



# sunday pioneer

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“With the demise of Shri Ramoji Rao, India has lost a titan of the media and entertainment sector.”

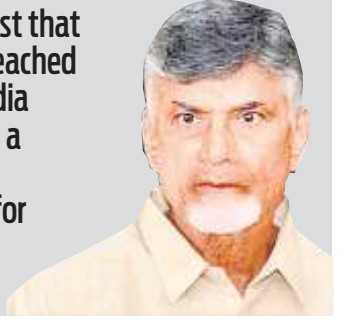
“Ramoji Rao Garu was extremely passionate about India's development. I am fortunate to have got several opportunities to interact with him and benefit from his wisdom.”



“The demise of Ramoji Rao is shocking. He had rendered immeasurable services to the Telugu media for decades. I pray to God that his soul rests in peace and convey my sympathies to the bereaved family.”



“We are unable to digest that Ramoji Rao, who has reached the pinnacle in the media world, is no more. He is a classic example and an inspiration in fighting for rights.”



# Telugus' newsman no more

## End of an era in Telugu media

From ruling Telugu media to inviting technology to enrich it, the Telugu people's newsman Ramoji Rao's journey has been stupendous. From humble beginnings in the early sixties to becoming a media titan, Ramoji's journey has been like a 'nothing succeeds like a success' story. He reached towering heights in every chosen field, particularly Telugu media. He had proved the power of journalism and impeccably followed the values till the last. From chit funds to cinema to television, he diversified into different fields and made a mark for himself. With the stalwart's demise, Telugu people have lost a man of powerful pen and also a man with a penchant for perfection.

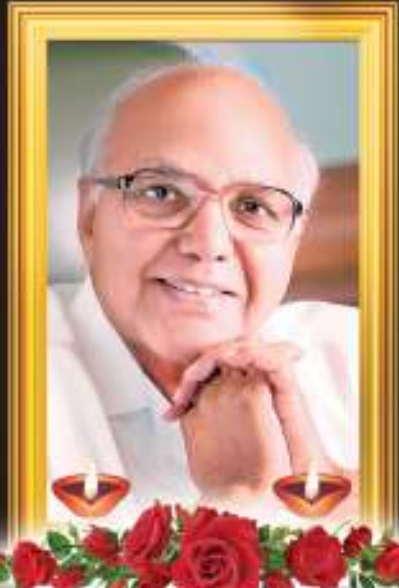
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Media baron and Ramoji Group chairman Ch Ramoji Rao, who revolutionised the news and entertainment industry, passed away at a hospital here early on Saturday. He was 88. Ramoji Rao, who was admitted to the hospital on June 5 following respiratory problems, breathed his last at 4.50 am, according to Eenuadu sources. The mortal remains were shifted to his residence in the famous Ramoji Film City near here. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, chief ministers of several states including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and film personalities mourned the death of Ramoji Rao. Former Vice President M

Venkaiah Naidu, former Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan, BRS leader K T Rama Rao, superstar Chiranjeevi, several leaders from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and film personalities paid homage to Rao at the Ramoji Film City. Ramoji Rao, who created a sensation in the media industry in undivided Andhra Pradesh with the Eenuadu newspaper and ETV group of channels, was a recipient of Padma Vibhushan. Ramoji Rao's rise to become the founder of Eenuadu, the largest circulated Telugu daily, and a media mogul, from humble beginnings is legendary. The firms founded by him -- Eenuadu

newspaper, ETV bouquet of channels, the world's largest film city Ramoji Film City, Dolphin group of hotels, Margadarsi Chit Fund, film production company Ushakiran movies, Priya Foods and others provided jobs to thousands and continue to impact the lives of millions in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and elsewhere. He also made several films some of which got awards at the national level. According to reports, Ramoji Rao's net worth is estimated at over USD four billion (over Rs 32,000 crore). He is survived by his wife and a son. Another son passed away a few years ago due to ill health.

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BORN: 16 NOV 1936  
 DIED: 08 JUNE 2024

Ramoji built his tomb in RFC



HYDERABAD: The head of the Eenuadu group of companies, C. Ramoji Rao, had finalised his final resting place in Ramoji Film City. The videos about 'Smriti Vanam' took everyone by surprise. Film actor Mohan Babu who paid condolences said, "I have a 43-year-old relationship with Ramoji Rao. Whenever we met, he used to ask me to see his Samidhi where he would be buried. I used to say I came to visit you, not your tomb. He would say, I thought you were brave, aren't you? Why are you so scared? But I never went there."

The journey of Ramoji Rao in the world of media, abiding by the ideologies he believed in, was unparalleled. His demise is a great loss to the media sector. I pray to God for his soul to rest in peace.

-Pawan Kalyan



“Ramoji Rao is a visionary who ran Eenuadu as a number one news daily for more than 5 decades even during the challenging times and also laid a strong foundation for TV industry by establishing Etv.”

-Revanth Reddy



## LAST RITES WITH STATE HONOURS

Cherukuri Ramoji Rao, Chairman of the Ramoji Group of companies and Padma Vibhushan awardee, passed away this morning. The Telangana government has decided to conduct his last rites with State honours. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who is currently in Delhi for the CWC meeting, issued orders to the

Chief Secretary of the government from there. Following these orders, the Ranga Reddy District Collector and the Cyberabad Commissioner have been directed by the Chief Secretary to oversee the arrangements. Meanwhile, the Andhra Pradesh government has declared June 9 and 10 as mourning days to honour the

media baron. During this period, the national flag will be flown at half-mast on all official buildings across the state, and no official entertainment events will be held. Three senior government officials, RP Sisodia, Saiprasad, and Rajat Bhargava, will represent the Andhra Pradesh government at Ramoji Rao's last rites.

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## Winning laurels even from detractors

B KRISHNA PRASAD ■ HYDERABAD

What is success in life? I had my moment of epiphany when I saw the tweets in 'X' of AICC leader Rahul Gandhi and former AP Chief Minister and YSRC president YS Jaganmohan Reddy condoling the death of media baron Ramoji Rao. I gained a deeper insight into the normally ignored shade of the meaning of success: winning laurels from even one's bitter rivals. Ramoji Rao achieved that and how!

Ramoji Rao had declared publicly that he was an 'anti-Congressman'; yet Rahul Gandhi condoled his death on Saturday and hailed his contribution to Indian journalism. Jagan has aired his displeasure at Ramoji Rao umpteenth times and even prevented Eenuadu group's media arms from reporting on

YSRCP's affairs and activities. Still, Jagan issued a statement hailing Ramoji's services to journalism. This is success in all its splendour! Hats off to Ramoji Rao!

Ramoji Rao -- with his business interests spread across media, film industry and FMCG sectors -- has pervaded almost all spheres of Telugu people's lives. At an individual level, one may agree with him or differ with him, but none can resist standing in awe of him for his achievements.

