

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 We have provided excellent governance in Telangana during the last 100 days. We are setting right the disorganised governing system. It is a blatant lie to say that we collected U-tax. I am now in another state with my family for darshan. We will come to Hyderabad on Wednesday. After that, I will give an appropriate answer to all the allegations of Maheshwar Reddy.
 — N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Civil Supplies Minister, TG P4

Can court examine legality of arrest after cognisance of ED's complaint
taken?

INDIA ON CUSP OF LONG-AWAITED ECONOMIC TAKE-OFF: RBI

Rakshana teaser: Paayal Rajput strikes
AS A COP

SIT bares police failure

Report sent to ECI; CS & DGP discuss action to be taken

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Officials in the state have forwarded the Special Investigation Team (SIT) report to the Election Commission of India regarding the election day violence and subsequent riots, awaiting further instructions from the EC.

In a meeting held on Tuesday, AP Chief Secretary Dr. KS Jawahar Reddy convened with AP DGP Harish Kumar Gupta to deliberate on the SIT report. Reports indicate that following the submission of the SIT report to the Central Election Commission regarding the incidents of violence during and after Election Day in the state, the two top officials engaged in discussions at the Secretariat. It is understood that they explored potential steps to be taken pending further directives from the EC based on the initial findings of the SIT.

Sources reveal that the SIT, as per the Election Commission's directives, uncovered shortcomings in the police's handling of the violence. The SIT teams extensively surveyed Palnadu, Tirupati, and Anantapur districts over two days, scrutinizing 33 cases related to violent incidents

- Detailed investigations conducted in three districts, examining 33 cases
- The report has sparked discussions due to identified investigation deficiencies.
- Emphasis is on expediting investigations and forming specialised teams at the district level.
- Transfers and suspensions effected among govt officials implicated in the violence.
- Speculation exists within the Police department regarding forthcoming EC directives.
- The Chief Secretary and DGP gear up to carry out EC instructions based on the SIT findings.

EVMs destroyed at 7 polling stations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission (EC) has taken a serious view of sitting MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy destroying an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at PS No. 202 in Machera. Election authorities in Palnadu district provided the video footage to the police. The MLA has been named an accused. In the Machera Assembly constituency, EVMs were damaged at seven polling stations. This was caught on the web camera. The Election Commission has directed CEO Mukesh Kumar Meena to instruct the DGP to take strict criminal action against all involved to prevent future disruptions.



across six constituencies. SIT Chief Vineet Brijlal and SP Rama Devi submitted a comprehensive 150-page report to DGP Harish Kumar Gupta on Monday evening, subsequently forwarding it

to the Election Commission. The release of this report has sparked considerable discussion within the state.

Central intelligence smells trouble on counting day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amid lingering concerns from the post-poll violence and riots that shook the state on May 13, there is now a significant threat of further unrest on the day of vote counting, June 4.

According to reports, central intelligence has received specific information indicating the potential for violence in various parts of the state as election results begin to be announced.

In response to these reports, central security forces have already been deployed to sensitive areas to prevent outbreaks of violence.

Tight security measures have been implemented at counting stations to safeguard against any attacks by violent mobs.

Botsa confident of 175/175 seat tally

Says Jagan will be sworn in as CM for his second term in Vizag on June 9



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has announced that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) expects a landslide victory in the upcoming elections, predicting they will win all 175 Assembly constituencies. He stated that YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will be sworn in as Chief Minister in Visakhapatnam on June 9.

Botsa accused pro-TDP media of publishing false reports against the Education Department. He emphasised that YSRCP's manifesto includes comprehensive reforms in education and medicine, which will be implemented upon coming to power. He questioned why opposition parties criticise these policies if they are ineffective.

From 2018-19 to the present, Botsa claimed, TDP media falsely reported about 4 lakh student dropouts.

He stated that by the 2025-26 academic year, classes will commence with 38,61,198 students. He praised the state's education system, highlighting international recognition and the high participation of Andhra Pradesh students in competitive exams.

Botsa detailed several educational reforms introduced by CM Jagan, including English medium instruction, TOEFL training, CBSE syllabus, Byju's curriculum, and the IB system starting next year. He also mentioned initiatives like providing nutritious food and financial support schemes such as 'Ammu Vodi', 'Vidya Deevana', and 'Vidya Kanuka'.

DON'T MISS...

Bridge learning gap between students...

In a release issued on Tuesday, the Principal Secretary of School Education, Praveen Prakash appealed to over two lakh teachers and lecturers of government schools and colleges to emphasise the need to bridge the learning gap between government and private school students. The Principal Secretary highlighted the disparity in average marks scored by students in the recently concluded 10th and 12th board exams. Government school students, on average, obtained 358 marks out of 600 in the 10th class compared to 479 marks for...

-PAGE: 3

'Silent demise' of rangelands...

Up to 50 per cent of the world's rangelands - vast open areas suitable for grazing livestock - are estimated to be degraded, posing a severe threat to food supply and survival of billions of people, the UN warned in a new report on Tuesday. Launched in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) 'Global Land Outlook Thematic Report' attributed the degradation of the immense natural pastures and other rangelands to overuse, misuse, and climate change. The degradation is...

-PAGE: 5

Market cap of BSE-listed firms hits...

The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the US\$ 5-trillion milestone for the first time on Tuesday. At the close of trade, the total valuation of the exchange-listed companies stood at an all-time high of Rs 4,14,62,306.56 crore (US\$ 4.97 trillion), the BSE data showed. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 73,953.31. However, during the day, it hit a high of 74,189.19, rallying 183.25 points, or 0.24 per cent. The market capitalisation...

-PAGE: 8

RR desperate to arrest slide...

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday. The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad. On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought their way...

-SPORTS



Kakani ready to face CBI probe over rave party charges

PNS ■ NELLORE

Denying the allegations of his presence at a rave party held in Bangalore, Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has stated that he is prepared to face a CBI probe.

At a press conference on Tuesday, the Minister dismissed reports that his passport was found in a car with an MLA sticker at the rave party.

He clarified that his passport is with him. Addressing the issue of the car found at the rave party, which had an MLA sticker issued to him, Kakani explained that the sticker was a Xerox copy, not an original. "Each MLA is given three MLA stickers for their cars. I do not know who obtained the MLA sticker issued to me, made a Xerox copy, and used it on the car. I do not know how many people are illegally using the MLA sticker on their vehicles," he stated.

2

Aarogyasri hosps to halt services from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Specialty Hospital Association (ASHA) has issued an ultimatum to the government, demanding the clearance of arrears amounting to approximately Rs 1,500 crore. In a letter issued on Monday, ASHA announced that all network hospitals would cease Aarogyasri services starting Wednesday, May 22.

In their communication to Dr. G. Lakshimisha, Chief Executive Officer of Dr. YSR Aarogyasri Trust, ASHA stated that since their previous letter on May 2, network hospitals have received only around Rs 50 crore in EHS dues. ASHA emphasised that no Aarogyasri dues have been received

since August 2023, leading to their decision to halt both Aarogyasri and EHS services.

Dr. Avinash, general secretary of ASHA, explained that Aarogyasri network hospitals across the state are compelled to stop services from May 22 due to pending dues amounting to Rs 1,500 crore from September 2023. He noted that the financial strain has made it impossible for hospitals to continue providing services under Aarogyasri. Dr. Avinash mentioned that they have met with CEO Meena, Chief Secretary Dr. Jawahar Reddy, and Aarogyasri CEO Dr. Lakshimisha, urging them to clear the dues by March 31, 2024. However, the dues remain unpaid.



Where is Naidu? asks Jogi Ramesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh has raised concerns over the unexplained absence of Opposition Leader N Chandrababu Naidu, questioning why he left the country without informing even his party or the media.

Speaking to reporters at the party's central office on Tuesday, Jogi Ramesh alleged that Naidu may have fled to Dubai to conceal illicit funds.

"The people of the State and TDP leaders are unaware of Chandrababu Naidu's whereabouts," Jogi remarked. "Our leader, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, always informs the public of his travel plans. But where is Chandrababu? Is he in



Dubai, Italy, or America? The State deserves to know."

The Minister suggested that Naidu, known for his constant media presence, secretly flew abroad with his wife, Bhuvaneshwari, from Hyderabad's Shamshabad Airport. Initial reports claimed Naidu went to the US for medical tests, but Jogi

Ramesh speculated otherwise.

"Despite the TDP's efforts, the people of Andhra Pradesh will ensure a YSRCP victory in the upcoming elections, reaffirming their trust in YS Jagan Mohan Reddy," Jogi Ramesh stated confidently. He said that no matter the conspiracies by TDP and Jana Sena, the YSRCP will prevail. He also predicted a decisive win in Penamaluru. Jogi Ramesh accused Naidu of inciting violence and manipulating the system to his advantage. "Chandrababu Naidu's actions led to the transfer of SPs and Collectors and caused unrest in Palnadu, Tirupati, and Anantapur districts," he claimed.

Continued on Page 2

300 trafficked Indians 'revolt' in Cambodia: Vizag police



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the wake of a human trafficking racket being busted here recently, Andhra Pradesh police on Tuesday said around 300 Indians 'revolted' against their handlers in Cambodia on May 20, leading to most of them being arrested in the foreign country.

As many as 150 youths from the port city and its vicinity have been stuck in Cambodia for a year already, where they are being coerced to carry out cyber crime and ponzi scams by Chinese handlers, police said.

Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner A Ravi Shankar noted that these trafficked Indians caused

large scale riots in Jinbei and Compound, Sihanoukville in Cambodia, which is allegedly a hub for cybercrime. "Many people called up Visakha city police WhatsApp numbers and sent videos. Yesterday (Monday), around 300 Indians 'revolted' on a large scale against their handlers in Cambodia," said Shankar in a release.

On May 18, Vizag police arrested Chukka Rajesh, S Kondala Rao and M Jnaneshwar Rao on human trafficking charges for luring youth from India with data entry jobs in Singapore but trafficking them to Cambodia for carrying out cybercrime.

Once in Cambodia, the youth would be held captive, tortured and

compelled by Chinese handlers to execute scams such as task game fraud, stock market fraud and others, police said.

To extend assistance, police contacted the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and related departments to repatriate the youth safely as most of them have been lodged in a jail after Monday's 'revolt'.

According to Visakhapatnam Joint Commissioner of Police Fakkeerappa Kagineelli, nearly 5,000 Indians were trafficked to Cambodia from across the country through various agents. Fakkeerappa said that with the three arrested persons, 150 youths have been traced to Cambodia.

Court reserves order against Kavitha in excise scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court here is likely to pronounce on May 31 its order on whether to take cognisance of a supplementary charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha in an excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Special Judge for ED and CBI matters Kaveri Baweja reserved the order after taking note of the anti-money laundering agency's claim that it has sufficient evidence to prosecute her. The ED also asserted it has adequate evidence against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to prosecute him in the case.

The court fixed May 28 for considering the supplementary charge sheet filed against Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party. Kejriwal is out on interim bail till June 1 following an order of the Supreme Court which permit-



ted him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. It has directed him to surrender on June 2 and go back to jail. The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22. Lt Governor VK Saxena recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED filed a money laundering case on August 22, 2022, taking cognisance of the CBI FIR over alleged corruption that was lodged on August 17, 2022.

No relief for Manish Sisodia

HC DISMISSES BAIL PLEAS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed the bail pleas of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in money laundering and corruption cases lodged by the ED and the CBI respectively in connection with the alleged liquor scam. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, who started pronouncing the order at 6:28 pm for 22 minutes, said Sisodia allegedly indulged in the destruction of crucial evidence, including electronic evidence. The high court said he was a very powerful and influential person within the power corridors of the Delhi government. It said the material collected during the investigation showed that Sisodia



prima facie subverted the process of making the excise policy by fabricating public feedback to suit his pre-determined goal.

The high court had on May 14 reserved its order on the pleas after hearing arguments on behalf of the AAP leader, CBI and ED. Sisodia has challenged a trial court's April 30 order by which his bail pleas were rejected.

The trial court had dismissed Sisodia's bail pleas in the corruption and money laundering cases lodged by the CBI and ED respectively in connection with alleged irregularities in the formulation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22. Meanwhile, Special Judge Kaveri Baweja on Tuesday extended Sisodia's judicial custody till May 31 in the money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam.

Low-pressure likely over Bay

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A cyclonic circulation is currently located over North Coastal Andhra Pradesh at 0.9 km above mean sea level and over the Southwest Bay of Bengal coast, extending up to 3.1 km above mean sea level.

Due to this circulation, a low-pressure area is expected to form over the Southwest Bay of Bengal by Wednesday.

This low-pressure area is likely to move northeastward and develop into a depression over the central Bay of Bengal by the morning of May 24.

It is anticipated to continue moving northeastward and intensify further.

A meteorological report issued on Tuesday indicates that a trough extends from the cyclonic circulation over the Southwest Bay of Bengal to North Interior Karnataka across Rayalaseema at 0.9 km above



mean sea level. Consequently, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds at speeds of 30-40 km/h are expected to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next five days.

Continued on Page 2

Intensify construction of toilets: Chief Secy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy has directed officials to intensify the construction of toilets by integrating the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGA), scheme, with the Swachh Bharat Mission. He emphasised that the summer season is the ideal time to undertake Upadhi scheme projects in the State.

Dr Jawahar Reddy held a video conference with all district collectors from his office at the Secretariat in Velagapudi on Tuesday, discussing issues related to drinking water, the Upadhi scheme, and electricity supply.

During the conference, Dr Jawahar Reddy announced that the government has sanctioned over one lakh individual toilets. He instructed district collectors



to focus on digging soak pits and completing toilet constructions, linking these activities with the Upadhi scheme and the Swachh Bharat Mission. He also stressed the importance of prioritizing water conservation projects under the Upadhi scheme.

Panchayat Raj Department Principal Secretary Sashibhushan Kumar reported that the construction of indi-

vidual toilets and the digging of soak pits, with a budget of Rs. 951 crore, is being carried out in conjunction with the Swachh Bharat Mission. He assured that there is no water shortage in the state and that the department is proactively addressing any potential water crisis.

Later, Dr Jawahar Reddy reviewed the status of drinking water and electricity supply. Energy Department Special

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand provided an update on the current power supply, stating that there are no issues. He assured that any problems would be addressed immediately with swift restoration measures.

The meeting was attended virtually by Panchayat Raj Commissioner K Kanna Babu, Rural Water Supply Engineer-in-Chief Krishna Reddy, and other officials.

Botsa confident...

Continued from Page 1

The minister affirmed that the YSRCP treats its election manifesto as a holy book and believes the public will support its continued reforms.

He reiterated that Jagan Mohan Reddy will be sworn in again as Chief Minister after the expected victory on June 4.

Botsa mentioned that CM Jagan had travelled to London with court permission after the election, contrasting this with Chandrababu Naidu's undisclosed foreign travel. He questioned Naidu's secrecy and noted that organizations in the US and UK reported Naidu was not in those countries.

Botsa expressed concern over the unprecedented political tensions and violence in the current elections. He urged party cadres to refrain from political activities and social media trolling until after the election results, calling for an end to attacks and riots.

Developing robust PR network is crucial: Additional DG of PIB

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Additional Director General of Press Information Bureau (PIB) AP Region, Rajinder Chaudhry emphasised the importance of the IMPCC meeting as a platform for enhancing coordination and information sharing among various government organisations. Speaking during an Inter-Media Publicity Coordination Committee (IMPCC) meeting here on Tuesday, organised by PIB Rajinder Chaudhry highlighted the meeting's role in addressing crisis communication and mitigating negative news, while also showcasing the activities and initiatives of

Central and State media units and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

"Developing a robust PR network is crucial," Chaudhry remarked. "Better media integration and synergy will certainly achieve the desired results."

He underscored the functions of the Press Information Bureau, Andhra Pradesh, with its regional office in Vijayawada, and the Central Bureau of Communication, AP region, in disseminating information on government policies, programs, initiatives, and achievements to the print and electronic media.

Chaudhry also pointed out that PIB serves as a vital inter-

face between the Government and the media, providing feedback on public reactions as reflected in media coverage. He articulated the purpose of the meeting as creating a comprehensive communication and management strategy among all stakeholders in government departments, PSUs, and media units to effectively communicate the government's welfare measures to the public.

The meeting saw participation from heads and representatives of local Central media units, including All India Radio, Doordarshan, DIPR, India Post, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, BHEL, and the Airports Authority of India.

Indo-US workshop on hydrogen held in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indo-US Workshop on Hydrogen and Global Decarbonization, co-hosted by the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPE), Visakhapatnam, and Stony Brook University, USA, marked a significant milestone in international academic and industrial collaboration. Vizag is set to become India's first hydrogen city, showcasing the potential of sustainable energy solutions.

In his keynote address, Prof. Devinder Mahajan of Stony Brook University emphasised the importance of goal-oriented research and praised the NTPC-IIPE collaboration for its innovative hydrogen production initiatives. SK Sinha, Project Director at NTPC Simhadri, discussed the utilisation of seawater for condenser cooling and the installation of a 25 MW floating



solar panel, projecting NTPC to become a 130 GW company by 2032.

UK Bhattacharya, Director of NTPC Projects, highlighted the recent commissioning of a 1 TPD hydrogen plant and the role of chemical and electrochemical engineering in addressing global energy challenges.

The workshop underscored the crucial role of industry-academia partnerships in advancing hydrogen technology and achieving global energy targets.

Where is...

Continued from Page 1

"False information provided by Purandeswari to the Election Commission resulted in senior IAS/IPS officers' transfers, escalating the riots." The Minister highlighted that even though YSRCP members faced serious charges, they remained resilient. "Despite Section 304, 307, and SC/ST cases against us, we stood firm."

In a surprising twist, TDP NRI wing leader Komati Jayaram, a close associate of Naidu, declared that Naidu did not travel to the US. Jogi insinuated that Naidu, known for funneling illegal funds through shell companies, might be in Italy based on recent reliable information. The secrecy surrounding Naidu's trip has fuelled widespread speculation and discussion.

