more about achieving the natural feel or look of breasts, restoring the breast mounds, and achieving symmetry than just enhancing the volume or shape. Even though both options—implant surgery and flap surgery—to reconstruct the breast can provide excellent cosmetic results, it is important to decide in close collaboration with your plastic surgeon. However, most often, flap reconstruction, meaning reconstruction of breasts using the patient's body tissue (also known as autologous tissue reconstruction or tissue-based reconstruction), either immediate or delayed reconstruction, is recommended. However, using a tissue flap option cannot always be the case for breast reconstruction after mastectomy, as there are several personal and medical reasons requiring assessment prior to recommending a specific option. Evaluating one's medical and problem status is crucial when deciding the right option. In addition, the type of breast cancer and body type also play a pivotal role when deciding the reconstruction option, aiming to achieve aesthetic results!

Some women may report donor site problems, such as abdominal bulging, weakness, or contour irregularities, such as dimpling of the skin.

When is flap reconstruction surgery performed?

Many patients get flap reconstruction surgery to rebuild their breasts immediately after breast removal surgery, known as immediate reconstruction. However, one may require a second surgery later on to improve the shape, volume, and contour of reconstructed breasts that weight fluctuations, aging, or other lifestyle changes can impact. One must note that they may not be recommended for immediate flap reconstruction surgery if they have inflammatory breast cancer or need radiation therapy!

In most cases, flap reconstruction surgery can be performed as a separate procedure post breast removal surgery, known as delayed reconstruction, when a patient might want more time to decide if breast reconstruction is the right choice in their specific case.

Breast reconstruction with implants:

A breast implant is the most common form of breast reconstruction. In reconstructive plastic surgery, implants are inserted into your chest to enhance the size of your breasts.

Breast reconstruction with implants is undoubtedly easier, safer, and result-centric, leaving minimal scars and having shorter downtime. But, in some cases, tissue flap procedures can be used with a breast implant if more volume is needed.

What is breast reconstruction using a flap procedure?

A tissue flap procedure (autologous tissue reconstruction), or tissue-based reconstruction, is the method of reconstructing or rebuilding the shape of your breasts after cancer treatment (mastectomy or breast removal surgery). To rebuild the breast shape, a tissue flap surgery involves harvesting the tissue from other body parts (called donor areas), such as the tummy, back, thighs, or buttocks. The tissue flap gives a more natural look and feel and has no risks of infection or side effects, as the patient's tissue is used for reshaping or reconstructing the breasts. One must note that tissue flaps will change like any other tissue in your body. However, weight changes, aging, or lifestyle changes are crucial in affecting outcomes after a certain time. Sometimes, they may require a second surgery to meet the desired surgical goals.

Advantages:

- Flap surgery gives a more natural feel and look because the patient's body tissue is used for reconstruction.
- Stay warm at a normal body temperature.
- Flap surgery is free from the risks of rupture or wear and tear issues, and side effects are not the case with tissue-based reconstruction.
- Have white blood cells that can fight infections in your breast.
- If more volume is required, flap tissue reconstruction can sometimes be combined with implants.

Limitations:

- In general, flaps require more surgery and have a longer recovery timeline than breast implants.
- Flap reconstruction leaves two surgical marks, one from where tissue is harvested, such as the abdomen, back, thighs, or buttocks, and the second one on the reconstruction sites (breasts) to fulfill the breast reconstruction job.



Breast implants involve a silicone shell filled with either saline (sterile saltwater) or silicone (gel). Patients may choose to receive breast implants following the mastectomy in response to restoring the breasts post-cancer treatment. A patient must have good physical health and realistic expectations and should be mentally ready to consider breast implants after breast removal surgery.

Advantages:

- Reconstruction with an implant is easy, safe, hassle-free, and gives a longer-lasting result.
- It causes less scarring and has minimal downtime compared to flap surgery.
- The reconstructed breasts with implants do not change in size if you gain weight.
- It gives a reasonable shape for small and medium-sized breasts.