I started my journalism career as a trainee reporter in Eenuadu. Chairman Ramoji Rao interviewed me and took me into state bureau directly -- a rare opportunity to a fresh graduate. During my interview, then executive director of Newstoday (the news agency of Eenuadu) said some good words about me to

Ramoji Rao, like "He is intelligent". Ramoji Rao immediately sized me up, retorting: "What is intelligence here? He has to work hard, sincerely; that's all". To confess, I was a bit taken back at that comment then. But later in my days of managing a newspaper and a satellite television channel I realized how brilliant and prescient he was to have commented like that. For any management, intelligence is not much of use, compared to sincere work. He was a past master in management and an inspiring leader. He always believed in full delegation of powers rather than centralized power. He was a true democrat though the spirit of his writ runs through all his businesses. As they say, "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

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## Sonia Gandhi re-elected CPP chairperson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi was unanimously re-elected as the chairperson of the Congress parliamentary party on Saturday, its leaders said.

At a meeting of party MPs, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge proposed Sonia Gandhi's name as the chairperson of the parliamentary party. The proposal was seconded by Gaurav Gogoi, K Sudhakaran and Tariq Anwar.

Gandhi, 77, was elected to the Rajya Sabha in February.

Earlier, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) unanimously urged Rahul Gandhi to take on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and he told the party's top brass that he will take a decision on it "very soon".

## Modi set to take oath as PM today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi is set to take oath on Sunday for a third straight term, equalling the feat of first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, as the head of a coalition government after two full tenures in which the BJP enjoyed a majority on its own.

Hectic parleys involving BJP leadership and allies were on over the share of berths of different constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the new government. Senior BJP leaders such as Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh besides party president J P Nadda have been consulting the allies, including Telugu Desam Party's N Chandrababu Naidu, JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar and Shiv Sena's Eknath Shinde, to finalise their share of representation in the government.

There is a view that heavyweight portfolios like home, finance, defence and external affairs besides education and culture, two ministries with strong ideological hues, will be kept by the BJP, while its allies can get anywhere between five to eight cabinet berths.

While leaders like Shah and Singh are seen within the party as a certainty in the new Cabinet, former chief ministers who have won the Lok Sabha polls like Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Basavaraj Bommai, Manohar Lal Khattar and Sarbananda Sonowal are strong contenders for joining the government. Ram Mohan Naidu of the TDP, Lalan Singh, Sanjay Jha and Ram Nath Thakur of the JD(U), and Chirag Paswan of the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) are among the allies who may be a part of the new government, sources said, adding

that either Singh or Jha will be accommodated from the JD(U) quota.

Maharashtra, where the BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP alliance has fared poorly, and Bihar, where the opposition has shown signs of revival, may be in the focus during the government-formation exercise.

Assembly polls are due in the western state in October, while polls will be held in Bihar next year.

Impending changes within the BJP's organisation will also be on the mind of its brain trust in finalising the names of ministers from the party. Nadda's term was extended due to the Lok Sabha polls, and organisational imperatives will be an important consideration for the party as the poll results have sent signals that all may not be well within its vast machinery.

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## Time for brevity in KCR's lectures

Recording historically significant events or interesting anecdotes is one thing and going round in circles is quite another. Of late Bharat Rashtra Samithi chief K Chandrashekar Rao's speeches are sounding like 'history classes', aver vocal members of audience. These days, whenever he opens his mouth amid the public, he tends to deliver a lecture. At a time when people expect netas' speeches to be short and sweet with loads of goodies among promises, his lectures leave a lot to be desired. We are in 2024 and getting audience attention for even one minute is a big deal. The average attention span has shrunk to a mere 8 seconds, say experts. KCR is sounding like a specimen from the old guard by gloating over his greatness. His lectures, bereft of his characteristic wit and humour, fail to appeal to audience, be they captive or otherwise.

right. For newbies, even before the recent elections, peevish Revanth had remarked: "If anybody calls me a 'disciple' of Naidu, I will beat him with chappals". If not BRS, media is watching both 'Guru' and 'chela'. It all depends on if and when Revanth plays to the tunes of Naidu.

### Kalkavuntla family not ready to face media

After scoring a duck in the recent Lok Sabha elections despite having painted a rosy picture of the pink party, none from the Kalkavuntla family have faced media. Normally, post results, parties hold a press conference, regardless of defeat or victory. However, BRS working president KT Rama Rao and Harish Rao chose to tweet instead. None of the brass --

what is published and how it is published in the media. In a recent interview, the Chief Minister himself said that a person has been appointed exclusively to deal with the news being published in newspapers, especially on public issues or in cases where the government's stand needs to be clarified. The officer will send the piece to the department concerned and get a report. Scribes have acknowledged that rejoinders or clarifications have increased in the new regime.

### Winning reflects the stuff the candidate has

The Congress candidate for Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates constituency by-poll Theenmar Mallanna won against odds, beating his nearest BRS candidate A Rakesh Reddy. For, hardly any Congress leader campaigned for him. Even the party leaders who count met him rather grudgingly after the results were announced. The reason is that many Congress leaders did not relish Theenmar Mallanna's victory. Most of them had questioned the wisdom of giving him the party ticket in the first place. The cadre, however, had a gut feeling that only Mallanna had the caliber and stuff to win the bypolls. Their gut feeling proved right.

### Setting records of both high and low

Setting a record is fine. But few end up setting records for both high and low in the same arena. For Telugu people at least, outgoing AP Chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has proved this. In 2019, Jagan won 151 out of total 175 seats. After five years, the same Jagan has won 11 seats out of 175.

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

## REPORTERS' DIARY

KCR, KTR, Harish Rao or Santosh Rao has since made statements on BRS' downfall. In contrast, AP's outgoing CM Jagan, despite facing a crushing defeat, gave a statement. Is this imperial arrogance or unspeakable shame? Whatever it be, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy made up for the lack of BRS' viewpoint by expressing his view on BRS' show, call it mileage or smear campaign. BRS' friendly party MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi too blamed the pink party.

### Media under close watch

Generally politicians tend to be late. Sometime press conferences can be delayed by hours. However, if media houses delay the broadcast or don't give enough coverage, then there is a new-found worry. The tracking is such that even if a few minutes of presser are not covered, reporters may be informed. This has kept TV channels on tenterhooks. The new Congress government is very keen on

Interestingly, some of his archival videos are gaining traction on the internet, drawing comparisons and sparking memes. Clips of his lectures these days are not shared even by followers in his home turf. This silence is deafening.

### Time for Revanth to prove he is nobody's chela

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has time and again faced taunts from his political detractors that he is the chela of his political guru and Telugu Desam Party chief and Andhra Pradesh CM-designate N Chandrababu Naidu. At times, he has put his foot down, saying he likes to be treated for the person he is now. A confidante of Revanth pointed out that the Guru-chela ties were a fact 15 years ago. Revanth has since regarded himself as a self-made man who longer requires mentoring. Now, with Chandrababu Naidu at the helm of affairs in Andhra Pradesh and holding control levers at the Centre, all eyes are on how Revanth Reddy will stand out as a leader in his own

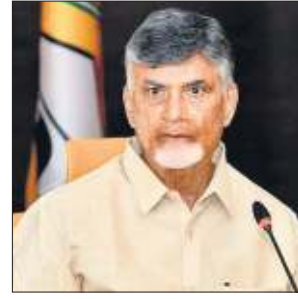
# Ramoji was an asset to Telugu people: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister-designate, Nara Chandrababu Naidu, expressed deep shock on Saturday over the sudden demise of media baron Ramoji Rao early on Saturday morning.

In a statement following Ramoji Rao's passing, the TDP chief highlighted the remarkable journey of Rao, who rose from a middle-class background to great heights.