Cyber fraudsters impersonating officials to cheat public

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Cyber fraudsters posing as officials from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Mumbai Police, and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have been deceiving residents in Vizag, Vijayawada, and other towns in Andhra Pradesh, extracting lakhs of rupees.

In a recent incident, a young man named Kumar from Vizag received a call from an unidentified individual claiming to be a TRAI officer. The caller accused Kumar of using three

mobile numbers illegally and threatened to block his numbers. Shortly after, Kumar received a video call from someone alleging to be from the crime branch of the Mumbai police, accusing him of money laundering through his bank account. Another call followed from a supposed CBI officer in Mumbai, alleging a one-crore rupee money laundering case against him.

The fraudsters pressured Kumar, demanding he pay 20 lakh rupees to a Reserve Bank of India agency, promising the



amount would be returned after an investigation. Terrified by the successive threats, Kumar transferred the money to the provided account. It was only later that Kumar realized he had been scammed.

"Cybercrooks are exploiting the fear factor and looting people. The fraudsters have extracted 4 crore rupees from Vizag residents by posing as TRAI, Mumbai Police, and CBI officers in the past fifteen days," said Inspector K Bhavani Prasad of the Cybercrimes Police Station in Vizag.

Vizag has also witnessed a spate of courier frauds. Fraudsters, pretending to be customs officials, deceive victims by claiming that intercepted parcels contain contraband. They demand immediate pay-

ments ranging from 5 to 20 lakh rupees to avoid prosecution. "The fraudsters create a sense of urgency, coercing their victims into paying large sums immediately," explained Vizag City Police Chief Dr A Ravi Shankar. Following these courier scams, the impersonation of TRAI and CBI officials marks the latest tactic used by fraudsters to swindle residents in Andhra Pradesh. Authorities urge the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious calls to the police immediately.

'Officials will face jail time if they violate law to favour Jagan'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Bonda Umamaheswara Rao stated on Tuesday that officials who violate the law to favour Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will ultimately face jail time and legal consequences. Speaking to the media, Bonda Uma claimed that CM Jagan has a history of exploiting officials and then abandoning them. He urged officials to exercise caution.

Bonda Uma recalled that when Jagan's father, Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy, was the chief minister of the combined Andhra Pradesh, Jagan pressured officials to violate norms, which eventually led to some bureaucrats being imprisoned. He specifically mentioned that senior IAS officer Srilakshmi, despite being a civil services topper, could not become the State's Chief Secretary due to pending cases against her from that period.

"We have clear evidence of how the former chief secretary, LV Subrahmanyam, was humiliated by CM Jagan. We also know the fate of the former director general of police (DGP), Gowtham Sawang, who complied with CM Jagan's demands," Bonda Uma said. He criticised certain IAS and IPS officers for still violating norms to favour CM Jagan, undermining the rule of law.

Forest dept ties up with Amazon to empower tribal artisans

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a significant step towards promoting sustainable livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage, the Visakhapatnam Division of the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Amazon India. This collaboration aims to empower tribal artisans through economic opportunities, cultural preservation, and community development. The partnership will leverage the rich heritage and craftsmanship of the tribal communities residing in Sambhuvanipalem, located within the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary. By offering their authentic handcrafted products on Amazon's e-commerce platform, these artisans will reach a global audience, significantly enhancing their economic prospects.

"This partnership with Amazon India will be a game-changer for the tribal community dwelling in the

Launched in 2017, the Amazon Karigar programme enables small businesses and specialised micro-entrepreneurs, including weavers and artisans, to benefit from e-commerce. The programme impacts over 1.8 million artisans with a selection of over 200,000 unique handmade products.

Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary," said Anant Shankar, District Forest Officer, Visakhapatnam. "The Amazon Karigar program will provide them with a platform to showcase their craftsmanship and reach a wider audience, helping to augment their income levels and improve their living conditions with sustainable livelihoods."

The primary objective of this initiative is to provide visibility and revenue generation opportunities through the sale of forest produce made by tribal artisans. The Amazon Karigar program will offer comprehensive training in value addition, packaging, and branding, empowering the artisans to

Development at Amazon India. "Together, we embark on a journey to create meaningful opportunities and preserve the invaluable traditions that define our nation's soul."

Launched in 2017, the Amazon Karigar programme enables small businesses and specialised micro-entrepreneurs, including weavers and artisans, to benefit from e-commerce. The programme impacts over 1.8 million artisans with a selection of over 200,000 unique handmade products. Amazon has onboarded more than 4,500 sellers, including master weavers, cooperatives, artisans, and brands. This collaboration between Amazon India and the Vishakhapatnam Forest Division underscores a shared commitment to fostering indigenous craftsmanship, promoting cultural exchange, and enhancing livelihoods.

It not only aims to empower local communities but also contributes to forest and wildlife conservation efforts in the region.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Chaturdashi: May 21 05:39 PM to May 22 06:48 PM
Purnima: May 22 06:48 PM to May 23 07:22 PM
Nakshatram: Swati: May 21 05:46 AM to May 22 07:46 AM
Vishaka: May 22 07:46 AM to May 23 09:14 AM
Rahukalam: 12:12 PM to 1:49 PM
Yamagandam: 7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Varjyam: 01:43 PM to 03:25 PM
Gulika: 10:36 AM to 12:12 PM
Amritkalam: 11:54 PM to 01:36 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 63%
Sunrise: 5:35 AM
Sunset: 6:33 PM
Updated: May 21, 2024 5:00 PM

Central intelligence...

Continued from Page 1

Interestingly, the intelligence reports highlight a higher likelihood of violence in the Godavari districts rather than in Rayalaseema or Palnadu, which have experienced recent violent incidents. Specifically, in the Pithapuram constituency, where Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan is contesting, there are particular concerns about possible violence on counting day.

The Election Commission has preemptively banned political parties from organizing rallies or setting off fireworks once the results are declared, aiming to prevent any violent reactions across the state.

There are indications that both YSRCP and TDP cadres are preparing for potential violence if the results favor their opponents. Central intelligence authorities have instructed state police to take stringent action against leaders who are likely to incite violence, according to sources.

Low-pressure...

Continued from Page 1

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are likely at a few places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days. In the past 24 hours, rain occurred at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema, while dry weather prevailed elsewhere.

The highest maximum temperature recorded was 38.7 degrees Celsius at Kurnool in Rayalaseema. Conditions are favourable for the further advance of the southwest monsoon over parts of the Southeast Arabian Sea, additional areas of the Maldives, the Comorin region, the South Bay of Bengal, and parts of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Andaman Sea over the next two days, according to the Meteorological Centre.

Kakani ready...

Continued from Page 1

Kakani expressed his willingness to provide blood samples for testing to prove he did not consume drugs at the party. He challenged former Minister and TDP leader Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy to also provide blood samples for testing.

Kakani further challenged Somireddy to provide evidence of his alleged participation in the rave party before making accusations. He noted that the Bangalore police have not contacted him regarding the rave party. Kakani also accused Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy of being caught red-handed at Roseland Lodge in Nellore for unlawful activities, stating that the people of Nellore are aware of this incident.

PM Modi was preparing 'communal pitch' but we refused to play on it: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been indulging in polarisation throughout the election and preparing a "communal pitch", but it refused to play on that and pursued its 'paach nay' agenda. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's attack came over Modi's remarks in an interview with PTI in which he had said that he has never uttered a word against minorities, and the BJP has "not just today but never" acted against them.

Ramesh claimed that Prime Minister Modi's entire campaign from April 19 has been based on "communalisation" with the Hindu-Muslim rhetoric throughout and



"no talk of Viksit Bharat, Modi ki guarantee, or issues of the farmers, youth, women, workers, SCs, STs and OBCs".

Asked about the remarks, Ramesh said, "What nonsense is he talking about. This prime minister is fast losing his memory. He has never had any adherence to truth. He is 'jhothjeevi', but now what he says today, he forgets tomorrow and says he never said it."

"Of course he has been attacking the Congress

party and has been talking of Hindu-Muslim," he said.

Ramesh said the PM had raised the issue of 'Muslim League' imprint on the Congress manifesto, the mangalsutra remarks and the allegation that the Congress will give reservations on the basis of religion, which were all "bogus statements".

"This is the prime minister who, when asked some years ago whether he had any remorse at the killings during the Gujarat riots, said even when a small puppy comes under a car, one feels bad. This is the language that he has used," Ramesh said.

He alleged that the prime minister's entire campaign from April 19 has been based on "communalisation and polarisation".

SIT bares...

Continued from Page 1

Reports suggest that the SIT identified numerous deficiencies in the investigations and issued clear directives to the Investigation Officers for prompt compliance. In light of this, the Chief Secretary and the DGP deliberated on expediting ongoing investigations, emphasized the formation of specialized teams at the district level to identify and apprehend suspects.

In a first, the State government has transferred the Palnadu Collector and the Tirupati Superintendent of Police (SP), while the SPs of Palnadu and Anantapur districts, along with 12 police officers, have been suspended for their failure to contain the election-related violence.

The government established the SIT to probe these incidents. There has been considerable speculation within the police department regarding the nature of directives expected from the EC.

'Time has come to fight for river water rights'

Kolli Nageswara Rao's death anniversary observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Speakers at fourth death anniversary observance of peasant leader and communist Kolli Nageswara Rao have said that it is time to fight for river water rights in the State. "It is the responsibility of everyone to protect river water for irrigation, drinking purposes and industry requirements," they added.

If necessary, people should be ready to fight to protect their rights. They mentioned the agitations for the Polavaram Project, Pulichintala Project and others organised by Kolli Nageswara Rao in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh.

On the occasion of Kolli Nageswara Rao's death anniversary, Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam (APRS) conducted a seminar at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday. During the programme, Rythu Sangham senior leader Y Kesava Rao released a book titled 'Protection of Krishna Water Rights - Challenges Ahead of the New Government' written by social analyst T Lakshmi Narayana.

Addressing the seminar, CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna said that peasants organised a historical struggle against three black Acts proposed by the BJP-led NDA government. Similarly, the agitations organised by Amravati farmers and Visakhapatnam Steel Plant



Leaders of left parties and farmers' associations attending a book release function at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday

labourers will also be part of history.

"There was a change in the tone of Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he spoke about winning the MP seats after the completion of the fifth phase polling. Earlier, Modi had claimed that NDA would win 400 seats," he said.

Meanwhile, Ramakrishna demanded implementation of the decision of the Apex Council meeting chaired by the Union Jal Shakti Minister and Chief Ministers of AP and Telangana. As per the decision, 512 TMCs of Krishna water

will be allotted to Andhra Pradesh and 299 TMCs to Telangana. The Bachavat Tribunal ordered the same, he added.

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao said that the Central government is trying to grab river water rights from the State governments. Former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu neglected big projects during his tenure, he alleged.

He stressed the importance of developing big as well as minor projects. Later, those projects should be interlinked

with irrigation tanks and canals. He also stressed the need for a special water policy. Former Minister Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao flayed the verdict of the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal that surpassed the freedom of usage of surplus water.

APRS president G Eswaraiah, general secretary KVV Prasad, AP Koulu Rythu Sangham general secretary P Jamalaliah, CPI leaders Muppalla Nageswara Rao, G Obulesu, R Ravindranath, Chalasani Rama Rao and others were present.

Principals of ICSE schools discuss NEP-2020

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) organised a crucial meeting at the Centre of Excellence in Hyderabad on Tuesday, bringing together principals of ICSE schools from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The focus of the meeting was the integration and implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to revolutionise the educational landscape in India.

Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive and Secretary of CISCE led the discussions, emphasising the crucial role of NEP-2020 in shaping a progressive and holistic educational framework. He highlighted the necessity of adopting innovative teaching methodologies that align with the guidelines set forth by the NEP-2020, to foster comprehensive development among students.

The event commenced with an enthusiastic welcome from UA Sundari, Regional Secretary



Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive and Secretary of CISCE led the discussions, emphasising the crucial role of NEP-2020 in shaping a progressive and holistic educational framework.

for the AP and Telangana Region. She expressed her excitement about the collaborative efforts and the potential advancements in educational standards that such meetings can catalyse.

Prominent personalities including Dr Immanuel, Chairman of CISCE, and Dr Sangeetha Bhatia, Deputy Secretary of CISCE participated.

The gathering provided a

platform for principals to exchange insights and strategies on effectively implementing NEP-2020, ensuring that the region's educational institutions remain leaders in academic excellence.

The meeting underscored the collective commitment to elevating the quality of education and adapting to contemporary educational demands, setting a progressive course for the future of schooling in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Technical Committee inspects Durga Temple development works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The Technical Committee led by expert R Kondala Rao inspected the current development works uphill and down hill at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Committee members VR Siddhartha Engineering College Civil Department Dean Prof Pandu Ranga Rao, Prof Ramesh Kumar, P Trimurthy Raju, Endowment Department Chief

Engineer S Srinivas and the officials of the Andhra Pradesh Urban Infrastructure Asset Management Limited (APUIAML) were part of the inspection team. Before the field visit, the expert committee held a meeting with Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao and Engineering Wing officials. EO Rama Rao and the engineers explained the ongoing works to the expert committee. Durga Temple Executive Engineer L Rama Devi explained the master plan and related works.



APLSA Member Secretary Babitha speaking at the inaugural session of the mediation training programme in Vijayawada.

40-day mediation training camp for judicial officers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Legal Services Authority (APLSA) Member Secretary M Babitha inaugurated a five-day 40-hour mediation training programme for judicial officers in Vijayawada.

Several judicial officers of Krishna, West Godavari and East Godavari were present. Similar training programmes

have started simultaneously at Guntur, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati.

In the Vijayawada training programme, around 120 Additional District Judges, Senior Civil Judges and Junior Civil Judges are participating. APLSA is organising the Mediation Training Programme under the aegis of the Supreme Court Mediation and Conciliation Project

Committee (MCPC).

Speaking on the occasion, Babitha said that mediation would help resolve family disputes and assets dispute cases.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge A Satyanand, APLSA Administrative Officer H Amara Rangeswara Rao, senior trainers from the Delhi High Court Nageena Jain and Harish Madani and others were present.

POLYCET admission process to begin tomorrow

Seat allotment scheduled for June 7

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The admission process for POLYCET 2024 will commence on Thursday, May 23, according to Chadalavada Nagarani, Commissioner of Technical Education and Chairman of the Technical Education and Training Board. A meeting held at the State Technical Education Department office in Amaravati on Tuesday discussed various aspects of the admissions process and finalised the necessary plans.

Commissioner Nagarani outlined the key dates for the admissions process. Online payment for admissions will be available from May 24 to June 2. Certificate verification must be completed between May 27 and June 3. Optional registration is scheduled from May 31 to June 5, with the opportunity to change options on June 5. The allotment of seats will be completed by June 7. Students whose



admissions are finalized will need to report both in person and online between June 10 and June 14.

Nagarani also announced that classes will begin on June 10 across the state. Rank cards can be downloaded from the official website, and students should be prepared for the admissions counselling process. Out of the 1,42,035 students who appeared for the POLYCET

entrance exam, 1,24,430 qualified, marking an 87.61 per cent pass rate.

Key officials from the Technical Education Department, including Joint Director Velaga Padma Rao, Additional Secretary SVRK Prasad, State Technical Education and Training Council Secretary Ramana Babu, Chief Camp Officer Vijayakumar, Deputy Director Vijaya Baskar, and representatives from the National Informatics Center, participated in the meeting.

Demo of postal vote counting held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji conducted a demo of counting of the postal ballots at the Spandana Meeting Hall in Machilipatnam. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the district officials should strive to ensure speedy, smooth and

accurate counting of votes. He said that the demo intended to bring down the pressure on officials. He said that based on the polled postal ballots in the respective Assembly constituencies, each table would be arranged for 500 votes. As per the guidelines of the Election Commission of India, reasons

for rejected and invalid votes should be explained in detail, he instructed. Krishna District Revenue Officer (DRO) K Chandrasekhar Rao, Returning Officers P Padmavati, M Vani, D Raju, P Venkata Ramana, Bala Subrahmanyam, Sri Devi and others participated in the demo programme.

Man killed in road accident

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A man, named Matthi Murali hailing from Remalavaripalem of Nagayalanka mandal in Krishna district, was killed in a road accident that occurred at Ramavarappadu Ring in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

He was taking his son for cricket coaching at an academy in the city when a lorry

hit him. Murali crashed under the lorry tyre and died on the spot whereas his son was injured. After learning about the incident, family members rushed to the hospital.

The police reached the spot and shifted the dead body to the government general hospital for the postmortem. The Patamata police registered a case and started the investigation.

Palagani Tamanna, Chalasani Jayanth to take part in Prerana Utsav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Palagani Tamanna, a Class 9 student at BVR ZPH School, Prodduturu, and Chalasani Jayanth, a Class 9 student at Jawahar Navodaya School at Jawahar in Krishna district have qualified for the National Prerana Utsav. The national-level competition will be held at Prerana School at Wad Nagar in Gujarat from May 25.

In this connection, Krishna District Educational Officer



(DEO) Tahera Sultana issued a press release here on Monday.



She said that Palagani Tamanna and Chalasani Jayanth would

represent Krishna district in the national-level Prerana Utsav.

She stated that as many as 4,431 students of Classes 9, 10 and Intermediate registered their names to participate in the Prerana Utsav-2024. All these students participated in the district-level programme held at the Jawahar Navodaya School at Veleru on April 19. Palagani Tamanna and Chalasani Jayanth excelled in essay writing, poetry, songs, elocution, and drawing competitions.

Use of 'Council', 'Commission' by NGOs is illegal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commissioner of the Civil Supplies Department H Arun Kumar has stated that the use of the words 'Council' and 'Commission' by non-governmental organisations is illegal. He made it clear that stringent action would be taken against those organisations if they used these names further.

In a press release here on Tuesday, Arun Kumar said that several complaints have come to the notice of the

Department of Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies as some consumer voluntary organisations are using these words in the name of their organisations. In view of the existing provisions specifically framed in Chapters II and IV of the Consumer Protection Act-2019, National, State and District Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions indicate that the government institutions are to be constituted for the protection of consumers' rights, he said.