Limitations:

- Silicone implants require monitoring for rupture with an imaging study every few years.
- Implants are less mobile and feel colder than a flap reconstruction.
- Implants may not be recommended if a patient has had radiotherapy or if their chest wall skin is not healthy.

(The author, Dr. Karishma Kagodu, is a plastic and cosmetic surgeon.)



SUNRISERS LOOK TO SEAL PLAYOFF BERTH

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Masters of their own fate right now despite being erratic, Sunrisers Hyderabad will hope their destructive batting line-up delivers when they take on Gujarat Titans in pursuit of a playoffs berth in the Indian Premier League here on Thursday.

Another win will be enough for Sunrisers to seal a playoff berth as they need only one point to ensure qualification. But the Pat Cummins-led side will also want to challenge for the top two spots, which is a possibility considering they have one more game after this match and a healthy net run rate of +0.406. SRH have 14 points from 12 matches and can reach a maximum of 18 points, which may be enough to ensure a top-two finish if other results go their way.

Not only are the Sunrisers players well-rested ahead of the clash against GT as they got a week off, their morale will also be sky high after notching yet another record-breaking win against Lucknow Super Giants on May 8.

If the bowlers did a commendable job to restrict

LSG to a blow-par score, the opening duo of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma made a mockery of the hosts by chasing down 166 in just 9.4 overs to notch a 10-wicket win at home.

SRH have made a habit of securing unbelievable victories throughout the season but they have also suffered sizeable defeats, including against GT (by 7 wickets) earlier in the competition.

The boom or bust approach by the batters has either done exceedingly well or has simply let the side down, including three times in the last five games, where SRH lost to RCB (by 35 runs), CSK (by 78 runs) and MI (by 7 wickets).

The 2016 champions would hope Head and Sharma deliver as SRH are heavily dependent on the explosive starts provided by the duo.

They will also want to do a better job at re-building their innings, especially while chasing. The likes of Nitish Reddy, Heinrich Klaassen and Abdul Samad need to manage that better.

On the other hand, the Titans, who have only five wins from 13 games and are on 11 points, are out of the reckoning and

GT AIM TO END CAMPAIGN ON A HIGH



will look to end their forgettable campaign on a high.

With former skipper Hardik Pandya moving to Mumbai Indians this season, GT struggled to find a replacement for the all-rounder who was key to their title-winning run in 2022 and runners-up finish last year.

The absence of pacer Mohammed Shami, who was ruled out of the tournament due to injury, has also hurt them.

GT's bowling hasn't been as effective this season, with inconsistent pacers and leaky spinners.

Their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders was a washout but the bowlers showed promise by taking three wickets in the first three overs against CSK.

Mohit Sharma's variations and knuckle balls were particularly effective, and Rashid Khan's clever bowling was noticeable. They'll hope for an encore.

In the batting department, much will depend on skipper Shubman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan, who revelled in the role of an opener. David Miller has looked off-colour this season and his big hits would

be crucial to ensure that the side signs off on a positive note.

SQUADS:
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Heinrich Klaassen (wk), Aiden Markram, Abdul Samad, Nitish Reddy, Shabbaz Ahmed, Pat Cummins (c), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, T Natarajan, Mayank Markande, Umran Malik, Anmolpreet Singh, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Upendra Yadav (wk), Jhathavedh Subramanyan, Sanvir Singh, Vijaykanth Viyaskanth, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Marco Jansen, Akash Maharaj Singh, Mayank Agarwal.
Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahruk Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier and BR Sharath.



Hopefully we get the momentum at the right time: Phil Salt

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders have been remarkable in the league phase of this IPL season and big-hitting opener Phil Salt is now hoping for the side to sustain the momentum and "put our best foot forward" in the play-offs.

Two-time champions KKR are currently at the top of the pecking order with 9 points following nine wins and three losses in 13 matches.