Chandrababu Naidu mourned the loss of the chairman of the Enadu empire, remembering him as a significant figure in the media world



and a dedicated advocate for the Telugu states.

"Though he was not well for the past few days, we all felt that he would certainly recover. But we never thought that we

would have to hear this sad news," Naidu expressed in the press release. He described Ramoji as an asset to the Telugu people, emphasising that his death is a substantial loss not only to the Telugu states but also to the entire nation.

Naidu praised Ramoji's enduring legacy, noting his tireless efforts for the country's welfare and his provision of employment to thousands through the Enadu network. He remarked on Ramoji's unique era in the media world, his ethical values, and his ability to overcome numerous

challenges without compromising his principles.

"We are unable to digest that Ramoji Rao, who has reached the pinnacle in the media world, is no more. He is a classic example and an inspiration in fighting for rights," Naidu said, recalling how he sought Ramoji's advice and suggestions on crucial issues when needed.

Chandrababu Naidu extended his heartfelt condolences to Ramoji Rao's bereaved family and the employees of the Enadu group of publications, praying for Ramoji's soul to rest in peace.

## Condolences pour in for media baron Ramoji Rao

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer has expressed profound grief and sadness over the demise of Enadu Group Chairman Ch Ramoji Rao in the early hours of Saturday in Hyderabad after a prolonged illness. Governor Nazeer described Ramoji Rao as a stalwart in media and entertainment, renowned for setting high standards of journalism. He noted that Ramoji Rao was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan for his invaluable contributions to journalism, literature, cinema, and education. The Governor offered his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.



Caretaker Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also condoled the death of media baron Ch Ramoji Rao and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family. Jana Sena Chief K Pawan Kalyan expressed shock and grief over the sudden demise of Ramoji Rao and extended his sympathies to the family.

Nara Lokesh, in a press note, said, "I pay my tearful tributes to the warrior and the public partisan. Ramoji, who had a deep commitment to people's welfare until the end, stands as an example and

guide for all of us. He strived hard with a spirit for upholding democratic values and preserving autonomy." Lokesh conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.

State BJP President Daggubati Purandheshwari stated that the news of Ramoji Rao's passing has plunged the Telugu nation into mourning. She expressed deep condolences, highlighting his indelible impact on the hearts of the Telugu people.

YSRCP MP Vijayasai Reddy remarked that Ramoji Rao's influence on the Telugu media sector over nearly five decades represents a great loss to the Telugu community. He extended his deepest condolences to Rao's family and prayed for his soul to rest in peace.

Former minister Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao also condoled Ramoji Rao's death and prayed for his soul to rest in peace. He acknowledged the indelible mark Rao left on media, cinema, and business, and his memorable services to the Telugu language.

## CWC ASKS RAHUL Take on LOP mantle in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Saturday unanimously urged Rahul Gandhi to take on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and he told the party brass that he will take a decision on it "very soon".

At a meeting of the CWC, the party's highest decision-making body, chaired by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and attended by Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, among others, the party's Lok Sabha polls showing was hailed but it was also decided that separate committees would be set up in states where the performance was not good or below expectations, to take corrective measures.

Kharge said the Lok Sabha poll mandate is a "decisive rejection" of the politics of divisiveness and hate, and stressed that the INDIA bloc must continue functioning cohesively both inside and outside Parliament.

Two resolutions were unanimously passed by the CWC, including one requesting Rahul Gandhi to assume the position of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

## Vundavalli expresses condolences to Ramoji Rao's family

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MP Vundavalli Arun Kumar expressed deep shock over the demise of media baron Ramoji Rao on Saturday. Speaking to the media, he said that the news of Ramoji Rao's death saddened him. He stated that according to the Bhagavad Gita, just as one discards old clothes to wear new ones, so too is the cycle of life and death. Vundavalli acknowledged that Ramoji led a complete life and died as a fighter who never compromised with anyone. He mentioned that he had tried many times to meet Ramoji Rao but was unsuccessful, describing it as the only disappointment in his life. He also noted that Ramoji became a celebrity in every field he entered and said he had never seen anyone as influential as Ramoji Rao in India. Vundavalli expressed his deepest condolences to Ramoji Rao's family.

It may be recalled that Vundavalli Arun Kumar has begun a relentless campaign against Margadarsi and exposed the misdeeds of Margadarsi Finance during the tenure of the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR). Despite YSR's passing, Vundavalli continues to fight a legal battle against Ramoji Rao alone.

## TDP to get 2 berths in Modi cabinet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu is set to receive two portfolios in the new Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to sources.

The two TDP leaders likely to be included in PM Modi's new cabinet are Ram Mohan Naidu and Pemmasani Chandrasekhara. The decision was made at a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) meeting to finalize cabinet allocations ahead of the government's swearing-in ceremony tomorrow. The NDA leadership, including JP Nadda, Amit Shah, and Rajnath Singh, held separate meetings with alliance partners to discuss cabinet positions.

According to sources, the TDP requested three portfolios and the post of Parliamentary Speaker after securing 16 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh. Naidu



emerged as kingmaker after the BJP secured only 240 seats, falling short of the 272 needed for a majority government. The NDA clinched 293 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha, marking a significant victory.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be sworn in for a third consecutive term after Jawaharlal Nehru on Sunday. These coalition negotiations are reminiscent of the pre-2014 era, before PM Modi's BJP achieved an outright majority when alliance partners negoti-

ated for positions and benefits. From Andhra Pradesh, the state BJP and the JSP are also likely to get one berth each in the Modi cabinet, sources say.

The BJP is likely to retain key portfolios like home, finance, defence, and external affairs. TDP may get the post of Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha. Other allies like Shiv Sena, NCP, and RLD are also expected to get one ministerial berth each. Meanwhile, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar is contemplating demanding a Special Category Status for the state.

## Winning laurels...

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Let me explain a little. He started Newstime, an English daily, and appointed SR Ramanujam as its head. During its long journey, the English newspaper incurred huge losses but not even once Ramoji Rao interfered in the affairs of Newstime. He gave full freedom to Ramanujam with regard to its operations. Similarly, he handed over Margadarsi Chit Funds and Financiers to his daughter-in-law. Thereafter, he almost stopped involving in its day-to-day operations, while attending reviews without fail.

Enadu opened several printing units in combined Andhra Pradesh with the respective edition in-charge functioning as its boss. Even if somebody complained in writing against such in-charges, Ramoji Rao used to pass on those complaints to the in-charge concerned, with a subtle warning, if required, to mend their ways. He used to believe a lot in the people picked by him or his trusted lieutenants. He had

immense confidence in his team. At the same time, he used to have a Plan B for everything that could go wrong. This is what I observed and learned during my stint in his organization.

He lived his life king size. Till the last minute, he never bowed down to anyone. Not even to great NTR. He did what he believed in even if it was too dangerous and risky. He loved challenges and never accepted defeat. Whatever be his business venture, he believed in delivering the highest quality, knowing it will yield results unfailingly. For that, he worked hard sincerely. He maintained highest quality in news, layout, printing, and delivery of Enadu that made the newspaper unbeatable for almost 50 years! "I get relaxation in work" was his inspiring refrain, which says all about his personality. He left an indelible mark on entrepreneurship, journalism, film-making and several other fields. He continues to inspire many young minds. May his soul rest in peace.