Cordon and search operations conducted across State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to maintain peace, manage crime, and prevent upward incidents, cordon and search operations were conducted across various districts in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday. Acting on the instructions of State DGP Harish Kumar Gupta, district Superintendents of Police (SPs) led these operations, targeting significant junctions, village outskirts, residences of suspected criminals, and other areas prone to criminal activity.

The operations aimed at a comprehensive search for weapons, explosives, narcotics, unregistered items, and vehicles. As a result, several vehicles without valid papers were seized. The police identified and searched 301 problematic areas statewide. This extensive operation led to the confiscation of 482 litres of ID liquor, 33.32 litres

of regular liquor, and 436 litres of non-duty liquor. Additionally, 1104 vehicles lacking proper documentation were impounded.

Ahead of the elections, authorities identified 1522 individuals, arresting several and issuing 41 CRPC notices. On election day, 2790 more individuals were scrutinized, leading to further arrests and the issuance of additional CRPC notices. Post-election, 356 individuals were identified in various cases, resulting in numerous arrests and more CRPC notices. To strengthen law enforcement, history sheets were opened for 85 accused individuals. The DGP recommended involving the PD Act against three individuals and expelling two others from the state. The authorities have urged the public to report any illegal or suspicious activities to the local police or by dialling 112/100.

'Vast employment opportunities for ITI graduates'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR district Vocational Guidance Committee Chairman Devarapalli Victor Babu has said that the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) courses are the best choice after Class 10 to get jobs.

After ITI, candidates can choose Railway, Army and other government organisations, he added.

A meeting of the NTR District Vocational Guidance Committee was

held at the Employment Exchange Office on the premises of the ITI College in Vijayawada.

Speaking on the occasion, Victor Babu said that ITI graduates have vast job opportunities both in the State and Central government sectors, besides private organisations.

Government ITI College Principal Kanaka Rao said that the ITI admission process had already commenced and the last date for receiving applications is

June 10. Interested candidates shall complete the admission process as early as possible, he added.

NTR District Vocational Educational Officer P Vijaya Lakshmi, District Industries Officer Sambaiiah, Intermediate Vocational Officer SN Reddy, Skill Development Officer P Suresh, Vocational Guidance Officer Y Satya Brahmam, Regional Employment Officer Rammohan Reddy, and others were present.



NTR district Vocational Guidance Committee Chairman Devarapalli Victor Babu addressing a district-level meeting on the premises of the ITI College in Vijayawada.

Others may emulate Jagan's 'investment' model if he wins!

The Government of Andhra Pradesh, under the leadership of YS Jaganmohan Reddy, has borrowed heavily or taken huge loans from the Union government, external agencies, and government corporations. The borrowings and loans obtained by the AP government total around Rs.11 lakh crore; or, in other words, each and every citizen in the state, including a newborn, has to share financial burden of the state to the tune of more than Rs. 2 lakh.



accept the narrative popularized during the election campaign that distributing money directly to beneficiaries of welfare schemes reflected development achieved by a welfare-oriented government. It is not without reason that the Chinese proverb 'Teach a poor man to catch fish, instead of giving him fish' has become popular across the world. Satiating hunger is different from providing a poor man regular and sustainable means of livelihood. Welfare schemes, especially like the ones hugely popular in AP, will make the poor rely more and more on the government. If the marginal man is made to act independently for earning two square meals

It is not without reason that the Chinese proverb 'Teach a poor man to catch fish, instead of giving him fish' has become popular across the world. Satiating hunger is different from providing a poor man regular and sustainable means of livelihood.

a day for his family, he could soon become a tool for further progress in society. For, the government can then focus on creation of assets that can benefit the entire community and put the state on the path of progress. Instead, these days, governments tend to sell public assets to fund their populist

schemes. Even land parcels, most precious public assets, are being auctioned to bridge the shortfall of funds for the implementation of welfare schemes. Lakhs of beneficiaries are believed to have received money in the name of welfare schemes and each family has received Rs.1 lakh to Rs.3 lakh



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

welfare schemes would translate into votes for his party. It is a fact that most of the beneficiaries have turned blind supporters of Jagan. In fact, some of these beneficiaries believe that AICC leader Sonia Gandhi had foisted criminal cases on Jagan for not toeing the Congress' line. Jagan did not care about the future of the Polavaram project, which is vital for the development of the state. At the same time, those who had received welfare benefits under direct benefit transfer have not shown any improved standard of living. They have simply spent the entire money that they had received all these years with no change in their means of livelihood or earning capacity. Their contribution to the state, and thereby to the

nation, remains zero. No one knows whether the state economy benefitted in any manner from the Rs.2.80 lakh crore spent till date on welfare schemes in AP. Development of villages is central to the growth of the country. The Union government has allocated lakhs of crores of rupees for the uplift of villages nationwide. Andhra Pradesh was allocated Rs.15,000 crore towards this end, thanks to the 73rd&74th Constitutional amendments. Strangely, the AP government entered the scene and got those funds transferred from the accounts of village panchayats to the state exchequer. The panchayats yielded meekly because 90% of the gram panchayats are under the con-

trol of YSRCP supporters. Jagan got tremendous support from people in the 2019 elections. He created a record by securing 86% of seats (151 out of 175) in the AP Legislative Assembly. Bent upon retaining power at any cost, he found it easy to go ahead with welfare largesse to enlist the marginalized sections as his diehard supporters. In this backdrop, other leaders who believe in throwing crumbs at marginalized sections, instead of working for real, tangible growth of the state or country, may emulate Jagan's 'investment' model if he wins! Jagan could become the role model for leaders for whom only the next election counts. They are least bothered about the next or succeeding generations.

Victory rallies will not be allowed on counting day: SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has made it clear that no procession or victory rallies are allowed in the district on the counting of votes day and legal action will be taken against anyone who disrupts peace and tranquility.

The SP in a release here on Tuesday said that the security arrangements are being made for the election counting and asked the people, candidates and activists to follow the election rules.

The SP said that strong security had been provided to the strong rooms located on the Engineering College campus, and also in the surrounding areas, adding that the counting of votes would be held on June 4.

SP Vakul Jindal said police pickets are being set up at problematic villages, important places and main intersections to prevent untoward incidents in the district. As per the Election Code, Section 144 CrPC and Section 30 Police Act are in force, more than four people should not gather at one place in any area, Meetings, open meetings and rallies should not be held.



The SP in a release here on Tuesday said that the security arrangements are being made for the election counting and asked the people, candidates and activists to follow the election rules.

candidates/activists of the opposing party and spreading false information/rumours on social media is an offence, he said, stating that strict legal action will be taken against those who behave in such a provocative manner.

"The officials should take legal action against those who consume alcohol in public places. It is a crime for youths to remove silencers from their bikes and drive bikes making a lot of noise and causing trouble to others, cases will be registered against those who drive vehicles that make a lot of noise, bikes will be confiscated and strict action will be taken," the SP warned.

If anyone roaming suspiciously or makes provocative comments in villages, the public should inform the same immediately to Police, he appealed, adding that the details of the informants will be kept confidential.

SP Vakul Jindal said that for all people to live in a peaceful environment, every citizen should act responsibly, and all people should cooperate with the police in maintaining peace and tranquillity and follow their prior instructions and advice.

"According to the Election Commission's directions, the officials have been ordered to ensure that petrol and diesel in petrol filling stations are filled to vehicles only and the same will not be filled in bottles or cans. Candidates and activists of political parties are not allowed to burst firecrackers on the counting day and the

officials have been advised to carry out inspections at the firecracker godowns in the district in coordination with police and fire officials. Owners of firecrackers manufacturing units should not sell firecrackers till the end of Election Code," he warned them. Deliberately making provocative comments to the

DC, SP review security at EVM strongrooms

PNS ■ ELURU

Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh and Superintendent of Police D Mary Prashanthi reviewed the security to the EVM strong room, located on the campus of CRR Engineering College, near here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the EVMs of seven Assembly segments were preserved in the strong room located on the campus of Engineering College near Vaturu.

He instructed the security personnel to be on high alert till the end of the counting of votes. The Collector and SP inspected the seals of the



strong rooms and the functioning of CCTVs on the premises. He inquired with the central security force per-

sonnel about providing three-tier securities to the strong rooms.

Meanwhile, the Collector issued orders on Tuesday banning the sale of firecrackers in the district till June 5 because of the counting of votes on June 4. He said that the bursting of firecrackers by the winning candidates might lead to a law and order problem and that is why the sale of firecrackers was banned.

The firing of crackers would lead to serious law and order problems in rural areas, the Collector said and directed the Eluru, Nuzvid and Jangareddygudem RDOs to implement the ban on firecrackers strictly.



50 kg of ganja seized; two siblings held

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The Karnataka police conducted a raid on a house at Santekuduru village in Adoni mandal on Tuesday and seized 50 kg of ganja. The police arrested two siblings in this connection.

On a tip-off that the two siblings Ravi and Chandra were supplying ganja to Karnataka, a Karnataka police team conducted a raid and found six bags which contained 50 kg of ganja in the house.

The siblings were raising the ganja crop in their agriculture field and exporting the same to Karnataka state. To earn money easily, the siblings started cultivating ganja and selling it in Karnataka, the police said.



31 bikes seized by police

PNS ■ NELLORE

The police conducted a cordon and search operation at Chinabazar, Udayagiri and Jaladanki police station limits and seized 31 motorcycles and an auto rickshaw here on Tuesday.

On the directions of Superintendent of Police Arif

Hafeez, police teams cordoned the area and searched every house given the counting of votes on June 4.

The police teams led by DSPs and CIs conducted the cordon and search operation in a bid to infuse confidence among people.

The police seized 31 motorcycles and an auto

rickshaw as the owners failed to produce relevant documents.

The cordon and search operation was conducted to seize weapons, country-made liquor, explosives and drugs as a precautionary measure to avoid violent incidents during the counting of votes on June 4, police said.

Police allay fears over violence on counting day

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Superintendent of Police S Satish Kumar here on Tuesday condemned social media reports of possible violence in Kakinada and Pithapuram Assembly constituencies on the counting day on June 4 and after the results were declared.

The SP made it clear that the report sent by intelligence to the Election Commission that violent incidents might take place in Kakinada and Pithapuram as 'wrong and baseless and appealed to the people not to be carried away by such rumours.

Kakani behind Bengaluru rave party: Somireddy

PNS ■ NELLORE

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader and former minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy has alleged that the rave party in Bangalore in which celebrities from the State were said to have participated, was held under the directions of Kakani Govardhan Reddy.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Somireddy said that the car with the MLA sticker of Kakani Govardhan Reddy was found at the rave party. Moreover, the passport of Kakani was also found in the car which was evidence that Kakani was connected to the



rave party. "Drugs, including cocaine, were seized by the police from the rave party. Gopal Reddy, the owner of the farmhouse, where the rave party was hosted, is the close friend of Kakani Govardhan Reddy," Somireddy

He also claimed that Kakani has links with international mafia gangs. Kakani was involved in a spurious liquor case in 2014 in which seven people died but he obtained bail from the court in the case, Somireddy slammed.

Stating that there are a total number of 518 MLAs including 224 MLAs in Karnataka and 175 in AP but the car with the official MLA sticker of Kakani was found at the farmhouse, where the rave party was hosted.

The Central government should consider the rave party and drugs issue as an interstate crime and take stringent action against Kakani, Somireddy demanded.

Uttam rejects Maheshwar's allegations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Responding to the allegations levelled by BJP leader Alletti Maheshwar, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that he is strongly denying them. He said that Maheshwar is constantly trying to be in the news by making baseless allegations.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Uttam said that Maheshwar and BJP leaders are talking without even a minimum understanding of things.

"We have provided excellent governance in Telangana during the last 100 days. We are setting right the disorganized governing system. It is a blatant lie to say that we have committed corruption and collected U-tax. I am now in another state with my family for darshan. We will come to Hyderabad on Wednesday. After that, I will give a suitable answer to all the allegations made by Maheshwar," Uttam said.

School Education Department begins delivery of textbooks

Govt plans to distribute books on school re-opening day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The School Education Department has started the delivery of textbooks to the respective mandal headquarters. They will be distributed to students on the day of school re-opening on June 12. After special pujas at the Government Textbooks Depot in Vijayawada, Krishna District Educational Officer (DEO) Tahera Sultana flagged off the textbook delivery through the APSRTC cargo bus on Tuesday.

The department estimated

that 17,44,487 textbooks are required for Krishna and NTR districts for the academic year 2024-25.

Textbooks for classes 1 to 7 were sent from the Government Text Book Depot to mandal headquarters. However, the textbooks for classes 8 to 10 will be sent to the mandal headquarters directly from the printing presses. Combined Krishna District Educational Officer Tahera Sultana and Text Book Depot Manager ASK Anjaneyulu are supervising the delivery of textbooks to all mandals in the district.

Mopeds given away to six farmers



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Coromandel International Limited organised the Coromandel Gromor farmers' celebrations on Tuesday, marking the conclusion of their Gromor Rythu Sambaralu programme, at Sri Ramanjaneya Menyurs in Eluru.

As part of the initiative, six farmers from Eluru district were selected through a lucky draw from among those who had purchased Gromor fertilisers. They were presented with TVS mopeds.

Key company representatives, including Regional Business Head KSR Chakravarthi, DGM M Sachidananda Reddy, Nano DAP Business Manager Swaroop, Senior Agronomist P Suryanarayana, Marketing Manager K Ramesh and others were present.

They addressed the farmers, emphasising the company's commitment to providing them with quality fertilisers tailored to their agricultural needs.

All set for Haj pilgrimage, three flights arranged from Gannavaram airport

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Haj Committee officials have said that all the necessary arrangements have been made under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Government, Minority Welfare Department and the Haj Committee. Special Haj camps were organised for Hajis at Eidgah Jama Masjid, GST Road, Durgapuram, Village Kesarapalli in Gannavaram of Krishna district for the pilgrims who are going for 2024 Haj pilgrimage from Andhra Pradesh.

In a press release issued here on Tuesday, they said the Secretary, the Minority Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh convened a



coordination meeting with the officials of various departments and issued appropriate instructions so that there is no inconvenience to the pilgrims. On Tuesday, Secretary to the

Government Medical and Welfare Department K Harshwardhan visited the Haj camp and inspected the arrangements. The Haj Committee officials

stated that Haj pilgrims from all the districts of the State have been allocated in three flights. Accordingly, the first flight of Hajis is on May 27, the second on May 28 and the third flight on May 29. The three flights will depart from Gannavaram Airport and reach Jeddah Airport in Saudi Arabia.

The pilgrims were informed about their travel details and reporting times to the Haj camp through WhatsApp and also, toll-free number 1800-4257873 has been allocated for the convenience of pilgrims. The officials stated that Haj pilgrims can contact the respective toll-free number and the Andhra Pradesh State Haj Committee website www.apstatehajcommittee.com for any information.

INDIA CORNER

Lt Guv, CM pull Tirukameeswarar temple chariot in Puducherry

Puducherry Lieutenant Governor C P Radhakrishnan, Chief Minister N Rangasamy and Home Minister A Namassivayam were among those who pulled the chariot of Tirukameeswarar temple in neighbouring Villianoor on Tuesday. Opposition DMK leader R Siva and delegates from different outfits also formed part of the large number of people who pulled the chariot. It has been the practice since the French regime in Puducherry that the head of the State should pull the chariots of the temples on the occasion of annual car festivals. Radhakrishnan and others later offered prayers at the sanctum sanctorum. Several organisations arranged free distribution of food to the people thronging the temple. The temple in Villianoor was constructed by a Chola King in 12th century. The car festival attracts large numbers of people from within Puducherry and neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu.



Two polling booths in Jhansi record 100 per cent turnout

Two polling booths in the Jhansi Lok Sabha constituency, where elections were held in the fifth phase on May 20, have recorded 100 per cent voter turnout, officials said on Tuesday. According to an official statement issued by District Election Officer (DEO) and District Magistrate Akshay Tripathi, all 375 voters -- 198 men and 177 women -- at booth number 277 in Sauda of Mehrauni Assembly cast their votes. Similarly, at booth number 355 in Bamhora Nagal village, all 441 registered voters -- 235 men and 206 women -- participated, it said. Both these booths are located in the Lalitpur district. In another village, Budhni Narahat, there is still confusion regarding 100 per cent voting due to technical issues, the statement said, adding there is a possibility that 100 per cent turnout will be declared there as well. DEO Tripathi said that further details will be confirmed once the technical issues are resolved.



Abducted Haryana businessman rescued in Greater Noida after car crash

A businessman abducted from Haryana's Faridabad was rescued by police in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, officials said on Tuesday. The police were able to rescue the businessman after a chase, during which the car holding the hostage rammed into a divider, they said. "Rajiv Mittal, a resident of Haryana's Ballabgarh area, was on his way to the Delhi airport around 1 am to receive someone when he was abducted by four men," Additional DCP (Greater Noida) Ashok Kumar Sharma said. "The abductors held him inside the Mahindra Scorpio and kept wandering on the roads before reaching Greater Noida from where they were perhaps trying to go to Delhi," ADGP Sharma said. A team from Knowledge Park police station was on patrol duty near the Zero Point in Greater Noida when they spotted this suspicious vehicle in the area, the police said. "When an attempt was made to stop the car, they started driving the vehicle at a high speed and rammed into a divider," a police said.