"It's about taking it day by day and hopefully we put our best foot forward and get the momentum at the right time," Salt said on KKR's Knights Dugout Podcast.

Salt has been one of the key players in KKR's impressive run to the play-offs, forming a formidable partnership with fellow opener Sunil Narine by taking the opposition bowling attack to the cleaners.

Left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc, Salt's colleague at KKR, said the team is desperate to regain the trophy they won twice in the past.

"I'm excited to get involved here at KKR and hopefully it will be a really successful season for us. We're here to get the trophy and that's what we're aiming for and hopefully we're going to do exactly that," Starc

said.

The Australian pacer also shed some light on his return to IPL after 10 years.

"It's been a while since I've been here. Was supposed to be here with KKR in 2018 but I got injured. So it's exciting to be back and looking forward to it."

Meanwhile, Salt touched upon his first experience with the England squad.

"That was my first experience at being flooded with messages on my phone. I'm generally not someone who uses the phone a lot but it was an incredible experience. My phone was blowing up with messages congratulating me and it was great."

He went on to share an anecdote about facing Jofra Archer in the nets.

"I think Jofra is the fastest I have faced in the nets and that too from 18 yards. He bowls it at that pace from 18 yards with three bouncers in an over. It's good because it helps sharpen the reflexes but there have been times when he's hit me right before the match day and then all hell has broken loose," Salt said.

KKR play the second-placed Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati on the concluding day of the league stage on May 19.

Abhishek's performance in IPL this season will help him play for India: Markram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sunrisers Hyderabad's South African import Aiden Markram believes Abhishek Sharma's destructive IPL form would fetch him an India cap in the not so distant future.

Sharma, who is striking at over 200 in the ongoing edition, has 401 runs in 12 matches. He and Australian Travis Head make for an explosive opening pair and most recently chased down over 160 runs in a less 10 overs against Lucknow Super Giants.

Markram, who is the captain of the South African team, described the duo as "brothers of destruction" in an interview to PTI Videos.

"Abhi (Abhishek) has made massive strides this season. He was showing some really positive signs in the previous seasons and what he's achieved so far this season puts him in good stead for hopefully

representing India one day," Markram said of the 23-year-old left-hander.

"He's got a very calm and level head on his shoulders and he'll take everything in his stride. But my fingers are certainly crossed for him to go to higher honours," he added.

IMPACT PLAYER RULE GIVES FREEDOM: Joining the debate surrounding the impact player rule, Markram said that the addition of an extra batter in the line-up has allowed teams to adopt a more aggressive approach.

"Naturally, when you have that extra batter in your batting line-up, you feel more freedom as a player. And obviously from the start of the innings, the openers feel that extra bit of freedom as well," he explained.

"I think we've seen it with quite a few other teams that have been doing it. So I'll definitely say that the impact players have created that and created



probably a new brand of T20 cricket that happens here in IPL," he said.

Markram also commended the team's bowling unit, particularly the leadership of Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

"I don't think he's

(Bhuvneshwar Kumar) ever lost it, to be honest. He sort of leads from the front in his own calm and silent way. It's been fantastic for us to watch.

"But the bowling unit as a whole has really confronted this challenge of the batters

that's been happening this season with the scene of impact player. They found their own unique ways to try to keep the batters calm and also try to find ways to keep taking wickets," he said.

"But definitely someone like

Bhuvu leading from the front, as he's done for many, many years, has been excellent for you," he added.

Markram hasn't had the best of seasons so far and has managed 199 runs from nine matches so far. The 30-year-old said he is happy with the effort he is putting into his game.

"I'm still feeling really good. IPL is a tough beast to crack and you as a player have to appreciate that. It's all for good reasons. For me, it's spending lots of time working on my game, working hard off the field as well.

"And if you get another opportunity, you'll feel ready to take that and grab that opportunity hopefully. And if it doesn't work out, then whatever cricket lies ahead, you trust that this preparation puts you in a good state for that," he said acknowledging being out of form.