## Modi set to...

Continued from Page 1

This opens the possibility of some seasoned hand being sent to the party and Nadda being given a berth in the government, the sources said.

The desertion by a section of voters, especially from the Scheduled Castes and other deprived sections of society, may also be a guiding factor in government formation even though Modi had made a point to increase their relative representation in his outgoing term.

Nehru is the only prime minister who held the post after three consecutive elections after independence.

The BJP is keen to send out a message of continuity and ward off any impression of political vulnerability following its surprising below-par show in the Lok Sabha polls as its seat tally fell to 240 from 303, considerably short of the majority mark of 272. The government has announced that leaders of several neighbouring countries, including from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Mauritius, will be attending the swearing-in ceremony slated to take place at 7:15 PM on Sunday at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

## Women's power surges in V'nagaram dist

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The combined Vizianagaram district stands witness to a groundbreaking shift in political dynamics as five women secure victories in the recent Legislative Assembly elections, marking a significant surge in female representation. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) emerges as the frontrunner, celebrating multiple triumphs against formidable Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) opponents.

In a resounding victory, Gummidri Sandhyarani, the TDP candidate, clinches the Salur constituency, delivering a blow to incumbent YSRCP

candidate and Deputy Chief Minister Rajanna Dora by a substantial margin. Similarly, in a political debut, TDP's Toyaka Jagadeeswari secures a remarkable win in Kurupam, outshining former Deputy Chief Minister Pamula Pushpa Srivani of the YSRCP.

Aditi Vijayalakshmi Gajapathiraju, contesting from Vizianagaram, scripts her success story by defeating YSRCP's Kolagatla Weerabhadraswamy, the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly, consolidating TDP's hold in the district. Kolla Lalitha Kumari, representing S. Kota, emerges victorious over her YSRCP rival Kadubandi Srinivasa Rao, further solidify-

ing the party's standing. Lokam Naga Madhavi, representing the Janasena Party, adds to the wave of change by clinching the Nellimara constituency, defeating YSRCP's Appalanaidu from Baddukonda. Additionally, newcomers Baby Nayana, Kondapalli Srinivas, Bonela Vijayachandrababu, and Kimidi Kalavankataravu secure wins in Bobbili, Gajapatinar, Parvathipuram, and Cheerupalli respectively, bolstering TDP's representation and influence in the district. Remarkably, except for Kala Venkata Rao and Kolla Lalithakumari, all other elected MLAs are stepping into the Legislative Assembly for the

first time, marking a significant shift in the region's political landscape.

The surge in female representation, coupled with TDP's remarkable victories, signifies a monumental transformation in the political landscape of the combined Vizianagaram district. These election outcomes not only herald a change in power dynamics but also reflect the electorate's endorsement of fresh faces and diverse representation in governance. This historic win for women marks a pivotal moment in the region's political history, promising a more inclusive and dynamic future for Vizianagaram.

## Telugus' newsman no more...

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President Murmu said Ramoji Rao's contributions to the industry will be long remembered. "With the demise of Shri Ramoji Rao, India has lost a titan of the media and entertainment sector," President Murmu said in a post on X. Expressing grief at the death of Ramoji Rao, PM Modi described him as a "visionary" who revolutionised Indian media. Rao's rich contributions have left an indelible mark on journalism and the world of films, Modi said on X, adding that through his noteworthy efforts, he set new standards in innovation and excellence in the media and entertainment world.

"Ramoji Rao Garu was extremely passionate about India's development. I am fortunate to have got several opportunities to interact with him and benefit from his wisdom. Condolences to his family, friends and countless admirers during this difficult time. Om Shanti," he said. Rahul Gandhi said Ramoji Rao's contributions to journalism, cinema, and entertainment have left a last-

ing impact and transformed the media landscape.

Sitharaman said PM Modi sent her as his emissary to pay his respects, the Union Government's respects to Ramoji Rao and also to place a wreath of homage.

She said she met the family members of Ramoji Rao and expressed Modi's condolences and also placed a wreath to pay homage. Chandrababu Naidu described Ramoji Rao as a "Yug Purush" and recalled the departed media mogul's stellar contributions to society and the high standards he maintained. Telangana Governor C P Radhakrishnan called Ramoji Rao a 'true legend', who revolutionised Indian media and cinema with his profound and extensive contributions. Telangana CM Revanth Reddy termed Ramoji Rao's death as a "great loss" to the Telugu newspaper and media industry.

The CM, who is in Delhi to attend the CWC meeting, directed state Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari to conduct Ramoji Rao's funeral with state honours, a CMO release said. The Andhra Pradesh government has

decided to observe state mourning on June 9 and June 10. During the state mourning, the National Flag will be flown at half mast from June 9 to 10 throughout the state and there will be no official entertainment, an official communication said. Noted producer D Suresh Babu said film shootings will not be held on Sunday as a mark of respect to Ramoji Rao. Mourning the passing of Rao, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin hailed the media mogul's contributions to journalism and film industry. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a post on his X handle, said Rao's curiosity, foresight and determination left an indelible mark on every field he ventured into, serving as an example and inspiration to all.

The Editors Guild of India said Ramoji Rao, who headed the Guild in the past, would be best remembered as being a media owner who on several occasions took on the establishment and fearlessly spoke truth to power.

Rajinikanth, Chiranjeevi, Allu Arjun, Ram Charan and Jr NTR, ace director SS Rajamouli and several other prominent cinema personalities also expressed grief over the demise of Ramoji Rao. Rajamouli said the only way tributes can be paid to Ramoji Rao is by conferring Bharat Ratna on him.

TDP, JSP ATTACKS

# YSRCP to file complaints and move courts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna district YSRCP leaders have accused TDP and JSP leaders and activists of resorting to attacks against YSRCP members.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, former ministers Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani), Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani), and others alleged that YSRCP leaders and activists have been deliberately targeted by TDP and Jana Sena Party members following the elections.

Tension mounts as attacks by TDP supporters on YSRCP leaders and activists continue unabated in Andhra Pradesh. Despite complaints to the President and the Governor, the situation remains unresolved while the police act as mute spectators.

The houses of two YSRCP leaders, Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) and former MLA Dr. Vallabhaneni Vamsi were attacked by TDP supporters in Krishna district on Friday. The assailants pelted stones at Vamsi's house in Vijayawada, damaging two cars parked in front and attempting to barge in. Perni Nani alleged that TDP

MLAs who won the election are creating havoc across the state. On Saturday, he, along with Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) and other leaders from Krishna district, spoke to the media about the ongoing anarchy by TDP activists statewide. Nani made some pointed comments against

DGP and police to neglect their duties. He claimed that the violence in the state, instigated by Chandrababu and his son Lokesh, has surpassed that in Bihar and UP.

Nani further accused TDP rowdies of threatening the police and preventing YSRCP



"We too will counter their attacks and go to the court of law against the authorities for not taking action against the atrocities being committed by Chandrababu. All our leaders will meet the district SP in two days," said Perni Nani.

Condemning the TDP attacks, Kodali Nani said, "YSRCP leaders and activists are being deliberately targeted after the elections. TDP and Jana Sena Party are attacking us to scare YSRCP leaders and activists. The police are not responding to the attacks."