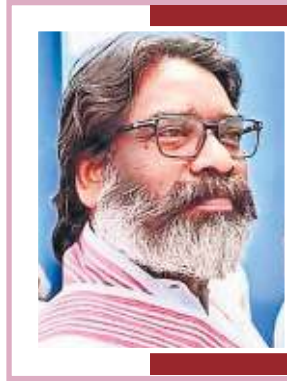
SUPREME COURT ASKS HEMANTH SOREN

Can court examine legality of arrest after cognisance of ED's complaint taken ?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren whether a writ court can examine the legality of his arrest after the trial court has taken cognisance of the prosecution complaint filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the money laundering case against him related to an alleged land scam. A vacation bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma, which posted the matter for further hearing on Wednesday, asked Soren's counsel to first satisfy the court as to how interim bail can be granted to him for campaigning in the Lok Sabha poll when his application for regular bail has been dismissed. "The trial court, after taking a prima facie view that offence has been committed, has passed a judicial order taking

cognisance of prosecution complaint. What will happen to that judicial order especially when it has not been challenged? You have to satisfy us, can a writ court examine the legality of arrest after the judicial order taking cognisance has been passed," the bench told senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Arunabh Chowdhury, who appeared for Soren. Both the lawyers sought time till Wednesday to respond to the court's queries. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, opposed Soren's interim bail plea, contending his case was different from that of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was granted interim bail on May 10 for campaigning in the general elections. He said the trial court had on April 4 taken cognisance of the prosecution complaint,



Both the lawyers sought time till Wednesday to respond to the court's queries. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, opposed Soren's interim bail plea, contending his case was different from that of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was granted interim bail on May 10 for campaigning in the general elections

ED's equivalent of a charge sheet, upon finding that a prima facie case was made out against Soren. Sibal said no offence of illegal possession of land is made out against Soren under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which is not a predicate/scheduled offence. "I am raising a question of constitutional infirmity. It

relates to my freedom. It relates to taking away of my right to liberty under Article 21. Why can't I challenge my arrest under the PMLA, when no offence is made out. The writ court can interfere, if my rights are affected," he said. The senior lawyer submitted that if the court is not inclined to grant interim relief to Soren, then it will have to

hold that the moment an accused moves a regular bail application, his right to challenge section 19 of the PMLA (power of arrest) stands extinguished. "We need assistance on the issue from both the sides," the bench said while referring to the subsequent developments following Soren's arrest like dismissal by the high court of his plea challenging his arrest, cognisance of the prosecution complaint (charge sheet), and dismissal of his regular bail application. Sibal said the trial court has only taken a prima facie view that an offence has been committed but the petitioner's case is that his arrest itself is bad in law. "This is totally different. The material before the trial court does not disclose commission of offence under the PMLA and hence arrest is illegal," he said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI probe into the nursing college scam in Madhya Pradesh has revealed that its officers were allegedly collecting Rs 2-10 lakh from each institute to give favourable reports after inspection, the central probe agency has said. CBI Deputy SP Ashish Prasad, inspectors Rahul Raj and Sushil Kumar Majoka, who were on attachment in the CBI from the MP Police, and Rishi Kant Asathe are among 22 persons booked by the agency in the case. Raj was arrested on Sunday. The CBI FIR also named the directors and chairpersons of eight colleges offering nursing courses, as well as staff and middlemen who collected and delivered the bribes on behalf of the inspection teams. "A case registered by CBI reinforces its zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and shows that CBI does not spare its own officials if found devi-



ating from core values of the organization," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. The inspection teams were constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to inspect the nursing colleges in the state. The CBI set up these teams, which, in addition to their officers, included staff nominated by the Indian Nursing Council and patwaris of the state. The CBI received information that the teams indulged in corrupt practices by giving suitability reports to ineligible institutes in return for huge bribes. After verifying and discreetly observing the officers and agents, the agency registered an FIR. The source also informed that the bribe money collected by this cartel from each nursing college varies from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. This bribe money is shared among CBI officers and middlemen," the CBI FIR said. The agency also received input that in addition to the amount, Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000 was paid to each nursing officer and Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 to each patwari attached to the CBI team as a bribe.

BJP implicating TMC over attack on RKM in Jalpaiguri: Mamata

PNS ■ ASHOKENAGAR (WB)

Taking a strong view of the BJP's charges that the TMC was involved in vandalism of properties of Ramakrishna Mission in Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accused the saffron camp of falsely implicating her party over an incident triggered by property dispute. Addressing an election rally in support of TMC candidate from Barasat Lok Sabha seat Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Banerjee said she had always been supportive of the RKM and other socio-religious organisations. Banerjee claimed that she renovated the residence of Sister Nivedita in Kolkata and the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda. "I don't discriminate among religions. I work



for renovating places of worship of all religions," she said. "I may go for defamation for maligning me and my party for spreading misinformation against our party. If anything happens in the state, the report comes to me as an administrator immediately. I did not get any such update. We have great respect for religious organisations like RKM and others," Banerjee said. Miscreants have vandalised the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission in

Jalpaiguri district and threatened monks and other employees at gunpoint to leave the place, an RKM official said Monday. The official said that a local land mafia was behind the early Sunday morning incident. "Many people donate property for religious reasons and then some dispute may break out. Police are investigating and action will be taken. But how dare you (BJP) implicate anyone without ascertaining the matter," she said while referring to the vandalism of the RKM ashram at Salugara in Jalpaiguri. About the minority appeasement charges against the TMC, she said, "I won't hanker for a certificate about my Hindu identity from BJP, but for me, all religions are the same. Every religion speaks about humanity and brotherhood."

'Bees saal baad' it will be '2004 moment' on June 4'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday said a "2004 moment" will be witnessed on June 4 with the INDIA bloc getting a clear mandate in the Lok Sabha polls, and asserted that a primary factor in the alliance's "strong performance" would be a "hugely impressive" turnaround in Uttar Pradesh. In an interview Ramesh also used cricketing terminology to claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was nurturing a "communal pitch" but his party had refused to play on it and had also successfully navigated his "googlies and bouncers". The Congress general secretary exuded confidence that the June 4 results day would be relieving of the "2004 moment" when the saffron party was unseated from power despite its 'India Shining' campaign.

"This is a 2004 moment, you will see. People keep asking me who will be the prime minister, I must remind you that the results of the 2004 election came out on May 13, 2004. By May 17, it was clear that Manmohan Singh was going to be the prime minister. This time it may be even quicker, and in any case, elections in India are not a beauty contest, not a 'kaun banega PM', it is about which coalition will get a mandate," Ramesh said. "We are a party-centred democracy. We are not like the American system, it is not a beauty contest between individuals, it is a choice between parties. This is a 2004 moment. In 1962, a film was released based on the Sherlock Holmes mystery -- 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' -- 'Bees saal Baad' starring Waheeda Rehman and Biswajeet...what happened in 2004, 'bees saal baad', you will see that repeating," he said.



Ramesh also expressed confidence that there would be a "dramatic turnaround" in Uttar Pradesh. Noting that the road to Delhi is through Lucknow because Uttar Pradesh has 80 seats, Ramesh pointed out that the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra had gotten a tremendous response in places such as Prayagraj, Varanasi, Pratapgarh, Lucknow, Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Aligarh, Moradabad, Amroha and Sambhal.

In Uttar Pradesh, youth, women, SCs, STs, OBCs came out in support of the yatra, he said. "I think there has been a complete disenchantment and disillusionment with the PM because the people are fed up with him. He (Modi) is tired, he is jaded and he is faded. One of the primary contributing factors in our strong performance on June 4 when the results came out, would be a hugely impressive turnaround in UP," Ramesh said. In the 2019 polls, the BJP had won 62 seats, NDA ally Apna Dal got 2 seats, while the Mahagathbandhan (SP, BSP, RLD) had won 15 seats and the Congress got one. Ramesh alleged that Modi had been indulging in polarisation throughout the election and preparing a "communal pitch", but the Congress refused to play on that and pursued its 'paach nyay' agenda.

KHARGE REPLIES TO MODI'S REMARK UPA I, II completed 2 terms under one PM Manmohan

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "five PMs in five years" remark, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Tuesday that similar things were said even in 2004 but the UPA government completed two full terms under one PM, Manmohan Singh. Addressing an election rally at Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh on May 16, Modi had said the INDIA bloc wants to make five prime ministers in five years and claimed that it will disintegrate after June 4. Kharge responded by rejecting Modi's claims. "In UPA I and UPA II, we were supported by other parties and we completed full term," Kharge told reporters here. For 10 years, there was one prime minister, a person who came from the land of Punjab, ran the country and changed its economy, he said about former prime minister Manmohan Singh. "Taking a dig at the BJP, he further said, 'Whereas they did nothing for 10 years.' Accompanied by former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Kharge arrived here after addressing an election rally in



Jagadhri in Haryana. On being asked that the ruling party leaders often ask who the opposition 'PM face' is, Kharge said, after the polls, the INDIA alliance partners will sit and decide this (if opposition wins the election). He said the BJP has been saying that the Congress or the INDIA alliance does not have a face like Modi. They used to say the same thing in 2004 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister, the Congress president said. "After the polls, alliance partners will sit and decide. Like we ran UPA government, in similar manner we will do this," he said. Replying to a question, Kharge claimed that the INDIA bloc has gained good ground in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. "Everywhere we are gaining and they are losing. Our alliance will definitely stop the Modi government from coming to power," he said, and added, "the people are fighting against Modi and we are supporting them." Voting for sixth and seventh phases of elections will be held on May 25 and June 1 respectively

PM Modi 'anti-tribal', plotted to finish AAP, JMM: Kejriwal

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR (JHARKHAND)

Labelling Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "anti-tribal" who put the "tallest tribal leader of the country" behind the bars, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday accused him of plotting to topple elected governments of AAP and JMM. He also launched a scathing attack on the BJP and its spokesperson Sambit Patra for remarks that "Lord Jagannath is Modi's devotee" and urged people to "crush their arrogance".



"PM Modi plotted to finish AAP and JMM but we got stronger and he could not topple Delhi, Punjab, Jharkhand governments," Kejriwal said while addressing an election rally here. "The PM put all his forces to keep me in the jail but I am a devotee of Bajrangbali and a miracle happened. I am on bail... soon Hemant Soren, whom he has kept in the jail, will be out... Soren's wife Kalpana is challenging Modi like 'Jhansi ki Rani'. No court has found Hemant Soren or Arvind Kejriwal guilty... it is nothing but PM Modi's 'gundagardi'," Kejriwal alleged. Alleging that "PM Modi hates tribals", the AAP supreme appealed to electors not to vote for the BJP as it would amount to betrayal with Jharkhand and the tribals.

'Silent demise' of rangelands threatens climate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Up to 50 per cent of the world's rangelands - vast open areas suitable for grazing livestock - are estimated to be degraded, posing a severe threat to food supply and survival of billions of people, the UN warned in a new report on Tuesday. Launched in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) 'Global Land Outlook Thematic Report' attributed the degradation of the immense natural pastures

and other rangelands to overuse, misuse, and climate change. The degradation is driven largely by conversion of pastures to cropland and other land use changes due to population growth and urban expansion, rapidly rising food and fuel demands, excessive grazing, abandonment (end of maintenance by pastoralists), and policies that incentivize overexploitation. "When we cut down a forest, when we see a 100-year-old tree fall, it rightly evokes an emotional response in many of us. The conversion of ancient rangelands, on the other hand,



happens in 'silence' and generates little public reaction," said UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw. "Sadly, these expansive landscapes and the pastoralists and livestock breeders who depend on them, are usually under-appreciated," Thiaw said. Pastoralist communities are frequently overlooked, lack a voice in policy-making that directly affects their livelihoods, are marginalised, and are even often seen as outsiders in their own lands, he added. Covering 54 per cent of all

land, the rangelands include savannas, shrublands, wetlands, tundra and deserts. Altogether, these lands account for one sixth of global food production and represent nearly one third of the planet's carbon reservoir. Two billion people - small-scale herders, ranchers and farmers, often poor and marginalised - depend on healthy rangelands worldwide. In many West African countries, livestock production employs 80 per cent of the population.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Iran at crossroads

Ebrahim Raisi leaves behind a rich legacy and an uncertain future for his country

Iran is grappling with an unprecedented political crisis as both President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were tragically found dead in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances. The sudden loss of these key figures has plunged Iran into uncertainty, creating a significant leadership void and fuelling various speculations and conspiracy theories. Raisi, known for his hardline stance and involvement in controversial actions, leaves behind a complex legacy. His death, alongside Amir-Abdollahian, not only creates a leadership void but also raises questions about the trajectory of Iranian politics and foreign relations. The circumstances surrounding the helicopter crash, which occurred in heavy fog near the Azerbaijan border, have fuelled speculation. Given Raisi's past, including his involvement in mass executions in 1988 and some contentious actions such as uranium enrichment and missile attacks on Israel, the possibility of foul play cannot be easily dismissed. Conspiracy theories abound, ranging from internal power struggles to foreign interference.



President Raisi had numerous domestic adversaries, from moderates marginalised by his policies to conservatives critical of his presidency. Israel, a long-standing rival of Iran, also enters the conjecture. Recent escalations, including the assassination of an Iranian General by Israel and subsequent missile exchanges, add fuel to speculations of Israeli involvement. Mossad has conducted such operations, but assassinating a head of state is a risky move even by Israel's standards. Both Israel and US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer have denied involvement.

The big question is Raisi's succession and Iran's trajectory going forward. Md Mokher has been appointed the Acting President, while Ali Bagheri Kani, who was Deputy Foreign Minister, has been elevated in the Ministry. The election date has been set for June 28. Raisi was a hardliner cleric but by no means a saint. During the summer of 1988, Raisi was a key member of the "Death Commission" responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners, primarily members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) and other leftist groups. A prominent figure in Iran's power structure, Raisi was poised for further advancement until his horrifying death. While his demise creates speculation about the successor to Supreme Leader 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it's unlikely to significantly alter Iran's political trajectory. The conservative-dominated system will prioritise continuity and stability, albeit amidst internal jockeying for influence. Raisi's successor faces a daunting agenda amid economic turmoil and societal discontent, with the spectre of continued international sanctions looming large. With internal dissent simmering and external pressures mounting, the succession process becomes pivotal. The coming days will decide if any discernible change takes place or if the old order continues where moderates and leftists have no role to play.

PICTALK



A man feeds a parrot's chick that fell off a tree, in Guwahati

Can AAP survive its ultimate resilience test?



KALYANI SHANKAR

As Kejriwal presents himself as an underdog fighting against perceived persecution, this election will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of both his career and the AAP

Delhi's Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, has overcome numerous obstacles in the past decade.

Yet, his unwavering resilience has been a beacon of inspiration. He and his party are currently facing the biggest crisis in the liquor policy case.

Despite the challenges, Kejriwal's political journey is a testament to his indomitable spirit. From a brief 49-day tenure and losing all seven seats in Delhi in 2014, he orchestrated a remarkable comeback, securing 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls.

The arrest of Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case last month, which involves allegations of corruption and misuse of power, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of the Aam Aadmi Party. Will this be the end of the party's road, or can they weather this storm and continue their political journey?

The Apex court's decision to grant bail to Kejriwal, allowing him to campaign for his party in the ongoing elections, is a beacon of hope for Kejriwal's supporters. This positive development paves the way for Kejriwal's success, especially if he garners public sympathy.

Kejriwal presents himself as the underdog, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged persecution and his colleagues' imprisonment. Kejriwal and his party have been trying to show the public how he was mistreated in prison and how he was denied insulin and his diabetes medication.

Kejriwal's arrest is the biggest crisis for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its founding in November 2012. The party has faced numerous challenges, including internal conflicts, allegations of corruption and the need to maintain its image as a party for the common man. Over the years, many of Kejriwal's associates from the India Against Corruption (IAC) days have been dumped and he remains a des[pt. Kejriwal has introduced a personality cult centred around him.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power has been quite dramatic.



It originated from the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2012. The party came into power within months, but Kejriwal's resignation within 48 hours was unsurprising. However, he returned in 2015 and 2019, winning the Delhi Assembly polls with a significant majority. These events have sparked curiosity about the party's political trajectory and Kejriwal's resilience.

Kejriwal has always been ambitious. He positioned himself as a prime ministerial candidate and even ran against Modi in Benares in 2014 but lost. This bold move significantly boosted Kejriwal's and his party's profile.

In the recently formed INDIA coalition, a significant political alliance that aims to challenge the dominance of the BJP, the AAP stands out as the only party other than Congress to rule more than one State. This alliance could pave the way for his party's expansion beyond Delhi and Punjab.

However, currently, AAP will have a significant political impact in only 20 constituencies. Kejriwal's national influ-



THE AAM AADMI PARTY IS NOT JUST A POLITICAL ENTITY. IT IS POISED TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY CONGRESS AND TARGET POLITICALLY BIPOLAR STATES LIKE HIMACHAL PRADESH, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT

ence depends on his party's performance.

The AAP currently holds one seat in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Upper House. The party has expanded its influence to other States and was granted national party status in April 2023.

The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power in Indian politics is fascinating. Unlike the BJP, or the Left parties, it has no solid ideological stance. It has not relied on regional or socialist backgrounds like the AIADMK, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Biju Janata Dal, or Rashtriya Janata Dal. Instead, it has gained power by championing development and the freebie culture.

The AAP is now contesting elections in Delhi with the Congress party, while Punjab is contesting 13 seats independently. These alliances offer a promising outlook for Kejriwal's political journey. The Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political entity. It is poised to fill the void left by Congress and target politically bipolar States like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Modi has promised a "Modi ki guarantee," while Kejriwal

has outlined a ten-point agenda. This agenda includes "freeing" Indian land from Chinese occupation if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc forms the Government at the Centre, attaining Statehood for Delhi, ensuring a 24/7 power supply and providing free education. These promises reflect Kejriwal's focus on national issues. The Delhi liquor policy case has become inconvenient for the AAP, and convenient for the BJP, as elections are underway. It raises questions like, is it the end of the road? Can the second rung of leaders like Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Run the party, or will Kejriwal, with his usual luck, return? Kejriwal is optimistic and hopes that luck will be on his side. This positive outlook has served him well so far.

His popularity will rise if his party secures a respectable number of seats in the current Lok Sabha polls. Only the voters can decide and their decision will shape the future of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party in Indian politics.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MALIWAL CASE

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "An Intricate Puzzle," published on May 20. Wherein the Pioneer has truly asserted that the incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. The cases booked under IPC Sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 354D (stalking), filing the FIR under sections 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or intent to insult) against Bibhav Kumar aide Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the attack on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal reflect seriousness.