Pant is an instinctive captain, he will get better with time: Ganguly

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals' Director of Cricket Sourav Ganguly feels Rishabh Pant is an instinctive captain and his leadership skills will refine with time and experience.

The dashing wicket-keeper batter returned to competitive cricket after a painstakingly long rehab following a horrific car crash in December 2022.

The 26-year-old resumed his duties as the Delhi Capitals captain.

"Pant is a young captain, he'll learn with time. The way he returned from injury to play a full season; we had our doubts during the off season," Ganguly told JioCinema.

"Indian players are crucial, especially since the TATA IPL shifted to 10 teams. I am very happy for him that he returned to



play so well over a full season. He has all my well wishes for whatever is next," Ganguly added.

Pant has time and again showcased his astute captaincy during the IPL, while he has also erred in his decisions a few times.

"With time, he'll become a better captain. Nobody is a great captain from day one, but he is an

instinctual captain, he makes decisions on the ground. With more time, he'll get better."

DC ended their league stage with seven wins and seven losses. Although they are still alive in the playoffs race as they have a mathematical chance, but in all probability they have all but played their last game this season.

The likes of pacers Mukesh Kumar and Rasikh Dar Salam rose to the occasion a few times this season and Ganguly was lavish in his praise for the duo.

"You've seen Rasikh's development over time. The more matches he played, the better he got. It's not easy to bowl on the Delhi wicket. This wicket is great, and the ground isn't that big, so I think for any bowler, it isn't easy to bowl here. Rasikh has improved a lot."

"Mukesh has been our best bowler this season. He bowls all the difficult overs, whether at the start or at the death. There has been no match this season where we didn't need his bowling in the death," he said. "We knew that conceding sixes would lead to more losses, so he has consistently delivered there. Our Indian bowlers have been great this season."

that's been happening this season with the scene of impact player. They found their own unique ways to try to keep the batters calm and also try to find ways to keep taking wickets," he said.

"But definitely someone like

Injured Rabada returns home from IPL, impact on T20 World Cup preparation unlikely

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada has returned home from the Indian Premier League due to a lower limb soft tissue infection, the country's cricket board said on Wednesday.

Rabada represented Punjab Kings in the IPL, taking 11 wickets in as many games. Punjab have already been eliminated from the IPL play-offs race and will play their last league game on May 19.

"The 28-year-old consulted a specialist on arrival in South Africa and is being closely monitored by the Cricket South Africa medical team," said Cricket South Africa (CSA) in a statement.

CSA also said that the injury is unlikely to impact Rabada's preparation for the T20 World Cup in the Americas next month.

"His preparation for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup in West Indies and USA is not expected to be affected," CSA added.

South Africa open their World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka in New York on June 3.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ultra-aggressive cricket, especially in the powerplay, has transformed the shortest format but it remains to be seen if the players can replicate it in the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas, said Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer.

IPL teams have scored 200 or more 37 times this season so far but LSG managed to achieve the feat only once — against Chennai Super Kings last month — and Langer admitted that they had struggled in the powerplay.

"The Lucknow wicket has been a real contest between bat and ball whereas a lot in this tournament has been very one sided towards the bat. So that's certainly, we haven't capitalised in our powerplay like some of the other teams have," Langer said after LSG lost by 19 runs to Delhi Capitals here on Tuesday night.

"...It's been absolutely amazing watching some of these powerplays. It's almost transformed the game. And

Ultra aggressive cricket transformed T20 but time will tell if players can do it in WC: Langer

whether people can continue to do this and whether they can do it during the World Cup, time will tell. But it's certainly been ultra aggressive cricket."

Defending 209, DC had reduced LSG to 71 for 5 but pace all-rounder Arshad Khan gave a real scare when he slammed an unbeaten 33-ball 58 before the hosts held their nerves to limit the visitors to 189 for 9.