Expressing concern over the deteriorating law and order situation, Nani said the party will approach the High Court regarding the attacks on YSRCP. He stated that they would file cases against the attackers and the 'mute spectator' police officials. Nani also mentioned that party leaders will visit Krishna district in the next two days to meet the injured cadre. "We will protect the party activists. We will visit the disturbed areas. If there is a law and order problem, the police will be held responsible," he asserted.



TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu.

He stated that YSRCP leaders have been under attack since the day of vote counting, and accused TDP and Jana Sena Party rowdy groups of behaving like hooligans following their election victory. Nani alleged that TDP MLAs are orchestrating these attacks with Chandrababu Naidu's support, influencing the state

leaders from attending meetings. He criticized the police for not taking action against TDP goons and for failing to register complaints after the attacks. He claimed that Chandrababu has completely undermined the police system, and TDP rowdy sheeters are mistreating women. Nani questioned the SP's role during this anarchy and continuous attacks.

# Trafficked youth recount horrific tales of hunger in Cambodia

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a harrowing tale of deceit and abuse, young Indians trafficked to Cambodia have recounted the horrific conditions they endured. Food deprivation, cramped living quarters with up to 20 people in a single room, and unsanitary toilets were just some of the torture methods inflicted on them. "We were forced to work day and night and coerced into scamming people through sexually suggestive messages. We also endured physical and mental abuse," said one of the rescued youngsters.

The victims initially promised high-paying data entry jobs in Singapore and Bangkok, found themselves transported to Cambodia instead, either by road or air. Upon arrival, they were taken to heavily guarded compounds and subjected to English typing tests. "Victims are coerced to create fake online profiles and engage in chats to lure other Indians. Refusal to comply with the Chinese bosses results in thrashing, confinement in dark rooms, and food deprivation," they explained.

Once targets were identified, the workers engaged in chats, feigning romance or friendship, and convinced them to invest in cryptocurrency or stocks with promises of high returns. As soon as the victims' funds were drained, all communication was terminated.

A young man, speaking on condition of anonymity, told *The Pioneer* that he had moved due to a lack of job opportunities in Visakhapatnam. "Once



**The victims initially promised high-paying data entry jobs in Singapore and Bangkok, found themselves transported to Cambodia instead, either by road or air. Upon arrival, they were taken to heavily guarded compounds and subjected to English typing tests**

tortured if they took too long in the washrooms, even during their periods. However, some women enjoyed the work as they made huge money from scamming people. "One girl from Mangalagiri swindled ₹1 crore from a man and was rewarded ₹10 lakh. This is in addition to the ₹4,000 monthly earnings they make," she said. She was able to return to India due to her poor health, having been locked in a dark room for two days before being given her passport and asked to leave. She borrowed money from friends and returned to India on May 13.

While receiving treatment at the hospital, she saw a news report featuring Cybercrime Inspector Bhavani Prasad about these scams. This prompted her to come forward and speak to the police to prevent others from facing similar situations. The youth further urged both the State and Central governments to generate more job opportunities domestically. This, they emphasized, would deter individuals from falling victim to scams or seeking employment abroad.

According to Police Commissioner A. Ravi Shankar, eleven agents have been arrested in Vizag, and 21 others have been identified across India for imminent arrest. Furthermore, three SIM suppliers have been identified and will soon be apprehended. The plight of these trafficked individuals underscores the urgent need for increased job opportunities and stringent measures to combat human trafficking and financial scams.

there, we discovered we had been scammed and were given two options: pay Rs 4,000 to leave or stay and participate in fraudulent activities. They made us sign a document agreeing to scam people. I was in Cambodia for a year. We could not report to the police because the Chinese agents bribed the Cambodian police, who ignored our plight. Our team leaders tortured us, denied us food, and restricted access to washrooms. When we saw the Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner's interview on TV, we revolted and managed to escape. Within two days, 58 of us returned to India," he explained.

facing torture, besides indulging in illegal activities. We urge them to return and work legally in India."

A woman from Guntur, who moved to Cambodia due to financial troubles, shared her ordeal. "I was advised by a close acquaintance to move to Cambodia to earn money. I paid him Rs 2 lakh, and after arriving in Cambodia, I paid an additional Rs 500. He immediately abandoned me after introducing me to the scammers. I was there for two months only but faced severe hardships. Our main targets were people with car pictures, gold ornaments, or retired Indian government officials. Once they trusted us, we would trick them into sending money. We used fake photos, and for video calls, we employed Artificial Intelligence (AI) to morph our faces."

She added that women were

## Tribal kids' protest sparks call for education equality

PNS ■ PADERU



Children from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) residing in remote corners of the ASR district have ignited a powerful movement, staging a sit-in protest to demand the establishment of a school and the appointment of teachers. Families from Kothaguda, Goppilapalem, Kadarevu, and Kalyana Gummi villages have united in their plea to the government, pledging to raise funds for school construction while urging authorities to fulfill their desperate need for education.

Approximately 50 Konda Dora tribal families reside in these villages. There are 78 children between the ages of five and ten who possess a keen desire for learning. Currently, however, they face a significant obstacle: a daunting six-kilometer trek through dense forests, encompassing multiple streams and uneven terrain, to reach the Ananthagiri Mandal Panchayat Centre school situated in Bodugaru village.

The treacherous nature of this journey, particularly during the rainy season, has resulted in a concerning dropout rate among the children. Many are forced to abandon their education altogether

due to the impracticalities of the commute. Parents, including Mamidi Vijay Kumar, Korra Bhimanna, and Rapa Raja Rao, have fervently petitioned the district collector for the appointment of teachers and have even volunteered to assist in the construction of temporary school structures.

The villagers have formally requested the ASR district Collector and Paderu ITDA Project Officer to deploy two teachers - one stationed in Kalyana Gummi and another serving the remaining three villages. Additionally, they have pledged to construct a temporary school building using their own resources. Furthermore, they have emphasized the urgent need for a road to connect their villages to essential medical facilities.

Recognising the gravity of the situation, Paderu District Education Officer, P Brahmaji Rao, has mandated a comprehensive assessment of the villages by the Ananthagiri Mandal Education Officer (MEO).

## AP community-based natural farming set to be implemented in Zambia

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The farmers of Zambia will implement community-based natural farming of Andhra Pradesh in their country. The Andhra Pradesh delegation is on a tour of Zambia studying Andhra Pradesh Community-Based Natural Farming (APCNF). The delegation includes agriculture researchers from the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Zambia, as well as farmer practitioners and project functionaries from two community-based organizations - Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC) and Valponasca Learning Farm (VLF) started by Salesian Sisters visiting the fields of APCNF for two weeks.