Picking up Bibhav Kumar from the official residence of the Chief Minister and seizing CCTV, DVR, mobile etc. can prove helpful in revealing the secrets of the crime. But it seems that as part of a conspiracy, Bibhav Kumar was hiding at Chief Minister Kejriwal's house and was engaged in destroying the evidence. Delhi Police should make every effort to collect crime data by using the latest digital technology and present concrete evidence before the court. So that the perpetrators of this serious crime can be punished as per the rule of the law.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

RISING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Madam — An individual's life span is dictated by a myriad of factors. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, global life expectancy is expected to increase by 4.9 years in men and 4.2 years in women by the year 2050. From 73.6 in 2022, there may be a jump to 78.1 in 2050. This trend will tend to be more exemplified in nations with a history of very low life expectancy. It is no secret that nowadays people are more cautious about their health. While diseases and disorders have taught them lessons, mortality and morbidity around them have disciplined their lives. Past pandemics, in particular COVID-19, have instilled a sense of fear

Secularism over politics



Apropos the news article, "Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections", published on May 20, this is my response. It is a pity that religion rather than economic issues take the stage in the election campaign for the ruling party at the Centre in our secular country. Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal lord used to favour his religion over other religions. History witnessed that such a practice spelt disaster on every occasion. The people felt the need for a complete separa-

tion of religion from politics. This gave birth to secularism. All modern progressive nations have embraced secularism after learning how painful it would be to deviate from its path.

Mixing religion and politics destroys accountability, enables corruption and favours one religion over others, undermining democracy. Politicians should be elected based on policy, not religion and churches should focus on spirituality, not politics. It divides the citizens and damages the unity and integrity of the country. It does not allow the policymakers to follow the progressive ideals of equality and fraternity. Rather, it attracts negative things such as discrimination, marginalisation, conflict and unrest. Some of our neighbouring countries have experienced the danger of not walking in the path of secularism. India must follow secularism and let religion be a personal matter between God and a person.

Sujit De | Kolkata

as well as responsibility in them like never before.

An extended lifespan increases susceptibility to non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and hypertension. As life expectancy in India is projected to rise, addressing behavioural and metabolic risks is crucial for healthy aging over the next two decades. Health outcomes can be significantly improved by efficiently addressing the risk factors. Furthermore, a safe environment and adequate vaccination can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

HAPPINESS IS A SKILL

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Connecting the Mind and Body," by Ravi Valluri, published on May 20, this is my response. Happiness is a skill that human beings must teach themselves. A lot of people spend so much time ruminating about the past or thinking about the future that they forget to enjoy the most beautiful gift they have received from God—the present moment. Our society is structured in a way that keeps reminding us of our

failures in the past and makes us anxious about our future. We need to consciously make efforts to silence our minds by incorporating daily practices into our daily routines.

Spending time in nature is one of the best-known ways to reconnect with your inner self. Meditating for 20 - 30 minutes daily can also provide you with a treasure trove of peace. Journaling can help you manage your emotions and teach you to focus on the present moment. Expressing gratitude to loved ones for being a part of your lives also goes a long way in nurturing the relationships you have with people that eventually become a source of joy for you. Exercising daily is also a good way to take care of your health. Staying away from social media and all the unrealistic expectations it imposes on you is imperative. All these practices when done every day can help you augment your happiness levels and enjoy life to the fullest.

Charvi Kathuria | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The rise of online internships for students



AARUL MALVIYA

Students are opting for online internships to gain practical experience, develop crucial skills and prepare themselves for the evolving job market

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, students are increasingly recognising the importance of proactive engagement in shaping their future careers. Embracing the adage of "building a door" to their professional aspirations, school students are turning to online internships as a means to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities and prepare themselves for the dynamic job market that awaits them upon graduation.



Online internships have witnessed a surge in relevance in recent years, offering school students an array of benefits that extend beyond traditional in-person placements. **Flexibility and Accessibility:** Unlike traditional internships with fixed schedules, online internships provide students with a flexible work environment tailored to accommodate their schedules. This flexibility allows them to optimise productivity according to their peak hours of concentration while balancing other commitments such as classes or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the absence of commute time associated with virtual internships fur-

ther enhances students' ability to dedicate time to their roles.

Skill Development : Engaging in tasks aligned with their field of interest, interns acquire practical experience and hone essential competencies crucial for professional success. By demonstrating initiative and self-reliance in completing assigned projects remotely, interns showcase their readiness to thrive in diverse work environments. These experiences not only deepen their expertise but also bolster their resumes, setting them apart in competitive job markets.

Access to Talent Beyond Geographical Boundaries: Online internships offer employers access to a diverse pool of talent unrestricted by geographical boundaries. This expanded reach enriches organisations with diverse perspectives, skills and cultur-

al insights, fostering innovation and collaboration within teams. Additionally, it prepares companies for the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce by developing remote work capabilities.

Exploration of Career Paths: Online internships serve as a platform for students to explore different career paths and gain insight into various industries. This exploration phase allows students to clarify their interests, identify strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career goals.

Networking Opportunities: Despite being remote, online internships provide students with networking opportunities that can be instrumental in their career development. Interacting with professionals within their chosen industry, connecting with fellow interns and building relationships with mentors and supervisors can lead to mentorship opportunities, job referrals and valuable insights into industry trends.

Innovative Learning Experiences: Through inter-

active projects, virtual meet-

ings and online training sessions, online internships offer innovative learning experiences that complement traditional classroom education. These immersive experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering critical thinking.

Cultural Exposure: Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds exposes students to different perspectives, communication styles and work cultures, enriching their understanding of the global economy's interconnectedness. Engaging in online internships significantly boosts students' resumes and bolsters their prospects for future employment. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of their initiative, adaptability and capacity to thrive in dynamic work environments, positioning them as desirable candidates poised for success in their chosen career paths. Thus, online internships not only enrich students' skill sets but also empower them to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

(The author is the Founder, Zamit; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN SPIRITUALITY CAN HELP US AVOID DEAD ENDS

Through spiritual purity, we can rise above limitations and obstacles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all end in death, i.e. our material bodies must die at some time in future, but we should avoid a dead end also, i.e. that leads to something not so good. We, souls, will go on in new bodies, but the problem is in what bodies and where. Are we going to a place where there is perpetual unrest? There are many areas in the world, which are in perpetual turmoil. Place of birth is one problem. Then, in what bodies are we born? Even in human bodies, there can be many handicaps like deformities, genetic defects and surely not-so-good looks, personality, level of intelligence, etc. There is a world of difference between ourselves and our material bodies. We, souls, are journeying eternally in various bodies, but our bodies have limited lifespans only. This thought should be uppermost in our minds. We should try to make sure that we make progress and avoid our end in a worse situation, condition, form or State.

Let us see how we can ensure it. We, souls, are parts of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) What does this mean? That we are very special, being parts of God. Imagine being the son of a very rich and cultured person. God is infinitely superior than any parent can be. God will always be favourable to us if we take His shelter because we have free will. In the case of parents, we receive shelter automatically, but in the case of God, it is a matter of choice. It shouldn't be too difficult to make this choice, but it is. Why? Taking shelter requires some basics. We must give up our egos; we need to do spiritual practices to qualify for God's attention. There is another big problem. Our lives are almost entirely controlled by our fate, which is what we have accumulated in our previous life/lives. One may question this premise. Yes, there is free will and liberty to do what we desire, feel or decide. But all these are controlled by our natures, which again are parts of our fate. What is the evidence? A person given to get angry readily continues to do so throughout his life, unless God intervenes on his or her behalf. And God wouldn't unless we take His shelter. Where does it leave us? In not a pleasant place. Life will go on almost automatically with not much improvement.



Are we doomed? We are not. God is very kind; He has left an opening for us; we just have to get started. We must have a desire. God has arranged to preach everywhere. If we bother to go and listen, we will be convinced. And the start is very simple. We just need to become better in whatever we do, not just in our work. In spiritual parlance, we must try to increase the mode of goodness in ourselves. Our whole being is made up of three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are in different percentages, with the mode of passion being predominant in most of us. It is no wonder that we are quite passionate about what we think, do, etc. Now we should try to be good in everything. For example, if we are habituated to eating foods, which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, horse, etc. (17.9), we should choose tasty, not dry, not having too much liquid foods. (17.8) Similar improvements are required in what we speak, see, hear, etc. As purity increases, we will begin to get attracted to God and spiritual acts.

The next big decision is to control our egos. This is the biggest hindrance in taking shelter from God. Arjuna had a similar problem. His ego would not allow him to accept God's instructions. Lord Krishna had to warn him, "If you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer, you will perish." (18.58) Is this not the fate of almost all of us? Who can change fate? God can and only He can in a substantial way. There is no one to share one's tough times. The solution again suggests itself. Love God and you will be able to love others as well. You won't always look for faults in others. This attitude change will help in becoming friends with family members. The conclusion is: that God is the solution if we wish to avoid the dead ends of our lives. Will we take God's shelter?

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

Raisi's tragic demise clouds Iran's future



SANTOSH MATHEW

The enigmatic President of Iran breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the country he governed



In the heart of the Middle East, where history and geopolitics are deeply intertwined, a towering figure met a tragic end, sending shockwaves across the globe. Ebrahim Raisi, the enigmatic President of Iran, breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the region he governed. Raisi's rise to power was nothing short of remarkable. Born in 1960, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of Iran's most influential figures. His journey began in the hallowed halls of Tehran's judiciary, where he earned a reputation for his unwavering commitment to Islamic principles and his uncompromising stance against corruption.

Raisi truly made his mark on the political stage. In June 2021, he ascended to the presidency, promising to usher in a new era of prosperity and stability for his beloved nation. His tenure was marked by bold foreign policies and ambitious domestic reforms, as he sought to solidify Iran's position as a regional powerhouse. At the heart of Raisi's vision was Iran's role as a champion of Shia Islam, a beacon of resistance against oppression and injustice. Under his leadership, Iran forged alliances with like-minded nations, offering support to movements and groups fighting for their rights across the Middle East.

However, amidst the triumphs and accolades, tragedy struck with devastating force. On a fateful day, as Raisi embarked on a routine journey to Azerbaijan, fate intervened. His helicopter plummeted from the sky, claiming his life and those of several others onboard. The crash sent shockwaves rippling through Iran and beyond, leaving a nation in mourning and the world reeling from the loss of a visionary leader.

As the dust settled and the wreckage was cleared, the full extent of Raisi's legacy came into focus. His death left a void in Iran's political landscape, one that would be difficult to fill. But beyond the borders of his homeland, Raisi's impact was felt far and wide. In the halls of power in Moscow and Ankara, Raisi was revered



RAISI WIELDED IMMENSE INFLUENCE, SHAPING IRAN'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WITH A FIRM HAND. HIS PRESIDENCY WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT STRENGTHENING IRAN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCING RELIANCE ON FOREIGN POWERS

and the stalwart ally, a steadfast defender of Iran's interests on the global stage. Russia and Turkey had lent their support to the rescue efforts, a testament to the enduring bonds forged between nations in times of crisis.

Meanwhile, in distant New Delhi, Raisi's passing was met with a mixture of sorrow and reflection. India had enjoyed a burgeoning partnership with Iran under his leadership, particularly through collaborative efforts at the Chabahar Port. His absence would be keenly felt in the corridors of diplomacy, where his influence had helped shape the course of history. But perhaps most intriguing were the whispers of conspiracy surrounding Raisi's untimely demise. Some speculated that external forces were at play, seeking to destabilise Iran and undermine its leadership. Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, was mentioned in hushed tones, its shadowy hand suspected of orchestrating the tragedy. As the world mourned the loss of Ebrahim Raisi, it also grappled with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. His death cast a pall of uncertainty over Iran's future, raising questions about the country's leadership and its place on the global stage. But amidst the darkness, there remained a glimmer of hope, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. For in the legacy of Ebrahim Raisi, there lay the seeds of inspiration, a reminder that even in the face of tragedy, the indomitable spirit of humanity endures, ready to rise again, stronger and more determined than ever before.

Raisi's sudden demise not only revealed the depth of his ultra-conservative beliefs but also showcased his unwavering commitment to populism, positioning him as a champion of the people

and the right-hand man of Ayatollah Khamenei. As the Ayatollah's trusted confidant, Raisi wielded immense influence, shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies with a firm hand. His presidency was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Iran's economic independence and reducing reliance on foreign powers. He focused on bolstering the country's industrial base, improving infrastructure and promoting technological innovation.

On the international front, Raisi pursued a policy of strategic partnerships, particularly with Russia and China. These alliances were seen as a counterbalance to Western influence and as a means of securing economic and military support. Raisi's administration also prioritised the expansion of Iran's influence in regional conflicts, providing support to allied groups in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. His efforts to position Iran as a regional leader were often viewed through the lens of resistance against Western hegemony.

Despite his achievements, Raisi's tenure was not without controversy. His hardline stance on social and political issues drew criticism from both domestic and international observers. Human rights organisations frequently condemned his administration for its treatment of political dissidents and minority groups. The suppression of protests and the enforcement of strict social codes were seen as hallmarks of his governance.

Raisi's death left a nation at a crossroads. The mourning period was marked by both grief and reflection, as Iranians contemplated the future of their country without the man who had steered it through turbulent times. The

question of succession loomed large, with potential candidates vying for the position of leadership. The uncertainty surrounding Iran's political future was palpable, with analysts speculating on the potential shifts in policy and power dynamics.

In the international arena, Raisi's passing was met with a range of reactions. Allies expressed their condolences and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining strong ties with Iran. In contrast, adversaries viewed his death as an opportunity to reassess their strategies towards the country. The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, already fraught with complexity, faced the prospect of further upheaval. Despite the challenges, there was a sense of resilience among the Iranian populace. The nation's history of overcoming adversity served as a reminder of its enduring strength. Raisi's legacy, with its blend of conservatism, populism and strategic acumen, would continue to influence the country's trajectory. His vision of an Iran that stands firm against external pressures and champions the cause of Shia Islam would remain a guiding principle for future leaders. As the world continued to navigate the aftermath of Raisi's death, one thing was clear: his impact on Iran and the broader Middle East would be felt for years to come. The region, shaped by his policies and leadership, would continue to evolve, reflecting the enduring legacy of a man whose life and career were as multifaceted as the history of the land he loved. In the end, Ebrahim Raisi's story was a testament to the complexities of leadership in a region where past and present are forever intertwined.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

Rajasthan healthcare challenges despite Government efforts

The Government's health programmes fail to sufficiently support rural women and girls affected by anaemia, a significant public health concern

In Rajasthan, the healthcare system is facing significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Despite numerous Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and quality, the benefits of these programs are not reaching their intended targets.



NASEEM BANO

This issue is especially pronounced among women and adolescent girls suffering from anaemia. While the State Government has enacted the Right to Health Act and conducts monthly campaigns to combat anaemia, these efforts have yet to bring about substantial improvements in the health sector across rural Rajasthan. An example of this can be seen in the village of Manoharpura located just four kilometres

from the heritage city of Udaipur. This village falls under the Badgaon Panchayat and has a population of around one thousand. Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, the village has a low level of education, which impacts the awareness of its residents. Despite its proximity to the district headquarters, Manoharpura lags significantly in the health sector. Many families in the village lack even basic identification documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare services.

The reason for not having documents is that most children in the village were born at home rather than in hospitals, resulting in the absence of birth certificates and Aadhar cards. For young girls

and women, the State Government has launched the 'I Am Shakti Udaan Yojana'. This scheme aims to empower economically weaker women and girls and the goal is to include about 2.8



million women and adolescents in this benefit by 2024. As part of this scheme, menstruating girls and women aged 11 to 45 receive sanitary pads. However, most adolescent girls and women miss

out on this benefit. Due to both a lack of awareness and poverty, many girls still use dirty clothes during menstruation instead of buying pads. Additionally, about half of the adolescent girls and women in the village suffer from anaemia, despite the State Government's monthly Shakti Diwas events aimed at eradicating anaemia in Rajasthan. It is important to note that various activities are organised under this campaign to reduce anaemia rates among children, women and adolescents. 'Shakti Diwas' events are held at Anganwadi centres, Government schools, health and wellness centres, sub-health centres, primary health centres, CHCs, dispensaries and sub-district and district hospitals. These

events include anaemia screenings, haemoglobin tests and treatment, distribution of iron tablets and activities to raise awareness and promote behaviour change regarding anaemia. On 'Shakti Diwas', targeted activities are conducted for children aged 6 months to 59 months, out-of-school children aged 5 to 9 years, adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and married women aged 20 to 24 years. Efforts are also made to combat anaemia in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. However, this issue extends beyond Manoharpura village to the entire Udaipur district, where ineffective implementation has affected district rankings. During the health department's monthly review

meeting last November, the CEO Kirti Rathore expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. She emphasised the urgent need to ensure that benefits reach all children, adolescents and women and to strictly enforce measures to make the district anaemia-free. These shortcomings reveal that Manoharpura residents are still not receiving full healthcare benefits and the village has not met its health targets. Addressing this requires both administrative action and increased community awareness, involving as many families as possible.

(The writer is a social worker from Grameen Awam Samajik Vikas Sansthan, Ajmer; views are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold, silver retreat from record levels amid profit taking

Gold and silver prices retreated from record highs in the national capital on Tuesday, with the yellow metal plunging by Rs 550 per 10 grams due to profit-taking and weak global trends. According to HDFC Securities, gold prices were impacted by hawkish comments from one of the US Fed Reserve members, who suggested that interest rates will need to continue at current levels for a longer period to bring inflation back to target. Gold prices declined by Rs 550 to Rs 74,650 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 75,200 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also declined Rs 1,600 to Rs 94,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 96,100 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets were trading at Rs 74,650 per 10 grams, down by Rs 550 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,420 per ounce, down US\$ 22 from the previous close.