"I think Arshad is a very good cricketer. You saw that he swung the ball early. He's a good fieldsman and to be able to bat like that, he's a very good package," Langer said.

"I've thought the whole way through watching this tournament that he's got huge potential and he showed some of that tonight. So when he becomes more consistent,



particularly with his bowling, he could be a real handful and a very, very good all-around cricketer."

For DC, Tristan Stubbs was sensational as he smashed a 25-

ball 57 and then returned to take a wicket.

"I think Tristan Stubbs, that wicket was important obviously. We tried (Deepak) Hooda when the two

left-handers were in and he got a wicket for us two games ago, he didn't get one this game, whereas Stubbs did," Langer said.

"So I thought if we had been a little more intelligent with our batting today, that was a chaseable score on this wicket. He's (Stubbs) a very good cricketer. I've been seeing the power plays in the first six, but we're also seeing the way some of these teams are finishing off, and I think Stubbs is an outstanding cricketer."

Talking about the focus on match-ups these days, Langer said: "There's so much data these days, so when you do your analysis leading into every game and what often happens traditionally is left-handers don't have as much impact on the game against off-spin when the ball's spinning away,

"You saw Bispy (Ravi Bishnoi) bowled beautifully when they're spinning away, whereas when the ball's spinning back into the left-hander or the off-spin is spinning back into the right-hander, it tends to be more in the arc to be hitting some of these sixes."

"So generally the thinking is that the ball that's turning away from the batsman, left or right, is the way that most teams tend to match it up. Often when a wicket quickly falls, you look to get an off spinner on ... And the truth is, there's not too many Ravi Ashwins or Nathan Lyons in the world. So it's a specialist role, that's why often part-timers are used."

they ended things on a high and assistant coach Pravin Amre credited the back-up players and Indian bowlers for producing the goods.

"It's a new team, I look personally at many positives. As a find, Jake, Stubbs, Porel are good finds for us and even Rasik. I think last four games, he really contributed well and as an Indian, bowling in a death, I think that's a specialist job. He backed himself very well," he said.

"So I think last four or five games, all Indian bowlers are doing good job. I think that was very important for us, like the way Khaleel bowled, Mukesh bowled, Ishant bowled, I think that was very positive for us as a franchise."

"In IPL, you have to expect the unexpected. Harry Brooks was not there, then (Mitchell) Marsh had to go, also (David) Warner got injured. So auction table team was not playing but the back-up players came and delivered. To finish at number five, I think that's a special achievement."

ALL INDIAN BOWLERS ARE DOING GOOD JOB: AMRE: DC are missing some key players but

NTR Jr donates a hefty sum of ₹12.5 lakh to a temple in AP

Actor NTR Jr, fondly known as Man of Masses by his millions of fans, is currently busy working on his much-awaited upcoming magnum opus, *Devara: Part 1*. Despite his larger-than-life persona, NTR Jr continues to be extremely humble and genuine. Recently, the actor extended his support for a noble cause! Man of Masses generously donated a hefty sum of Rs. 12.5 lakhs to the famous 'Sri Bhadrakali Sametha Veerabhadra Swamy Temple' in Cheyuru, Andhra Pradesh. The same was revealed on social media by a fan page dedicated to NTR Jr. The post read, "Tarak donated 12,50,000 to Sri Bhadrakali Sametha Veera Badra Swami Vari Alayam ????"

Additionally, NTR Jr has earlier made donations to various other important causes as well, including contributing Rs 25 lakhs to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund to aid flood victims and donating another Rs 25 lakhs to The Corona Crisis Charity to support daily-wage workers in the industry, among many others. NTR Jr's contributions reflect his strong commitment to doing his bit for society and serve as a positive influence for others to follow. Meanwhile, NTR Jr's upcoming action drama *Devara: Part 1*, helmed by Koratala Siva, is scheduled for nationwide release on October 10, 2024.