The Rythu Sadhikara Samstha officials said that the Government of Andhra Pradesh, through the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) in the name of APCNF has been promoting natural farming on a large scale since 2016. The RySS officials stated that the Zambian delegation will learn in detail the practices and implementation of APCNF to gain insights that can be applied to promote natural farming in Zambia. The delegation team already reached Anantapur District on June 7 and will continue till

21st June. The training programme to the delegation will be held in the Anantapur District Project Management Unit office as well as in villages of Anantapur district, following APCNF's 'learning by doing' principle. The delegation will learn the APCNF model by practising the natural farming principles with APCNF farmers under the guidance of APCNF farmer trainers and Lakshma Naik, the District Project Manager, APCNF Project

(NF). They further explained that following this initial exposure visit, a senior technical team from RySS will travel to Zambia for a scouting visit to define the strategy and project timelines and deliverables. The RySS officials stated that once this is completed, senior farmer trainers from the Anantapur APCNF project will be deployed in Zambia for three years to see the natural farming model in Zambia.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia has nominated Silumesi Munda and two other training officers from agriculture colleges to study the APCNF Model. Fr. Claus Recktenwald from KATC has brought a delegation of 11 farmer practitioners. Sr Modester Chansa from VLF has arrived in Andhra Pradesh with five farmer representatives. The Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre works to promote the adoption of sustainable organic agriculture with rural communities in Lusaka County in Zambia and the VLF serves as an agricultural school, training young people to work on the land and become self-reliant and provides formal education, professional training, and skills to 529 small-scale community farmers, helping them improve their families' incomes.



Anantapur and Chief Technology and Innovation Officer of RySS.

The RySS officials further stated that this is the first step towards a long-term international collaboration between Andhra Pradesh and Zambia. They explained that the RySS is getting ready to play the role of an International Resource Organization (INRO) on Natural Farming

## Level 3 off-site emergency mock drill in Gajulamandiyam by AG & P Pratham

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

To enhance emergency preparedness and response, AG&P Pratham, successfully conducted a Level 3 Mock Drill. The drill simulated a CNG leakage scenario at the company's COCO station in Gajulamandiyam, Renigunta Mandal, Tirupati district wherein a vehicle carrying a mobile cascade of CNG had a gas leak from a cylinder valve. The primary aim of the drill was to raise awareness about Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and assess the effectiveness of response mechanisms in both pre- and post-emergency phases.

During the drill, Gajulamandiyam SI Sunil emphasized the importance of adequate awareness about gas leakage and fire hazards for everyone. He, along with firemen and factory workers,

stressed the need for precautions in the event of accidental gas leaks and fire accidents, especially when a CNG vehicle is on the road with a gas load.

Gautam Anand, Regional Head & Assistant Vice President, AG&P Pratham, CVK GA, highlighted the necessity for people and organizations in the surrounding areas to be knowledgeable about gas leakage protocols. He stated, "At AG&P Pratham, our commitment to the safety of both our staff and the public is paramount. We organize these mock drills to raise awareness and educate the public on how to act in case of gas leakage and fire accidents. While the leaked gas is not harmful as it is natural gas, we regularly conduct these drills to ensure our team can swiftly handle any unpredictable situations and minimize any inconvenience to the community."

## Beach cleanup event marks World Oceans Day in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A large-scale beach cleanup program was organized on World Oceans Day, stretching from RK Beach to the YMCA in the city. The event saw enthusiastic participation from students, research scholars, and staff from Andhra University, alongside scientists and technical staff from premier institutes like NCCR, CMFRI, CIET, and NIO. NSS volunteers from various colleges also joined hands for the cleanup.

Officials from the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC), the Ground Water Department, and the Police Department actively participated in the program. Professor James Stephen, Registrar of Andhra University, officially flagged off the program. He emphasized the crucial role oceans play in sustaining life on Earth and the urgent need for their preservation. The theme for this year's World Oceans Day, "Planet Ocean: Tides are Changing," resonated throughout the event, highlighting the growing necessity for sustainable ocean management.

Prof. P Janakiram, Head of the Department of Marine



Living Resources at Andhra University, spoke about the vastness of oceans, covering over 70% of the planet's surface and generating a significant portion of Earth's oxygen. He underlined their importance as a source of food, medicine, and livelihoods for millions globally. He further elaborated on the crucial role oceans play in regulating climate by absorbing carbon dioxide and heat, making them vital in combating climate change. The program also addressed the numerous threats oceans face, including pollution, overfishing, habitat destruction, and the detrimental effects of climate change. Experts highlighted the dangers of plastic pollution, harming marine life and entering the human food chain. Overfishing was identified

as another significant threat, disrupting marine ecosystems and jeopardizing food security.

Around 250 volunteers, including faculty members from various departments, actively participated in the cleanup. To ensure safety, an ambulance with medical staff was stationed at the beach. All collected debris was handed over to GVMC Visakhapatnam for proper disposal and recycling. This beach cleanup program was part of a nationwide initiative, with similar events held simultaneously across 23 beaches in all maritime states of India. The program was jointly funded by the Ocean Society of India, the Ministry of Earth Sciences (Government of India), and the European Commission.

## Body-worn cameras for train ticket-checking staff

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a landmark move that prioritises passenger safety and service quality, the Waltair Division of East Coast Railway has unveiled body-worn cameras for its ticket-checking staff. This progressive initiative, spearheaded by Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Saurabh Prasad, marks a giant leap forward in leveraging technology for enhanced transparency and accountability across the vast railway network.

The rollout of body cameras signifies Indian Railways' unwavering commitment to fostering a secure and respectful travel experience. These cameras are expected to significantly reduce incidents of misconduct, violence, and discrepancies during ticket inspections, both onboard trains and at stations. Emphasising the importance of this initiative, DRM Saurabh Prasad stated, "Equipping our ticket-checking staff with body-worn cameras represents a pivotal step in our unwavering commitment to upholding transparency and professional-

ism within the Indian Railways system.

This not only bolsters passenger safety but also strengthens accountability and protects the reputation of our dedicated staff." Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Shri Sandeep and other prominent officials joined the launch event, underlining the significance of this development.

The body-worn cameras will play a crucial role in deterring untoward incidents and guaranteeing that ticket checks are conducted with fairness and respect. Additionally, footage captured by these cameras will provide concrete evidence in case of complaints or disputes, facilitating swift and effective resolution.

This innovative measure by Indian Railways underscores its unwavering dedication to passenger safety and service excellence. By seamlessly integrating advanced technology into daily operations, Indian Railways is taking a proactive approach towards building a more secure and transparent railway network for all its passengers.

## Railway Hospital observes World Brain Tumour Day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Divisional Railway Hospital, Vijayawada, SCR observed World Tumor Awareness Day on Saturday. An awareness programme on the Brain, Alzheimer's & Brain Health was conducted at New OPD Block. Dr M Sowri Bala, Chief Medical Superintendent, Railway Hospital graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The theme for this year is 'Together we can make a difference in the lives of those affected by Brain Tumours.'

Dr M Jaideep welcomed the audience and briefed them about the prevalence of Alzheimer's & Brain tumours in the community. Dr Sai



Snehita, a Radiation Oncologist, at AOI hospital, enlightened the audience about the causes and treatment of Brain tumours. He also encouraged everyone to undergo regular Health checkups for early detection.

Dr Haseena Begum, a Physician gave a PowerPoint presentation of Alzheimer's dis-

ease. She also briefed the audience on modalities of treatment.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr M SowriBala, CMS said that Nutrition and LifeStyle modifications play an important role in preventing tumours. She also highlighted the hospital's commitment to providing quality healthcare services to its beneficiaries. She stressed avoiding environmental hazards, exposure to radiation and avoiding smoking to lower the risk rate.