Rupee rises 6 paise against US\$ as crude oil prices ease

The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.31 against the US dollar on Tuesday following a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and softening crude oil prices in international markets. However, a sluggish trend in the domestic equity markets restricted the sharp upside in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 83.32 and touched an intraday high of 83.26 and a low of 83.36. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), a gain of 6 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 83.37 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Monday on account of general elections. "A decline in crude oil prices and fresh foreign inflows also supported the rupee. US Dollar softened on rate cut expectations by Fed but hawkish comments by Fed officials supported the US dollar at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.



India's global travel & tourism index rank up at 39th: WEF index

India's rank on the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 has risen to 39th place, with global tourism activities returning to pre-pandemic levels, the annual report showed on Tuesday. While the US topped the list, India is ranked highest in South Asia and among the lower-middle-income economies, the WEF said. India was ranked 54th in the previously published index in 2021, though changes made to the index parameters limit its comparability to earlier years. After the US, Spain, Japan, France and Australia figure among the top five in the 2024 list. The index, prepared in collaboration with the University of Surrey, showed India is highly price-competitive (18th) and boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground and Port (25th) infrastructure. In particular, India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th) and Non-Leisure (9th) Resources help drive travel, and the country is only one of three to score in the top 10 for all the resource pillars, the WEF said.



Sensex edges lower nearly 53 pts amid weak trends

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by nearly 53 points in a volatile trade on Tuesday amid weak trends from Asian and European markets and fresh foreign fund outflows. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31 as 18 of its constituents declined while 12 ended with gains. The index gyrated around 426 between a high of 74,189.19 and a low of 73,762.37 in day trade. The broader Nifty of NSE, however, closed higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05, driven by gains in metal shares. As many as 27 Nifty shares declined while 23 closed with gains.

India on cusp of long-awaited economic take-off: RBI

India is on the cusp of long-awaited take-off on the back of rising aggregate demand, and non-food spending in rural economy, according to the Reserve Bank of India May Bulletin released on Tuesday. The outlook for the global economy is turning fragile as the descent of inflation is stalling, re-igniting risks to global financial stability, said an article on 'State of the Economy' published in the Bulletin. Capital flows have become volatile as nervous investors turn risk averse, it added. The article is prepared by a team led by Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. The article further said "there is a growing optimism that India is on the cusp of a long-awaited economic take-



The article further said "there is a growing optimism that India is on the cusp of a long-awaited economic take-off" as recent indicators are pointing to a quickening of the momentum of aggregate demand.

off" as recent indicators are pointing to a quickening of the momentum of aggregate demand. It notes that for the first time in at least two years, rural demand for fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) has outpaced urban markets -- in the quarter just gone by. FMCG volume growth of 6.5 per cent was driven by rural growth of 7.6 per cent relative to urban growth of 5.7 per cent on the back of robust demand for home and personal care products. Turning to private investment, for listed private manufacturing companies, retained earnings remained the major source of funds during the second half of 2023-24, it said. Results that have been declared by listed corporate so-

far indicate that they closed the financial year 2023-24 with the highest growth in quarterly revenues registered in January-March 2024 year-on-year as well as sequentially. "A modest easing of headline inflation in the reading for April 2024 confirmed our expectation that an uneven pace of alignment with the target is underway," the authors said.

India to be US\$ 1 trn digital economy by FY28

IndiaAI mission value doubled to Rs 20k cr: IT Min

India's digital economy is growing at 2.8 per cent per annum and is expected to reach US\$ 1 trillion by 2027-28, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said at an outreach programme. The minister further said the value of the IndiaAI mission will be doubled to Rs 20,000 crore from Rs 10,000 crore. The government earlier expected India to reach the US\$ 1 trillion-mark by 2026-27 but the target has been moved by a year due to various reasons, including the Covid-19 pandemic, he said. "Digital economy is growing at the rate of 2.8 per cent because of the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His vision laid down in 2015 has



played out well. We are already the fastest growing digital economy of the world. We are aiming to be US\$ 1 trillion digital economy by 2027-28," Chandrasekhar said. He was speaking at "Vishesh Sampark Abhiyan" on Monday evening at Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri's official residence. The event was attended by leaders of about 300 ITs, startups and the technology industry. The minister said the prime minister has already approved Rs 1 lakh crore as seed fund, which will be invested in research and development for fuel innovation and India AI mission with a total value of Rs 20,000 crore.

'Baggage delivery time at 6 major airports improves significantly'

The baggage delivery time at Delhi, Mumbai and four other major airports has improved significantly in the last four months, with more than 90 per cent of the passengers getting their baggage arriving within 30 minutes of an aircraft landing, according to the civil aviation ministry. The ministry has also advised all domestic and international airlines operating at other airports to improve baggage delivery timings. In January, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) started an exercise to boost the baggage delivery

system of the domestic airlines at the country's six major airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The exercise under the aegis of the civil aviation ministry was started after it was noticed that baggage was getting delivered late after the landing of a plane. As per the global standards prescribed by IATA (International Air Transport Association) and the provision under the OMDA (Operation, Management and Development Agreement) with airports, baggage should be delivered to passengers within 30 minutes of the arrival of the aircraft.



Govt needs to further expand PLI scheme to make India 'Global Drone Hub': Report

The government needs to expand the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and develop an ecosystem to realise the goal of making India a global drone hub, a report said on Tuesday. An incentive of Rs 120 crore spread over three financial years was provided for Indian manufacturers of drone and drone components under the PLI Scheme notified on September 30, 2021. As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation projections, the Indian drone manufacturing industry is expected to reach Rs 900 crore by 2025 from just Rs 60 crore in 2020-21, according to a study conducted by Nexgen Exhibitions.



It also noted that the Indian drone market is expected to grow at 22.15 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) during the 2024-30 period. With innovation and expansion of its application portfolio, India has the potential of becoming the global drone hub by 2030, it stated. The study highlighted that the key to realising India's

vision lies in boosting the domestic drone ecosystem. Other major factors are the expansion of the PLI scheme, government procurement, and pushing the Make in India initiative, it stated. The application of drones is already proven in the fields of Border Surveillance, Rescue Disaster Management, and COVID management etc. The drone services industry's operations in logistics, data processing, and traffic management etc are far bigger in scale and will outshine the other related sectors very soon, the report highlighted. Around 250 drones and unmanned systems manufacturers, anti-drone radar, guns and jammers innovators, component, wires, motors, sensors,

CCTV suppliers, software developers for drones and unmanned systems, drones as service providing companies, GPS and Geospatial solutions providers participated in the survey. Institutes developing drones, defence research labs manufacturing drones, and aerospace companies like flight control, and simulator developers were also part of the survey. The survey was conducted across 10 states - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The survey also reached out to foreign companies from the Middle East, Europe, the UK, the US and Australia.



BHEL net profit falls over 25 pc to Rs 489.6 cr in Q4

State-owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) on Tuesday reported an over 25 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 489.62 crore in the March quarter, mainly due to higher expenses. Its consolidated net profit stood at Rs 658.02 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2023, according to a regulatory filing. Total expenses of the firm rose to Rs 7,794.11 crore in the quarter from Rs 7,411.64 crore

in the same period a year ago. Total income in the quarter rose marginally to Rs 8,416.84 crore in the quarter from Rs 8,338.61 crore in the year-ago period. The board has recommended a final dividend at the rate of 12.50 per cent or 25 paise per share with a face value of Rs 2 each on paid-up share capital of the company for fiscal year 2023-24, it stated. Its consolidated net profit in the fiscal 2023-24 also declined to Rs 282.22 crore from Rs 654.12 crore in 2022-23.

IREDA mulls FPO to raise funds to meet future capital requirement

State-owned non-banking finance firm Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) is mulling follow on public offer (FPO) as well as perpetual debt to meet its future capital requirements and onward lending for renewables. The Rs 2,150 crore initial public offering (IPO) was oversubscribed about 39 times in November 2023. Addressing a media round table discussion, IREDA Chairman and Managing Director Pradip Kumar Das said the company is planning an FPO as well as perpetual

debt for meeting future capital requirements of the company and onward lending mainly for renewable energy projects. He further said the loan disbursements are expected during the current fiscal year in view of the government's push for renewable energy projects in the country. He said the company's loan

disbursements increased from Rs 16,071 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 21,639 crore in 2022-23 and further to Rs 25,089 crore in 2023-24. Loan disbursements by IREDA increased about 16 per cent in 2023-24, he said, adding that the company has a borrowing plan of Rs 24,200 crore for the current fiscal.



Sebi amends rule to facilitate ease of doing biz for cos planning IPOs

To facilitate ease of doing business for companies planning IPOs, Sebi has said any change in the size of offer for sale (OFS) requiring fresh filing will be based on only one of the criteria -- either issue size in rupee or number of shares. Further, promoter group entities and non-individual shareholders holding more than 5 per cent of the post-offer equity share capital can be permitted to contribute towards the shortfall in minimum promoters' contribution (MPC) without being identi-

fied as a promoter, according to a notification issued by Sebi. Companies promoted by entrepreneurs often have sev-

er rounds of funding prior to listing their equity shares on the stock exchanges. In such situations, the promoters' holding may fall short of the minimum promoter contribution i.e., 20 per cent of the post-offer equity share capital. While the current ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) rule permits certain categories of investors to contribute equity shares held by them towards the shortfall, further flexibility has been provided. In addition, equity shares from the conversion of compulsorily convertible securities held for a year before filing the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) are to be considered for meeting MPC requirements.



Revamping of BOT is tactical move to attract private capex: Ind-Ra

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Tuesday said the revamping of the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model is a tactical move to attract private capex, which is estimated to surpass Rs 1 trillion by 2030, as per the government. According to the rating agency, during the past seven years, the government has successfully rolled out about 400 Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) road projects in India, worth over Rs 4 trillion. This approach has balanced risk appropriately between private and public partners, thereby boosting public-private partnership activity in the sector. Also, the government's enhanced focus on monetisation via the National

Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has attracted foreign investors, including various sovereign wealth funds and pension funds, it added. Ind-Ra asserted that developers need to be mindful of aggressive bidding, taking projects beyond the appetite of their balance sheet, and overestimating toll revenue for green-field projects to protect them from volatilities in the longer run. The road sector in India has been at the forefront of performance and innovation and has played a crucial role in shaping the country's economic growth trajectory, with a CAGR of about 14% over the past decade, it said. As per Ind-Ra, BOT model of road development will drive investments worth Rs 0.4 trillion-Rs 0.5 trillion in FY25

Market cap of BSE-listed firms hits US\$ 5-trillion milestone

The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the US\$ 5-trillion milestone for the first time on Tuesday. At the close of trade, the total valuation of the exchange-listed companies stood at an all-time high of Rs 4,14,62,306.56 crore (US\$ 4.97 trillion), the BSE data showed. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 73,953.31. However, during the day, it hit

a high of 74,189.19, rallying 183.25 points, or 0.24 per cent. "The market capitalisation of companies listed on the BSE has crossed a record US\$ 5 trillion for the first time -- hitting a fresh high on May 21. India became the fifth largest market-cap country after the US, China, Japan, and Hong Kong," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the US\$ 4-trillion milestone for the first time



ever on November 29 last year. The m-cap of all listed companies on the BSE touched the US\$ 3-trillion mark on May 24, 2021.

The total valuation of exchange-listed companies went past the US\$ 1 trillion level on May 28, 2007. The journey from US\$ 1 trillion to US\$ 1.5 trillion was covered in 2,566 days, or just over seven years on June 6, 2014. The m-cap of listed companies reached US\$ 2 trillion on July 10, 2017 -- taking 1,130 days from the US\$ 1.5 trillion level. It took ten years for the exchange to reach from US\$ 1 trillion level to US\$ 2 trillion in market capitalisation. From

there, it took 1,255 days to go past the US\$ 2.5-trillion mark on December 16, 2020. So far this year, the BSE benchmark has climbed 1,713.05 points, or 2.37 per cent. It hit the all-time peak of 75,124.28 on April 9 this year. In Tuesday's trade, among the Sensex components, Nestle, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HDFC Bank, and Axis Bank were the major laggards.

Sanjay Dutt bids adieu to *Welcome To The Jungle* post shooting for 15 days

Welcome to the Jungle has generated a lot of interest since the project's announcement. The film features a star-studded ensemble and has been making news ever since. Unfortunately, another piece of news has emerged from the set. According to reports, Sanjay Dutt has left the comedic caper! Sanjay Dutt has left the project after approximately 15 days of shooting. A source said, "Sanjay Dutt has claimed date troubles as the reason for his departure. He has relayed all of the difficulties to his great friend Akshay, who has taken the arguments into consideration and has no bad blood. Sanjay Dutt believed that the *Welcome To The Jungle* shoot was unplanned, with too many modifications to the screenplay, disrupting his shooting schedule. As a result, he has decided to part ways." Sanjay Dutt has already shot for 15 days, and the producers are unsure whether to keep what he has or reshoot it entirely. According to the source, "Sanjay Dutt has shot some funny portions of *Welcome To The Jungle* in the first schedule, and the makers are tempted to retain his scenes and credit Sanjay Dutt for a guest appearance." The film *Welcome to the Jungle* went on floors in December 2023 in Mumbai. Akshay Kumar, Raveena Tandon, Disha Patani, Jacqueline Fernandez, Lara Dutta, Suniel Shetty, Paresh Rawal, Arshad Warsi, Tusshar Kapoor, Rajpal Yadav, Johnny Lever, Kiku Sharda, Krushna Abhishek, Rahul Dev, and singer-brothers Daler Mehndi and Mika Singh star in the film.



SUNNY DEOL AND AYUSHMANN KHURRANA'S *BORDER 2* SHOOT WILL BEGIN IN OCTOBER

Sunny Deol will begin filming the sequel to his 1997 smash *Border* in October 2024, following the success of *Gadar 2*. The film also features Ayushmann Khurrana. Anurag Singh directed the film, which is produced by JP Dutta, Nidhi Dutta, and Bhushan Kumar. A source close to the *Border 2* team stated, "The team behind *Border 2* has been working relentlessly to prepare everything, and it's been a long time coming since they wanted to do justice to the scale of the original film. Now that the preparations are nearly complete, the team will begin shooting. As of today, the team will begin shooting in October."

Border 2, starring Sunny Deol, was shelved in 2015!

On The Ranveer Show podcast, the actor stated, "Sunne toh mujhe bhi aaya hai (I've also heard that they're making *Border 2*) (laughs). *Ye hum bahut pehle karte wale 2015 mein*. If I don't have a movie, I'm not going to get a banana. *Ab sab bol rahe hain humein karni*. (We were supposed to start it much earlier, in 2015. But then my films failed, so people were afraid to produce them. Now, everyone wants to make it." Sunny Deol added, "Those characters were really lovely. When I watch a film today, I want to see an extension of those characters. I feel like doing it, but the story should lend a justification to that character. So that those who come to watch the film and hope it'll be fun, they're not disappointed, like they're getting that fun in my film *Gadar 2*."

According to reports, *Border 2* would be released on the Republic Day weekend of 2026.



Keanu Reeves to star in *The Entertainment System Is Down*

According to reports, A24 has signed an eight-figure deal to acquire the US rights to Ruben Ostlund's film *The Entertainment System Is Down*. This agreement was signed with the Paris-based co-production office, which launched worldwide sales for the project at the Cannes Film Market. Currently, information on the cast and crew is limited. Ruben Ostlund directs and produces. The film stars Keanu Reeves, Samantha Morton, Kirsten Dunst, and Nicholas Braun. It was made by Philippe Bober and Erik Hemmendorff! Ostlund and producer Erik Hemmendorff planned a 70-day shoot on a studio lot, using a genuine Boeing 747. Ostlund stated this at a Cannes event organised by Sweden's Film i Väst. According to reports, Ostlund plans to premiere the movie in Cannes in 2026. However, because the film is still in production, it is prudent to take this news with care. Who knows what surprises lie ahead in the production process? Keanu Reeves has future projects, including *John Wick Presents: Ballerina* and *Good Fortune*. However, numerous films, including *Rally Car*, *Rain*, and *Past Midnight*, are still in development limbo.

Julianne Moore speaks about the latest works, which feature more women of different ages!



Hollywood actor Julianne Moore says it's "exciting" to see women represented at different ages on screen today. Talking about the latest works, which feature more women of different ages, she also noted that the number of the number of women directors and camera operators has increased.

However, the actor pointed out that it is still far from "gender parity."

"Meryl (Streep) said this too the other day—this idea that when she was 40, she thought it was all going to be over. I think we're now seeing women represented through all stages of their lives, which is very exciting." "Whereas before, there were none. But we're still really far from gender parity," the actor, 63, told.