PNs | HYDERABAD

In a groundbreaking move, *Jabardasth* sensation Getup Srinu is set to captivate audiences in his debut lead role in the much-anticipated entertainer *Raju Yadav*. Directed by debutant Krishnamachari and jointly produced by K. Prashanth Reddy and Rajesh Kallepalli under the banners of Sai Varunavi Creations and Charishma Dreams Entertainment, this wholesome comedy is already generating buzz ahead of its May 17 worldwide release. The film, which has already piqued interest with its teaser, trailer, and songs, promises to deliver a fresh perspective on

comedy. Director Krishnamachari recently shed light on the film's unique features and the journey behind its creation in a press meet.

Hailing from Mahbubnagar, Krishnamachari brings 15 years of industry experience to his directorial debut, having worked as an associate director under the acclaimed Venu Udugula for films like *Nidi Naadi Oke Katha* and *Virataparvam*. Reflecting on his journey, he expressed, "*Raju Yadav* marks my maiden voyage as a director."

Delving into the character of *Raju Yadav*, Krishnamachari revealed, "Almost 90 percent of people have some small defect. This story demanded a flawed character, and I aimed to present a fresh

Director Krishnamachari unveils insights into Getup Srinu's *Raju Yadav*



portrayal. The inspiration came from various sources, including a scene from a movie featuring Rajendra Prasad and Ali, where they exude joy after winning a lottery. Additionally, cricketer Lakshmi Prasad Balaji's perpetual smile, attributed to childhood surgery, sparked the idea of crafting a character with a similar trait.

Raju Yadav is a character designed to evoke laughter and connection."

When asked about the choice of Getup Srinu for the titular role, Krishnamachari emphasised, "*Raju Yadav* is a character that thrives on performance. After conducting workshops with several actors, Srinu's portrayal stood out as the perfect

fit. Despite being known primarily for comedy, Srinu is a versatile actor capable of delivering nuanced performances. This role will redefine his career and showcase his true potential."

Krishnamachari also praised the musical contributions to the film, particularly the song penned and sung by Chandra Bose. He remarked, "Chandra Bose's lyrics beautifully complemented the story's essence, and his rendition added depth to the emotions. Harsha Vardhan Rameshwar's compositions have elevated the film's narrative, while Suresh Bobbili's background score enriches the viewing experience."

Looking ahead, Krishnamachari expressed his penchant for naturalistic storytelling, aiming to create narratives that resonate with audiences on a personal level. Despite having other stories in mind, his current focus remains firmly on the imminent release of *Raju Yadav*.

As anticipation builds for this unconventional comedy, audiences eagerly await to witness Getup Srinu's transformative performance and Krishnamachari's directorial prowess unfold on the silver screen.

Double iSmart teaser reflects Puri's signature style



Ustaad Ram Pothineni and the visionary director Puri Jagannadh have joined forces once again, this time for the much-anticipated sequel to their blockbuster hit *iSmart Shankar*. Aply titled *Double iSMART*, the film promises to double the madness and excitement of its predecessor. To celebrate Ustaad Ram's birthday, the makers unveiled the electrifying teaser of *Double iSMART*, igniting a frenzy among fans.

The teaser, released on Wednesday, plunges viewers into the heart of the action, as we witness the return of the charismatic Ustaad iSmart Shankar, now known as Double iSMART. From flirting with

"Kiraak" girls to grooving to "Khatarnaak" beats, Ram effortlessly embodies the role once again. Joining the fray is the stunning Kavya Thapar as the leading lady, while the legendary Sanjay Dutt makes a commanding entry as the formidable Big Bull. True to Puri Jagannadh's signature style, *Double iSMART* promises a double dose of action, entertainment, and mass hysteria. The teaser's slick visuals, coupled with Puri's trademark one-liners in Hyderabad slang, keep the audience hooked from start to finish. Ram's energetic performance and on-screen charisma elevate the excitement to new heights.