Dr M Jaideep, ACMS proposed a vote of thanks and concluded the event. Around 120 Railway Beneficiaries attended the programme today at Railway Hospital.

## 30 passengers of private bus have miraculous escape

PNS ■ NELLORE

As many as 30 passengers of a private plane had a miraculous escape as the bus caught fire at Chagallu village in Ulavapadu mandal in the wee hours on Saturday.

Police said that the Sri Tulasi private travel bus was going to Hyderabad from



Chennai. Flames erupted in the engine of the bus. The driver noticed the flames and stopped the bus.

As many as 30 passengers, who were travelling in the bus at the time, got down from the bus. All passengers escaped unhurt. However, the luggage of the passengers was destroyed in the fire.

## Heavy rains forecast in parts of AP till June 12

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The India Meteorological Department on Saturday forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning in parts of Andhra Pradesh for five days from June 8 to 12.

Thunderstorms have been predicted for parts of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP) and Rayalaseema.

Further, these places are also expected to witness gusty winds up to a speed of 40 km per hour (kmph).

"Southwest Monsoon has advanced into some more parts of central Arabian Sea, south Maharashtra, Telangana, some parts of south Chhattisgarh, south Odisha and some more parts of coastal Andhra Pradesh today," said

the Met department in a press release.

The northern limit of the weather system is now passing through Harnai, Baramati, Nizamabad, Sukma, Malkangiri, Vizianagaram and Islampur.

The weather department noted that conditions are favourable for further advance of the Southwest Monsoon into the remaining parts of the central Arabian Sea, some more parts of Maharashtra and Telangana in the next two to three days.

However, the cyclonic circulation over south Telangana and the neighbourhood at 1.5 km above mean sea level has become less marked, even as lower tropospheric southerly and south-westerly winds prevail over Andhra Pradesh and Yanam.



## CS reviews arrangements for CM's swearing-in ceremony

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad reviewed the arrangements with officials at the Vijayawada CS camp office on Saturday because N Chandrababu Naidu will take oath as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on June 12 at the meeting being organized near Gannavaram

Airport. During the review meeting, the CS said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Governor of the state and many other dignitaries will be present for this oath-taking ceremony, so he instructed the officials of the relevant departments to take strict measures. In this meeting, DGP Harish Kumar Gupta, Special

Chief Secretary MT Krishnababu, Chief Secretaries M Ravichandra, Shashi Bhushan Kumar, Additional DGP S Bagchi, TR&B Secretary PS Pradyumna, Civil Supplies and Horticulture Commissioners Arun Kumar, Sridhar, CRDA Commissioner Vivek Yadav, AP GENCO CMD Chakradhar Babu,

Eluru Range DIG Ashok Kumar, Krishna, NTR District Collectors DK Balaji, S Dilli Rao, Vijayawada Police Commissioner Ph D Ramakrishna, Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar, NTR District JC Sampath Kumar, Gannavaram Airport Director Lakshmi Kant Reddy and other department officials participated.

## Andhra Pradesh CRDA Commissioner inspects works at Amaravati



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) Commissioner Vivek Yadav inspected the construction works of AP CRDA and Amaravati Smart City under construction in the capital Amaravati along with the officials on Saturday.

The commissioner has ordered to immediately remove the bushes and trees especially along the trunk roads in Amaravati and at the building complexes under construction. A total of 76 JCB

machines were installed for the cleaning works and the commissioner inspected the works along with the engineering officers.

Later, he inspected the works of the Amaravati Command Control Center under construction at Rayapudi and issued orders to complete these works immediately. The commissioner also inspected the area where the foundation stone of Amaravati was laid at Uddandaryuni palem and instructed the staff to protect with security guards under the constant supervision of higher authorities.

## 'TDP activists demolished Morampudi flyover plaque'

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

YSRCP leader and former MP Margani Bharat Ram alleged that the TDP activists destroyed the plaque of Fly Over Bridge at Morampudi near here.

Talking to the media here on Saturday, Bharat Ram said that when he was the Rajahmundry MP, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of Fly Over Bridge and a plaque was unveiled by Union Minister Nitin Gattkari on the occasion. The Fly Over Bridge construction is going to be completed soon and it will be inaugurated.

Unable to digest the YSRCP's development programmes and successful completion of Fly Over Bridge, a group of TDP activists demolished the plaque. The newly elected TDP MLA Adireddy Srinivas responded to the destruction of the plaque in an irresponsible manner, he flayed.

The Ex-MP has claimed that he had striven a lot for the con-



struction of Fly Over Bridge at Morampudi and expedited the construction during this five-year tenure as an MP. Responding to the allegations of demolishing the 'Praja Vedika' convention centre at Undavalli, near Vijayawada, Margani Bharat Ram stated that the Praja Vedika was constructed defying the rules and guidelines of NGT.

He said that when he was the MP, four flyovers were sanctioned for Undrajavaram, Kaikalur, Tetali and Jonnada and an amount of Rs 345 crore was sanctioned for their construction, claiming that

they had worked with commitment for the development of the district.

He lamented he was unable to ascertain the reasons for the debacle. Despite fulfilling the 30-year pending dream of constructing a Flying Over Bridge at Morampudi, the people rejected him and he is still unable to find the exact reasons, he lamented.

"The people of the district elected the MLAs and MP hoping that they would do better than us but they are indulging in a demolition spree," Margani Bharam Ram slammed.

## Stringent action warned against social media posts inciting violence

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Superintendent of Police N V Manikanta Chandolu warned of stringent action against those who post inciting posts on social media.

In a release here on Saturday, the SP said that those who destroy the statues of political leaders and private properties would be dealt with firmly. He also warned of firm action against those who vitiate peace and tranquillity in the district.

The SP said that the admin of media and WhatsApp groups should be responsible if inciting posts are posted by anyone.

The SP said that the police had received information that stoking and inciting posts were being posted on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp groups. These kinds of provoking posts create fear among people and such posts also intimidate people.

An action will be taken immediately against the admin, if an inciting post is posted on any social media group, the SP warned. Those who post such posts on social media groups should be removed from the group by the admin immediately, the SP said. He said all steps were taken to safeguard the hormone among people in the society.



## KTR asks NDA govt to address NEET 2024 results issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA KT Rama Rao has voiced serious concerns about the recently announced NEET 2024 results, urging the newly formed NDA government to address the issue immediately. He highlighted several irregularities in the examination results that could significantly impact the future of millions of students. KTR noted that this year, an unprecedented 67 students achieved a perfect score of 720/720, securing All India Rank (AIR) 1. This unusual

occurrence raises questions about the examination process's integrity. Additionally, many students scored 718 and 719 marks, which seems highly improbable given the exam's marking scheme of (+4, -1).

The National Testing Agency (NTA) later admitted to awarding 'grace marks' to some students, with reports suggesting that some received as many as +100 grace marks. The results were also declared hastily on the same day as the election results, further fueling suspicions.

For the first time in five

years, no student from Telangana is in the top 5 ranks, which KTR attributes to irregularities in the results. He demands an explanation and transparency in the process used for allocating grace marks. KTR insists on a standardised methodology that benefits all students equally, not just a select group of 1,500 students. To ensure justice and fairness, KTR calls for the formation of a high-level expert committee to thoroughly investigate the issues surrounding the NEET 2024 results.