Moore said it is wonderful that young actors are now also producing their work. "I think that expectations have changed about what's possible for women to achieve. Certainly, when I was Sydney's (Sweeney) age, that's not something I ever considered," she added. Moore debuted back in 1984 with the television series *The Edge of Night*. She has been a part of projects like *Gloria Bell*, *The End of the Affair*, *Chloe*, and *Non-Stop*, to name a few. She won an Oscar in the best actress category for her role in *Still Alice*.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



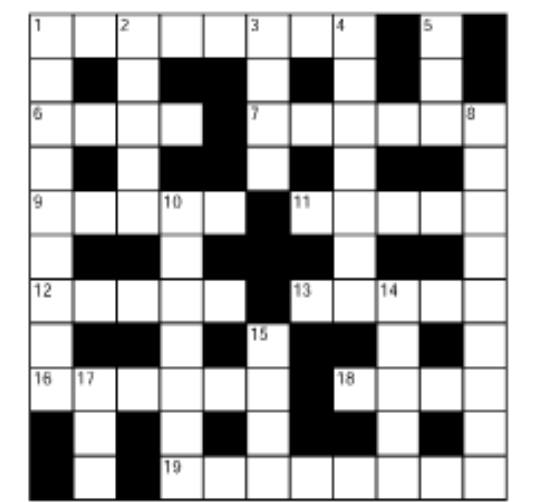
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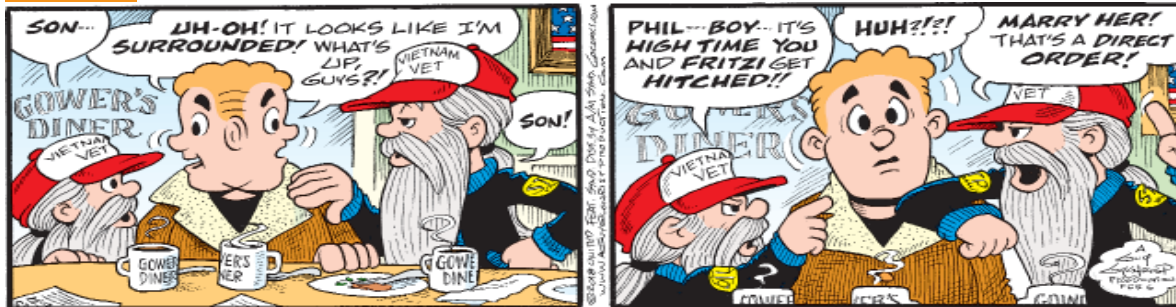
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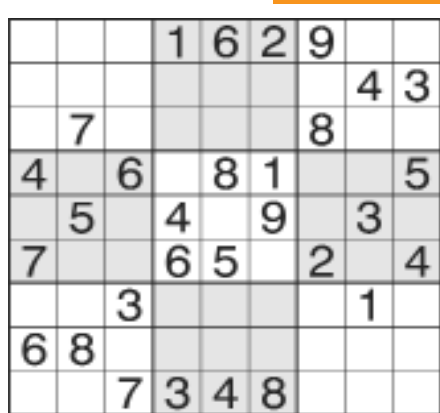
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- 1 An extinct animal
- 7 Get away from
- 9 Beneath
- 11 Depart
- 12 Footwear
- 13 Doing a job with something
- 16 Split into smaller parts
- 18 Something that helps you find the answer to a puzzle
- 19 Obstinate
- 4 Soaring fireworks
- 5 Jump along on one foot
- 8 A tree that doesn't shed its leaves
- 10 Foes
- 14 A house made of hard snow
- 15 Restaurant's meal list
- 17 Liquid inside a pen

DOWN

- 1 With your appearance changed so that people will not recognise you
- 2 Labelled
- 3 High playing cards



Vijayawada

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Wednesday
May 22, 2024

'I'VE ENCOUNTERED A LOT OF REJECTIONS; IT'S BEEN FRUSTRATING'

Srishty Rode, who recently made her film debut with *Gabru Gang*, speaks candidly with *The Pioneer* about her career and recalls rejections.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Srishty Rode, who made her acting debut in 2010 with *Yeh Ishq Haaye* and swiftly rose to prominence with roles in hit dramas such as *Choti Bahu 2*, *Punar Vivah-Ek Nayi Umeed*, and *Ishqbaaz*, has progressed significantly as an actor over time. She claims she has learned to better understand her characters and add depth to her performances.

"One significant thing I've learnt is that an actor should be willing to experiment, learn, and explore new areas, as each assignment teaches you a lot. This helps you improve as an actor."

Recently, as she was seen in *Gabru Gang*, she shared, "I didn't have time to prepare for Ginni because I was on *Big Boss*, and within a week, I signed with *Gabru Gang*. We flew to Amritsar and started shooting, and I had no idea what to do. My director and producer wanted me to be exactly who I am in real life and how people view me in the *Bigg Boss* house. They just wanted me to be like 'Srishty.'"

The sports drama film, *Gabru Gang* is written and directed by Sameer Khan, which stars Srishty, Abhishek Duhan, Abhilash Kumar, Avtar Gill, and Mukesh Bhatt.

The film focuses on the sport of kite flying, and she emphasises, "Kite flying is more than just a traditional practice in Punjab. Although this film was set in Punjab, kite flying is a popular activity around the world. Many people mistook the film for a Punjabi film due to its heavy Punjabi flavour. However, it was a Hindi film filmed in Punjab. As a Punjabi, it was my first time staying in Punjab for so long, and I found it to be a valuable learning experience. The friendly people left an indelible effect on me."

She says she has not done anything particularly challenging yet, but she found *Shobha Somnath Ki* to be rather demanding. It was about a warrior princess who had to learn a variety of new skills, including horseback riding, sword fighting, and speaking in 'Shudh Hindi'.

According to her, "Talking in the show was itself a big task, and for a very long time, I spoke in a very similar language, which sounded nice, but a lot of hard work went into it as the role demanded a specific kind of walk and way of speaking."

Another episode, *Punar Vivah: Ek Nayi Umeed*, was challenging for her since it was so unlike who she is in real life. It was unusual for her to play such an emotional role!

She also had to mentally prepare for *Bigg Boss*. The most difficult moment for an actor is the audition process. As Srishty recalls, "I've encountered a lot of rejection, been frustrated, and considered leaving the industry because things didn't go my way. But then you have to push yourself. I've done it. One must believe in their abilities and be determined. That has helped me remain focused."

Manjari Chaturvedi cherishes her first lead role in the youth-based sitcom *Yeh Ishq Haaye*. I had always wanted to be a part of a show on Star One," she says, adding, "and I was fortunate to be given the opportunity. It was a very youth-oriented show, and my show was one of the last to air before the channel suspended operations."

Manjari, she claims, was quite similar to her real-world persona: exuberant, full of life, and determined. "Working on the show was really delightful, and I miss it a lot. I'd given everything to the character and the play. I recall working for 48 hours straight, remaining on set, feeling poorly, but still working with great excitement because it was my first show. There were no time limits on the shoot. I even ended up in the hospital but continued to do dubbing from there."

After playing many characters, including a joyful girl, a warrior princess, and a regular bahu, the *Pavitra Rishta* actor goes on to say, "I find portraying a dark character challenging, but I am confident that I will excel at it."

She also admits, "One mistake I made was taking a break after every project, which I should not have done. When you finish a project, more proposals come in right away, so it's better to accept them than to wait for something wonderful to come along and be picky."

Reintroducing cast iron cookery to the modern kitchen

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY

Following the pandemic, most people are returning to their traditional origins to reinstate science and old methods of life in a world of advanced modern technology. Ruchika Ruthi, the founder of Aarogyam, has restored cast iron cooking to the modern kitchen, drawing inspiration from an ancient lifestyle.

Though hailing from Rajasthan, Ruchika was brought up in Hyderabad. The cast iron business is not something new, because her father had run it back in 1991. "Apart from cast iron, we are also into the solar business," she shares as *The Pioneer* interacts with her. "I studied in Hyderabad for my engineering, i.e., electronics and communication. I never imagined that my family business would become my back-up and gain fame because of my products."

The fact that our ancestors lived their lives well and healthy without any technology has certainly been quite surprising. And undeniably, post-pandemic, people have been very concerned about their health, tracing their steps back to past habits. Well, and so, this was the inspiration behind the launch of Aarogyam, which mainly caters to cast iron cookery.

"I believe that cooking is more than just making food. It's a way to nurture our bodies, connect with loved ones, and live a more sustainable existence. "In India alone we have more than 10 million cases of iron deficiency anemia every year and the prevalence of anemia in South Asia is the highest in the world. Women often feel tired because of reasons they aren't able to figure out - the leading cause of iron deficiency is most commonly found in pregnant women, ladies, kids and children. Our products are naturally non-stick, contain no dangerous chemicals, will endure for generations, and are engineered to uniformly disperse heat, guaranteeing that

your food is cooked to perfection," she added.

The pandemic has become a game changer for her by raising health consciousness among people. "People are ready to switch from aluminum or Teflon-coated cookware to cast iron cookware despite its weight and costly prices. They are well aware of the negative effects of cooking on aluminum-coated or Teflon-coated cookware. Also, I have witnessed the majority of families using cast iron cookware, which was passed down via generations."

Having not faced many challenges in her entrepreneurial journey except for the weight of her products, she shares that they also manufacture and sell industrial products, showcases, and grills made out of cast iron. Recently, she also added cast iron furniture, which is useful in farmhouses.

"WE Hub aided me in networking and making connections. It also allowed me to gain some exposure in share recruitment. My future goal is to make Aarogyam a household name and the synonym for cast iron cookery," she shares on a concluding note.



With the aim of embracing a sustainable lifestyle, we bring to you Aarogyam, which aims to enhance your cooking experience while promoting your well-being.

FROM BUMP TO BABY A GUIDE FOR SEAMLESS PREGNANCY AND CHILDCARE

Bringing a new life into the world is an exhilarating journey filled with anticipation and joy. However, it can also be a time of uncertainty and questions, especially for first-time parents. From the moment you discover you're expecting to the day your little one arrives and beyond, there's a wealth of information and products available to help make the transition smoother. Here's a comprehensive guide to the essentials for a seamless pregnancy and childcare journey.

Prenatal care and nutrition

The foundation of a healthy pregnancy begins with prenatal care and proper nutrition. Regular check-ups with an obstetrician or midwife are crucial for monitoring the baby's growth and ensuring the mother's well-being. Additionally, maintaining a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients like folic acid, iron, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids supports the baby's development and helps prevent complications.

Comfort and support

As the body undergoes significant changes during pregnancy, it's essential to prioritise comfort and support. Maternity clothing, including stretchy pants, supportive bras, and comfortable footwear, can alleviate discomfort and accommodate a growing belly. Pregnancy pillows are also invaluable for providing support while sleeping or lounging.

Preparing the nursery

Creating a nurturing environment for your baby begins with designing a functional and cozy nursery. Essentials include a crib or bassinet, changing table, comfortable chair for feeding or bonding, and ample storage for diapers, clothes, and other baby essentials. Decorate the space with soothing colours and soft lighting to promote relaxation and sleep.

Baby gear

Investing in quality baby gear can simplify daily routines and enhance caregiving experiences. Must-have items include a stroller, car seat, baby carrier or sling for hands-free mobility, diaper bag stocked with essentials, and a safe sleep environment such as a crib or bassinet. Researching product reviews and safety guidelines ensures you select the best options for your needs.

Self-care for parents

Amidst the excitement of preparing for a new arrival, it's essential for parents to prioritise self-care. Taking time for relaxation, exercise, and activities that bring joy helps reduce stress and promote overall well-being. Support from friends, family, or support groups can also provide emotional encouragement and practical assistance during this transformative time.

Postpartum recovery and support

The postpartum period brings its own set of challenges and adjustments as parents adapt to caring for a newborn while recovering from childbirth. Adequate rest, nutritious meals, and gentle exercise support physical healing and emotional well-being. Additionally, seeking support from doctors, lactation consultants, and peer groups can address concerns and provide guidance on breastfeeding, newborn care, and managing postpartum emotions.

Bonding and attachment

Building a strong bond with your baby is essential for their emotional and cognitive development. Skin-to-skin contact, responsive caregiving, and engaging in activities like singing, reading, and playing together foster attachment and communication. Cherishing these precious moments strengthens the parent-child relationship and lays the foundation for a lifetime of love and connection.

Parenting philosophy

Every parent approaches childcare with their unique values, beliefs, and parenting style. Whether you choose breastfeeding or formula feeding, co-sleeping or sleep training, cloth diapers or disposables, it's essential to trust your instincts and do what feels right for your family. Being flexible and open-minded allows you to adapt to your baby's needs and preferences while embracing the joys and challenges of parenthood.

Final thoughts

The journey from bump to baby is a transformative experience filled with excitement, challenges, and endless possibilities. By prioritising prenatal care, education, self-care, and support, parents can navigate this journey with confidence and grace. Remember to cherish each moment, celebrate milestones, and embrace the adventure of parenthood with an open heart and mind.

(The author, Dr. Shilpi Sachdev, is a Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynecology, at Apollo Cradle and Children's Hospital.)





RR desperate to arrest slide against RCB

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday. The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad.

On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought their way back from the brink of elimination. After losing seven of their first eight games this season, the team led by Faf du Plessis hit a dream run and finally knocked out defending champions Chennai Super Kings a few nights ago to seal a playoffs berth.

If Rajasthan Royals are coming off four losses and a rained-off game, RCB have notched up six consecutive wins to sound a warning to their rivals that they mean business in the playoffs.

RR, the 2008 IPL winners, suddenly find themselves as the underdogs, when a couple of weeks ago they were red-hot favourites.

When on song, Rajasthan Royals have shown they are unbeatable, but the last four games have exposed frailties in their batting and bowling.

The exit of Jos Buttler has taken a lot of firepower out of their batting and a lot will depend on Yashasvi Jaiswal



(348 runs), skipper Samson (504) and Riyan Parag (531) to halt the slide. Samson and Parag will once again be expected to deliver the goods for RR, with England's Tom Kohler-Cadmore expected to partner Jaiswal in what seems like a frail opening pair going by form and experience.

Shimron Hetmyer is expected to be available for the contest giving Rajasthan solidity in the lower order, which has not made a big

contribution with the bat this season. RRs strong bowling lineup could come in handy given the venue for the Eliminator has not been a batting paradise like the other grounds, where shorter boundaries and docile tracks have made the bowlers' job tougher.

The 200-run mark has been breached only twice in 12 innings this season at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which means the team having a disciplined

bowling attack and a strong batting lineup is more likely to win here. On the other hand, RCB's Virat Kohli continues to be the highest run-getter this season with 708 runs from 14 matches and could make the difference in the contest.

After initial struggles, RCB skipper Faf du Plessis has also found form with the bat to forge a dominating partnership at the top with Kohli, while Rajat Patidar (five half-

centuries this season) has also given solidity at the top. RCB have not been impacted much by the exit of England's Will Jacks, while veteran Dinesh Karthik is firing on all cylinders with a strike rate in excess of 195 lower down the order.

In their last match, left-arm seamer Yash Dayal turned around his fortunes to dish out a splendid final over against CSK to deny them a win and lead RCB into the playoffs.

For a bowler who was devastated after conceding five consecutive sixes in an over last year, Dayal has proved his mettle this year.

TEAMS (FROM):

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c&wk), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.



McGurk, Short offer something different: Australia coach on pairs inclusion as travelling reserves for World Cup

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian cricket coach Andrew McDonald said on Tuesday that charismatic young batter Jake Fraser-McGurk and all-rounder Matthew Short have been added as travelling reserves with the squad for the T20 World Cup in the Americas because they bring something different to the table.

Fraser-McGurk, 22, in only his debut IPL season, gave an excellent display of explosive batsmanship for Delhi Capitals smashing four half-centuries in nine games at an astronomical strike rate exceeding 234.

He hit 330 runs, including 32 boundaries and 28 maximums, prompting several Australian greats to pitch for his inclusion in the 15-member squad. But after being overlooked for the World Cup in the West Indies and USA next month, he has been finally included as a travelling reserve.

"I think they're (Fraser-McGurk and Short) slightly different in what they offer. Fraser is an out-and-out opener and the way we've grown Matthew Short into the team is through the middle order and that spin (bowling) ability as well," McDonald told Sen Radio.

McDonald indicated that Short could come in handy in the event of Glenn Maxwell getting injured.

"We feel like he's (Short) a spinning all-rounder much like Glenn Maxwell if anything should move there, and obviously Jake Fraser-McGurk is an out-and-out top order player," added

McDonald. The two reserves will, however, not be able to play unless there is an injury in the squad.

The Australian team is set to fly out for the World Cup on Wednesday.

"Both exciting, I think they both add a lot. Those guys sit outside of the 15, the only way they can come onto the selection table is if there was to be an injury, we've got two options there depending on what we lose or what may unfold in terms of injuries," McDonald added.

The coach said that apart from the two players, Australia had several other options as well, should a player in the 15-member squad get injured or indisposed.

"We've also got some other options in Spencer Johnson, Xavier Bartlett that are playing in the UK as well, so if we were to lose a bowler those guys are up and running in the UK... and they can come in, it's only a short flight into the West Indies from England. On opener David Warner's fitness concerns, McDonald said the 37-year-old was doing fine.

"No, not at this stage. We believe he's fully fit, everything he says is he's fully fit, we know that he missed the last game for Delhi (Capitals in IPL), clearly that was a selection mechanism there with the way they want to play late in the tournament, I think he played the second last round... We have no fears he won't be fit and fully available."

Australia play their opening group stage match against Oman in Barbados on June 6.

OTHER SPORTS

Ekta wins gold with season's best effort in club throw at World Para Athletic Championships

PTI ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

India's Ekta Bhan secured the gold medal with a season's best throw of 20.12m in the women's F51 club throw competition at the World Para Athletic Championships here. A day after Deepthi Jeevanji clinched the gold medal in women's 400m T20 category race, Indian athletes continued their impressive run with Ekta producing the goods to finish in the top, while Kashish Lakra took the silver with an effort of 14.56m. Nadjet Boucherf of Algeria won the bronze with a score of 12.70m.

Ekta, a Haryana Civil Services (HCS) officer, had won a bronze medal in the Asian Para



Games China. The 38-year-old, who took up sports after her selection in the Haryana government as HCS officer, also won gold medal in the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta. She had also qualified

for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. Ekta wanted to pursue a career in medical stream but a tragic accident in 2003 cut short her dream. The accident happened near Kundli in Sonapat district when a truck overturned on her cab on the Delhi-Haryana border. While she suffered quadriplegic spinal cord injury and is wheelchair-bound ever since, six other students were killed in the accident.

On Monday, Deepthi, Para Asian Games gold medalist, had smashed a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race en route to her gold medal.

On Sunday, Nishad Kumar (T47 high jump) and 200m runner Preethi Pal (T35 200m race) won a silver and bronze respectively.

India's tally has now swelled to five medals — 2 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze.



Hockey Pro League: Indian men's, women's teams hope to make most of European leg

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Indian men's hockey team will hope to iron out the flaws ahead of the Paris Olympics, while the women's team under new skipper Salima Tete will look to overcome the disappointment of not qualifying for the Summer Games, when the gruelling European leg of the FIH Pro League commences here with matches against Argentina on Wednesday.

The men's team under drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh is coming into the tournament following a 0-5 Test series whitewash at the hands of Australia and would look to make the most of the opportunity in Europe to get back to winning ways ahead of the Paris Games.