In addition to the stellar cast and engaging storyline, the teaser showcases breathtaking visuals by Sam K. Naidu and Gianni Gianneli, complemented by the pulsating background score by Mani Sharma. With its larger-than-life production design by Puri Connects, *Double iSMART* promises to be a visual spectacle unlike any other.

With promises of regular updates to come, the team behind *Double iSMART* is gearing up to deliver a cinematic experience that will leave fans and masses alike on the edge of their seats. The film is said to be released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi languages.

SURIYA SET TO BLAZE BOLLYWOOD SCREENS

Superstar Suriya is gearing up to conquer Bollywood screens with an epic cinematic extravaganza. The buzz surrounding this upcoming venture has already ignited excitement among fans, with details emerging about the ambitious project. The wheels are in motion as preparations for the film are in full swing. Notably, renowned fight choreographer Nick Powell, known for his work in the magnum opus *RRR*, has been roped in to train Suriya for the intense action sequences. With sword fight scenes set to dazzle audiences, the collaboration between Powell and Suriya promises to deliver adrenaline-pumping thrills on an unprecedented scale.



talent from both industries, promising a captivating cinematic experience for audiences nationwide.

At the helm of this grand venture is acclaimed Bollywood director Rakeysh Omprakash, known for his masterful storytelling and visionary direction. With his expertise, coupled with Suriya's powerhouse performance, the film is poised to make waves in Bollywood and beyond.

Adding to the allure of the project is the casting of Janhvi Kapoor as the female lead. With her charm and talent, Kapoor is set to captivate audiences alongside Suriya, promising an electrifying on-screen chemistry that will leave a lasting impression.

Anticipation mounts as the film is slated to be released in two parts, with a staggering budget of 600 crores allocated for production. This ambitious undertaking underscores the magnitude of the project, signaling a cinematic spectacle of epic proportions. In a testament to its pan-Indian appeal, the film boasts a stellar ensemble cast featuring both Tamil and Bollywood actors. This cross-cultural collaboration is poised to bring together the best of



STANDALONE

Urvashi Rautela was spotted at the opening ceremony of the 77th Festival de Cannes this year. Not only was she honoured with tremendous respect, she also received it in the presence of the amazing Meryl Streep who was also a special guest of honour alongside her.

KC Venugopal: Kerala stands firmly with Mammooty



Amidst a cyberattack launched by right-wing forces against actor Mammooty, AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal stepped up to defend the legendary superstar, emphasising that Kerala's bond with him remains unshakable. "Mammooty has long been regarded as a pillar of Malayalam cinema, elevating it to unprecedented heights over the past five decades through his unwavering dedication. Those familiar with him understand the caliber of his character. We strongly

condemn the unwarranted cyber assault on this esteemed actor," stated Venugopal. The veteran actor has recently faced criticism regarding his 2022 film *Puzhu*, which some perceive as anti-Brahminical. "Every Keralite is well aware of Mammooty's legacy, identity, and principles. His conduct has consistently exemplified dignity. Therefore, any attempt to sow discord will undoubtedly falter. Keralites stand resolutely beside him," Venugopal reaffirmed. At 72 years old, Mammooty continues to enjoy a string of successful films, solidifying his status as Kerala's foremost icon.

Deepika Padukone named 2024 Global Disruptor

Deepika Padukone, renowned as India's cultural ambassador and a global sensation, has recently been honoured as a Disruptor in the movers and shakers class of 2024 by a prestigious international publication. This distinguished recognition places Deepika in the esteemed company of influential personalities such as Eva Longoria, Uma Thurman, and Lee Sung Jin, who are reshaping the entertainment industry and shaping the future of global entertainment.

World Cup trophy as the first Indian—an achievement that speaks volumes about her global influence.

Acknowledged as a Disruptor in Deadline Hollywood's edition, Deepika's significant contributions to the global entertainment landscape are undeniable. Her ability to transcend cultural barriers and geographical boundaries has garnered her acclaim and admiration on a global scale.