"Undoubtedly, we are focused on the Olympics but we also need to give our best to finish as champions (in Pro League) and secure direct qualification for the 2026 Hockey World Cup as well," said Harmanpreet, whose team is currently placed third with 15 points from eight Pro League games.

Netherlands are leading the charts with 26 points (12 matches), while Australia are on 20 points (8 matches).

"To achieve both these targets (doing well ahead of Olympics and secure direct qualification for 2026 World Cup), we will strive to give our all on the pitch and win all our matches," the skipper added.

Besides Argentina, the Indian men's team will also test their Olympic preparations against Belgium, Germany and Great Britain.

The Indian women, currently placed sixth on the Pro League

table, have a chance to climb up the table when they take on world No.7 Argentina on Wednesday.

The world No.6 side has earned eight points from an equal number of games in the Pro League home leg, registering victories against the United States and Australia. Newly-appointed captain Salima said the friendlies against South Africa in India earlier this month had helped her team prepare for the European leg of the Pro League.

"We played practice matches against South Africa (in India) to prepare for these Hockey Pro League matches. The point difference between us and second-placed China is just seven points," said Tete in a Hockey India release.

"We (will) aim to close this gap in the remaining matches against Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain in a bid to finish as high as we can," she added.

China are placed second on the table with 15 points from eight games, while leaders Netherlands are on 36 points with an all-win record in 12 games.

Following the matches against Argentina, the women's team will play Belgium on May 23, while the men's side will take on the hosts a day later.

The women's and men's teams will face Belgium again on May 25.

India women and men will end their first half of the European tour with matches against Argentina on May 26, before moving on to the final leg in London where they play Germany on June 1 and 8 and take on hosts Great Britain on June 2 and 9.



Vennam fourth in rankings, takes India to second spot in qualifying round

PTI ■ YECHEON (SOUTH KOREA)

Reigning Asian Games champion Jyothi Surekha Vennam's fourth place finish lifted compound women's team to second spot in the qualifying rankings of the Archery World Cup Stage 2 that got underway here on Tuesday.

Fresh from winning a hat-trick of gold medals at the season-opening Shanghai leg of the World Cup last month, Jyothi missed the top-three spot in the rankings by just three points, finishing behind South Korea's Oh Yoonhyun, who shot 707.

Han Seungyeon took the pole position at 711, followed by Luxembourg's Mariya Shkolna one point adrift.

At eighth and 15th places respectively, Parnet Kaur (704) and world champion Aditi Swami (702) were the next best Indians as overall as a team India grabbed the second seed behind South Korea.

The Indian women's team will get a bye into the quarters

where they will face seventh seeded Italy. It was a forgettable outing for the compound men archers and Priyansh at 16th place in the leaderboard was the best among the Indians. Prathamesh Fuge and multiple World Cup gold medalist Abhishek Verma, who seemed to have past his prime, were the next best Indians finishing lowly at 20th and 24th places. It impacted the team ranking as they slipped to fourth place. Priyansh and Jyothi combined to get a fourth spot in the mixed team ranking as well.

The qualifiers for the recurve archers will begin on Wednesday.

Indian men's recurve team are coming back after upsetting South Korea for the first time in a World Cup final in the Shanghai leg in April.

India topped the medal standings at the Stage 1 World Cup with five gold medals, two silver and one bronze, pushing South Korea to second spot (two gold, three silver and two bronze medals).

Treesa, Gayatri enter second round of Malaysia Masters; Indians falter in singles qualification

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Indian shuttlers Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand progressed to the second round of women's doubles competition after securing a straight-game win over Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu-Hsun and Liang Ting Yu at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 here on Tuesday.

Commonwealth Games bronze medalists Treesa and Gayatri, seventh seeded, notched up a fine 21-14 21-10 win over Huang and Liang, ranked 104, in the round of 32. There were four Indians in men's singles qualification round but none could make the cut for the main draw.

Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, who won his



maiden BWF Super 100 title at Odisha Masters last December, beat Malaysia's Cheam June Wei 21-15 21-19 before going

down 21-13 20-22 13-21 to Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito. Ayush Shetty, a bronze medalist at the World Junior Championships, beat compatriot Kartikey Gulshan Kumar 21-7 21-14 but lost 21-23 21-16 17-21 to Thailand's Panitchaphon Teeraratrakul. Former World Junior Championships silver medalist S Sankar Subramanian suffered 12-21 17-21 to Rhustavito in the opening round of qualification.

In women's singles qualifiers, Tanya Hemant went down 21-23 8-21 to Lin Sih Yun of Chinese Taipei.

In women's doubles, Palak Arora and Unnati Hooda lost 10-21 5-21 to Chinese Taipei's Hsu Yin-Hui and Lin Jhij Yun to also bow out of the competition.

Paralympics champion Sumit defends F64 javelin world title, India jump to third

PTI ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

Reigning Paralympics champion Sumit Antil on Tuesday defended his F64 javelin throw world title while Thangavelu Mariyappan and Ekta Bhan also grabbed gold medals in their respective events as India jumped to third place in the World Para Athletics Championships here. With five medals won on a productive fifth day, India's tally swelled to 10 (4 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze) and the country is currently placed below China (15 gold, 13 silver, 13 bronze) and Brazil (14 gold, 6 silver, 5 bronze).

Antil, who had won gold medals in the Tokyo Paralympics and 2023 World Para Athletics Championships, sent his spear to a distance of 69.50m to stand on top of the podium.

The 25-year-old Haryana athlete thus continued his global domination in the F64 javelin event. He is the current world record holder also, courtesy his massive 73.29m throw while winning gold in the Para Asian Games in Hangzhou, China last year. He also holds the World Para Athletics Championships record of 70.83m which he had produced while winning the gold in the last edition in Paris in 2023. Compatriot Sandeep won the bronze medal in the same event with a throw of 60.41m. Sri Lanka's Dulan Kodithuwakku took the silver with a throw of 66.49m.

Antil was the leader all through the event in the nine-man field as he opened with a 68.17m effort before coming up with his day's best jump of 69.50m in the second attempt. His next four attempts read

64.04m, 65.58m, 69.03m and 68.08m. Sonipat's Antil wanted to pursue a career in wrestling, but in 2015, when he was 17, his motorbike was hit by a speeding truck while he was returning home from a tuition class. As a result, his left leg was amputated and he had to abandon his dream of becoming a wrestler. His father, employed in Indian Air Force, died when he was seven. Tokyo Paralympics silver winner Mariyappan also grabbed a gold in T63 high jump with a championship record of 1.88m. This was his first gold in a major event in eight years.

The 28-year-old Mariyappan won gold in T42 high jump in the 2016 Rio Paralympics and a silver in the Tokyo edition in 2021 in T63. He also won the silver in the T63 class in the

Hangzhou Para Asian Games last year. The T63 classification is for athletes with single through knee or above knee limb deficiency competing with a prosthesis. Americans Ezra Frech and Sam Grewe won silver and bronze with jumps of 1.85m and 1.82m respectively. Hailing from Salem district in Tamil Nadu, Mariyappan was raised by his daily wage labourer mother who also sells vegetables after his father abandoned the family. At the age of five, Mariyappan suffered permanent disability in his right leg when he was run over by a drunk bus driver while walking to school. Before taking up sport, he would do the job of newspaper hawk and work at construction sites to help his mother run the family.

KANNAPPA TEASER UNVEILED AT CANNES, TO RELEASE FOR AUDIENCE ON JUNE 13



Telugu actor Vishnu Manchu made waves at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival by unveiling the teaser of his much-anticipated film *Kannappa*. Amidst the glitz and glamour of the French Riviera, Manchu shared his excitement as he revealed that the teaser would be available to audiences worldwide on June 13. The announcement came following the teaser's positive reception from attendees, international distributors, and other industry insiders present at the event.

Taking to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Manchu expressed his joy at the overwhelming response to the teaser. He also revealed plans for an exclusive screening of the teaser for a select audience later this month in Hyderabad, further building anticipation for the film's release.

He wrote on his X handle on Tuesday: "We showcased the teaser of *Kannappa* here in Cannes, and it received an overwhelmingly positive response! International distributors, local Indians, and everyone who saw it absolutely loved it. I am excited and have butterflies in my stomach after witnessing such fantastic reactions. For our audience in India, the teaser will be released worldwide on June 13. On May 30, I will be showcasing the Telugu version of the teaser in Hyderabad at a popu-

lar theater. This special screening is for a select audience who have been encouraging *Kannappa* throughout my journey and have been sending constant messages of support on Instagram and Twitter. My team will be reaching out to these special invitees. I can't wait to share the world of *Kannappa* with you all!"

Manchu's Cannes appearance was nothing short of spectacular, as he graced the red carpet alongside his wife, Viranica, and his father, veteran actor-producer M Mohan Babu, as well as actor-choreographer Prabhu Deva. Their presence added to the allure of the festival, setting the stage for the grand unveiling of *Kannappa*.

Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and penned by Vishnu Manchu himself, *Kannappa* boasts an impressive ensemble cast including Prabhas, Mohanlal, Akshay Kumar, and others. Produced by Paruchuri Gopala Krishna, Eswar Reddy, G Nageswara Reddy, Tota Prasad, and M Mohan Babu, the film promises to be a cinematic spectacle, with more details set to be revealed in the coming days.



Mohanlal looks powerful in L2 Empuraan

Celebrating his 64th birthday on Tuesday (May 21), Mohanlal received a special gift from actor-filmmaker Prithviraj Sukumaran: a new poster unveiling Mohanlal's appearance in *L2 Empuraan*. Directed by Prithviraj himself, this sequel to the 2019 hit *Lucifer* once again features Mohanlal in the lead role.

The buzz for *L2 Empuraan* started building in November 2023 with the release of the first poster, which showed Mohanlal from behind, holding a gun. Now, the latest poster showcases Mohanlal dressed in all-black attire, striding confidently among a group of armed security personnel. Sharing the poster on X (formerly Twitter), Prithviraj extended birthday wishes to Mohanlal, affectionately referred to as Laletta, while teasing fans with the hashtag #L2E.

The sequel to Prithviraj's directorial debut, *Lucifer*, was officially announced in August 2022, much to the excitement of fans who were enthralled by Mohanlal's portrayal of the charismatic Stephen Nedumpally. However, the release date of *L2 Empuraan* is still under wraps.

Set to be released in multiple languages, including Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi, *L2 Empuraan* is being produced by Lyca Productions. Earlier this year, Prithviraj announced the completion of the third schedule of his upcoming directorial, which began filming in October of the previous year.



Sudheer Babu's Harom Hara release pushed to June 14

Excitement is building as the release date for Sudheer Babu's highly anticipated film, *Harom Hara*, draws near. With captivating songs, intriguing teasers, and other promotional material garnering significant attention, anticipation for the movie is at an all-time high. Particularly, the *Murugan* song, released on Sudheer Babu's birthday, showcasing his camaraderie with Sunil, has left a lasting impression on audiences.

Amidst the buzz, the makers have announced a new release date for the film, shifting it from its initial plan of May 31st to June 14th. The announcement was made through a brief teaser featuring Sudheer Babu wielding a gun, accompanied by the film's title song in the background. With no major releases scheduled for June 14th, *Harom Hara* is set to make its solo theatrical debut. Directed by Gnanasagar Dwaraka, known for his work in *Sehni*, *Harom Hara* promises to be an intense action thriller. Produced by Sumanth G. Naidu under the banner of SSC (Sree Subrahmanyeshwara Cinemas), the film features Malvika Sharma in the lead role, opposite Sudheer Babu. Set in 1989 against the backdrop of Kupparam in Chittoor district, the movie unfolds as a gripping period drama.

The film's musical score is composed by Chaitan Bharadwaj, while Aravind Vishwanathan handles cinematography and Raviteja Girijala takes charge of editing. With a talented team behind the scenes and an intriguing storyline, *Harom Hara* promises to deliver an adrenaline-pumping cinematic experience for audiences worldwide.



OC SET TO RELEASE IN THEATRES ON JUNE 7

Produced by Kaundinya Productions and directed by Vishnu Bompelli, Harish Bompelli is playing the lead role of Mani Saladi in the film *OC*, which tells the story of several young people who aspire to enter the world of cinema as youth entertainers. The makers have been completing post-production work swiftly. The makers officially announced on Tuesday that the film will be released worldwide on June 7.

The special teaser of *OC* released so far has captivated audiences. The dialogue delivery in the movie focuses on urging audiences to think about whether they, like the youngsters in the film, have been able to make their mark without any background or baggage.

With a high production value and a hefty budget, the makers have assured that *OC* will be a movie that doesn't compromise anywhere. It is said to have a storyline that will engage audiences from all walks of life. The movie unit believes that *OC* will captivate audiences in theatres.

Rakshana teaser: Paayal Rajput strikes as a cop

Known for her stunning on-screen presence and captivating social media influence, Paayal Rajput has made a name for herself by taking on riveting, intense, and impactful roles. Her choice of unique and diverse movie projects showcases her exceptional talent and continually captivates her audience.

With her astounding performances, Paayal Rajput has left many in awe. She is now set to thrill her fans once again with another powerful crime thriller, *Rakshana*. The movie's first look and teaser have already created a buzz among fans, and the recent teaser release has only amplified the excitement.

The teaser of *Rakshana* starts with a mysterious murder, followed by Paayal Rajput's character, a powerful police officer, determined to catch the culprit. The impactful background music and captivating cinematography heighten the intensity of the teaser, leaving the audience craving more.

Rakshana, inspired by real-life incidents, promises to be intriguing and impactful. The teaser has already piqued curiosity among movie lovers, eagerly anticipating its release on June 7. Her incredible talent and dedication to her craft make her an exceptional performer and a formidable presence in the film industry.

In addition to Paayal Rajput's stellar presence, the film features Roshan and Manas in pivotal roles, adding depth and intrigue to the story. Pranadeesh Thakore, who serves as both director and producer, brings a passion for the project, ensuring a high-quality production under the banner of Haripriya Creations. Mahati Sagar, the talented music director, enhances the film's emotional depth through his compositions, while cinematographer Anil Bhandari captures each frame's essence, enriching the visual storytelling. With a stellar cast, a dedicated director-producer, a talented music director, and a skilled cinematographer, *Rakshana* promises to be a complete package of entertainment and quality. Audiences can look forward to a captivating and immersive experience that will keep them engrossed from beginning to end.



A R Rahman to tour in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur

Music composer AR Rahman will be returning to Singapore in August with his first concert performance in the country in 10 years.

The Oscar and Grammy-winning musician will perform at the National Stadium on August 31. Maestro Productions, the company behind the singer-songwriter-musician's upcoming concert titled 'A Rahman Rhapsody', shared the announcement on social media on Monday. "Singapore! It's been a decade! We look forward to performing again in our favourite city! Join us on the 31st of August at the National Stadium," the company posted. The 57-year-old musician last played here in 2014 at

Gardens by the Bay. Before coming to Singapore, Rahman will hold a concert on July 27 at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Rahman's Malaysia gig is organised by Star Planet, the country's premier entertainment company, a press release said. "The concert presents a unique opportunity for fans to immerse themselves in AR Rahman's timeless classics, including chart-topping hits from his acclaimed films. With a setlist that promises to evoke nostalgia and stir emotions, attendees can expect an unforgettable evening filled with musical brilliance and unparalleled entertainment," it added.

THAMAN TO TAKE PART IN BIGGEST TELUGU CONCERT EVER IN DALLAS

Thaman S, who is one of the biggest and most successful music directors in the South, is known for his eclectic and mass style of compositions. While he has composed songs in multi-genres, Thaman right now is enjoying the top-form, working for movies of top South Indian stars. This is billed to be the biggest Telugu concert ever in Dallas by the music maestro Thaman, presented by People Media Factory. The Spice Tour begins on June 1. The promo released recently by the team shows Thaman with the mass blast *Dum Masala* from Superstar Mahesh Babu's *Guntur Kaaram*.

Creative differences lead to Ranveer Singh exiting Rakshas?

In a move that has left fans surprised, the highly anticipated collaboration between director Prasanth Varma, actor Ranveer Singh, and Mythri Productions for the ambitious project *Rakshas* has hit a roadblock. Earlier in April, Mythri Productions officially announced their partnership with Varma and Singh for this mega-budget venture set against a mythological backdrop during the pre-independence era. Reports hinted at Singh portraying a grey character, adding to the intrigue surrounding the project.

However, recent developments indicate that the actor-director duo has decided to part ways on the venture due to creative differences. Despite Singh's visit to Hyderabad in April for a photo shoot to announce the film, plans for the official announcement have been shelved.

According to a source close to the development, speaking to Pinkvilla, "Ranveer Singh will no longer be a part of Prashanth Varma's *Rakshas*. They have amicably parted ways due to creative differences." Despite exploring various solutions, the duo has opted to move on, with a promise to collaborate in the future. The director is now set to restart the casting process, aiming to ensure the film hits the big screen before shifting focus to his next project, *Jai Hanuman*. As for Singh, sources close to the actor revealed that he is currently prioritising his personal life, gearing up for parenthood alongside wife Deepika Padukone, with their first child expected in September.

While the exit of Singh from *Rakshas* comes as a surprise, fans remain eager to see how the project evolves under Varma's direction and who will step into the lead role in this eagerly anticipated film.

'SAY YES TO THEATRES'

The movie *Dirty Fellow* will see actor Shanti Chandra, a soldier who served in the Indian Navy, play the protagonist, while Deepika Singh, Simriti Bhatija, and Nikkisha Rangwala are going to be seen as heroines in this film. Produced by G Shanthi Babu under the banner of Raj India Entertainments, the movie is directed by Adari Murthy Sai and is set to hit big screens on May 24.

As the film nears its release, the promotional activities kick off in full swing. Requesting the audience to watch the movie in theatres, director Aadari Murthy said, "Those who worked on the movie *Dirty Fellow* worked like a family. There was no need to instruct them. We used to celebrate hundred-day festivals for our movies. Now, within two days, a movie's life ends. Because of piracy, some movies don't even run in theatres. Hence, I request all the audience to watch the movie in theatres."