Reflecting on her journey and motivations, Deepika Padukone emphasised her passion for cinema and the collaborative spirit of the industry. Beyond her acting career, she is a vocal advocate for mental health awareness, with her foundation, Live Love Laugh, dedicated to destigmatising mental health issues in India and beyond.

As Deepika continues to blaze trails and set new standards, her recognition as a Disruptor underscores her enduring legacy and pivotal role in shaping the future of global cinema. As India's foremost female superstar, she not only showcases the country's talent but also inspires future generations of artists to dream big and break barriers on the world stage.



First single from Allu Sirish's *Buddy* is here

In the upcoming film *Buddy*, starring Allu Sirish and Gayatri Bharadwaj, excitement peaks with the release of its first single, *Aa Pilla Kanule*. Produced by KE Gnanavel Raja and Adhana Gnanavel Raja under the esteemed banner of Studio Green Films, and directed by Sam Anton, with Neha Gnanavel Raja serving as co-producer, *Buddy* promises a youthful love story filled with entertainment.

The musical journey of *Buddy* kicks off with the vibrant melody of *Aa Pilla Kanule*, unveiled today to enthrall audiences. Crafted by the acclaimed music director Hip Hop Tamizha, the song weaves a spell with its captivating tunes and infectious lyrics, offering a glimpse into the film's musical tapestry.

Voiced by the mesmerizing talents of Hip Hop Tamizha, Sanjith Hegde, Airaa, and Vishnu Priya, *Aa Pilla Kanule* showcases the stunning visuals of Gayathri Bharadwaj and the charismatic presence of Allu Sirish. With its irresistible charm, this song is poised to dominate playlists everywhere. As *Buddy* gears up for its theatrical release, billed as a fantasy-based extravaganza, fans can anticipate an immersive cinematic experience like no other. With filming now wrapped up, the official release date for *Buddy* will soon be announced, promising audiences an unforgettable journey into the realms of love and fantasy.

AFTER SUCCESS IN TAMIL, ARANMANAI 4 IS SET TO RELEASE IN HINDI

Tamannaah Bhatia and Raashii Khanna starrer Tamil film *Aranmanai 4* wreaked havoc at the box office, and now, the film is set to release in Hindi. Fans of Tamannaah Bhatia and Raashii Khanna can enjoy the horror-comedy in Hindi in their nearest theatres from May 24 onwards. The Tamil version has been received well by the audience as well as the critics. It has crossed Rs 70 crore at the box office, and is set to touch Rs 100 crore soon. The film ended Tamil industry's dry spell and emerged as the first Tamil hit of 2024. It is also the highest grossing film in the franchise.

Apart from Tamannaah and Raashii, the film featured Sundar C in the lead role along with an ensemble cast that included Ramachandra Raju, Santhosh Prathap, Kovai Sarala, Yogi Babu, VTV Ganesh, Delhi Ganesh and K. S. Ravikumar in pivotal roles. It is directed and written by Sundar C.



Buchi Babu Sana lauds *Dhakshina* trailer as riveting

Director Buchi Babu Sana has characterised the trailer for *Dhakshina* as spine-tingling. Renowned for introducing female-centric narratives through films like *Mantra* and *Mangla* in Telugu cinema, director Osho Tulasi Ram returns with his latest venture, *Dhakshina*. Produced by Ashok Shinde under the Cult Concepts banner, the film features Sai Dhanshika, known for her role in *Kabali*, and Rishav Basu from *Mahabharat Murders* in pivotal roles. The trailer has garnered significant acclaim and interest. Director Buchi Babu, while unveiling the trailer, praised Osho Tulasi Ram, suggesting that *Dhakshina* could potentially set a new benchmark in the psycho-thriller genre. The event witnessed the presence of producers, directors, and crew members, all expressing confidence that *Dhakshina* would be a gripping thriller, keeping audiences on the edge of their seats with its suspense and unpredictability. Producer Ashok Shinde teased that the release date would soon be announced, adding to the anticipation surrounding the film's debut.