## TDP's national role sparks hopes for Vizag Railway Zone and VSP privatisation halt

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Amid the post-election landscape, the emergence of TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu as a central figure on the national platform has stirred optimism among the people. Now, attention shifts towards pressing local concerns, including the imminent establishment of a new railway zone headquartered in Visakhapatnam and the potential overturning of the decision to privatize Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the cornerstone of Visakhapatnam's industrial sector.

Despite enduring demands for Special Category Status (SCS) for Andhra Pradesh, this issue has largely remained unresolved. TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh emphasized that their alliance with the

NDA is unconditional, while the SCS matter is settled. Consequently, the new ruling party in Andhra Pradesh might pivot towards securing substantial funding for major projects like Polavaram instead of pushing for SCS.

The promise of a new railway zone was made by Prime Minister Modi during a pre-election rally in 2019. Recently, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw declared that construction on the South Coast Railway Zone headquarters would begin within 15 days of the state government handing over the designated site.

However, during the elections, Modi criticized the outgoing YSRCP government for alleged delays in land allocation, a claim that former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy strongly disputed.

Speaking to The Pioneer, JV Satyanarayana Murthy, convenor of the Railway Zone Sadhana Porata Samiti, expressed expectations, stating, "We anticipate the prompt operationalization of the zone with the backing of both the Centre and the new state government." The designated site for the headquarters covers 52.2 acres in Mudasaralova. Optimism is also growing that the TDP government may revise the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for metro rail projects in Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada, seeking viability gap funding from the Centre. Additionally, a proposal is on the table to build a six-lane expressway from Visakhapatnam to Bhogapuram International Airport, currently under construction by the GMR Group.

RINL unions, which have been staging peaceful protests against privatisation, hope that



the BJP, now reliant on TDP support due to its lack of an absolute majority, might reconsider the privatisation move. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved 100 percent disinvestment in January 2021. However, the unions are hopeful that TDP's electoral promise to oppose privatisation could lead to alternative strategies such as capital restructuring, interest holidays on borrowings, and the granting of captive iron ore mines to enhance the steel plant's financial stability, as it grapples with over Rs 20,000 crore in accumulated debt.

TDP MLA-elect from Gajuwaka, Palla Srinivasa Rao, assured during his campaign to pressure the BJP to halt privatisation and explore other options. Meanwhile, YSRCP leader and former Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath emphasized that it is now TDP's responsibility to leverage its influence over the BJP to address the demands of North Andhra's people and RINL employees. BJP State president Daggubati Purandeswari had also previously committed to convincing party leadership to withdraw the privatisation decision.

## Modi to attend Naidu's swearing-in ceremony

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi is expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony of N Chandrababu Naidu as the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh on June 12, an official said on Saturday.

Modi is set to be sworn in as prime minister at a ceremony on the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday evening.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi, state Governor (S Abdul Nazeer) and other eminent people are expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony (of Naidu)," Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad said in a statement.

Naidu is scheduled to take oath at 11:27 am on Wednesday at the Kesarpalli IT Park near the Gannavaram airport.

The chief secretary reviewed the arrangements being made for the ceremony and directed officials to make foolproof preparations.

Several VIPs are expected to arrive at the Gannavaram airport.

Senior IAS officer PS Padhyumna has been appointed as the state coordinator for the swearing-in ceremony.

## BRS demands removal of Adityanath Das from post

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy has called for the immediate removal of Adityanath Das from his position as an advisor to the Telangana Irrigation Department. He criticised Das's appointment, labelling it as detrimental to the interests of Telangana.

Niranjan Reddy alleged that the appointment signified the influence of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu over Telangana even before the new government was sworn in. He questioned whether Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would act in the state's best interest or succumb to Naidu's directives out of fear of losing his position.

Highlighting Das's controversial role in the past, Niranjan Reddy pointed out that Das played a key role in halting the Palamuru-Rangareddy project during the Jalayagan era through legal interventions. He questioned the rationale behind appointing someone who served in high-ranking positions in the Andhra Pradesh Irrigation Department as an advisor to Telangana's irrigation sector.

He emphasised that Das has been known for his opposition to Telangana's water projects and was instrumental in diverting water from the Krishna projects to Andhra Pradesh. He expressed doubt over whether Das, who has been fighting for Andhra's interests for the past decade, could now do justice to Telangana. The former minister also questioned the Congress party's decision to appoint Das, suggesting that it could lead to significant setbacks for Telangana's irrigation projects. He cited Das's involvement in controversial projects such as Pothireddy Padu, Dummugudem, and the Rayalaseema Lift Scheme, which have historically diverted water away from Telangana. He argued that Telangana has many water experts with extensive experience and knowledge of its projects and resources. He expressed dismay over the decision to overlook these experts in favour of Das, who has a track record of working against Telangana.

In his concluding remarks, Niranjan Reddy warned that under the current Congress administration, regions like Palamuru might once again face severe water shortages and turn into arid zones. He urged the government to reconsider Das's appointment and remove him from the advisory position to protect Telangana's water interests.

## 12 first-timers, two turncoats among TDP's 16 new Lok Sabha MPs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 16 new TDP members of the 18th Lok Sabha include 12 newcomers, two YSRCP turncoats and two experienced MPs, who catapulted the regional party to national prominence and 'kingmaker' status.

Amalapuram (SC) Lok Sabha election winner G M Harish is the son of former Lok Sabha Speaker GMC Balayoghi, who died in a chopper crash in 2002.

Harish, a first-time MP had contested the 2019 elections but lost to YSRCP's Chinta Anuradha. In 2024, he trounced YSR Congress' R

Varaprasada Rao by a margin of over 3.4 lakh votes.

Ambica G Lakshminarayana Valmiki won the Anantapur Lok Sabha seat, defeating YSRCP's M Sankar Narayana by a margin of 1.8 lakh votes.

The first-time MP is a businessman and holds a B.Sc degree.

T Krishna Prasad, a former IPS officer, bagged the Bapatla (SC) seat. He trumped YSRCP's Nandigam Suresh Babu by a margin of over two lakh votes to emerge a first-time MP. Prasad was a former BJP leader.

First-time MP D Prasada Rao won the Chittoor (SC) Lok Sabha seat. He is a former

IRS officer-turned-real estate businessman.

Eluru Lok Sabha segment winner, P Mahesh Yadav, is a 36-year-old first-time Parliamentarian. He is the son of former TTD chairman P Sudhakar Yadav and son-in-law of senior TDP leader Y Ramakrishnu.

P Chandrasekhar, who won from Guntur, is one of the richest candidates to contest the elections in the country, with family assets of over Rs 5,000 crore.

A doctor-turned-entrepreneur and a politician now, Chandrasekhar secured an impressive 27th rank in the EAMCET examination. He

defeated YSRCP's K Venkata Rosaiah by a margin of 3.4 lakh votes. B K Parthasarathi defeated YSRCP's J Shanta to bag the Hindupur Lok Sabha constituency by a margin of 1.3 lakh votes. Parthasarathi is a veteran TDP leader. He was elected to the Lok Sabha earlier from the same segment in 1999.

B Nagaraju Panchalingala beat YSRCP candidate BY Ramaiah in Kurnool by a margin of 1.1 lakh votes.

The first-time winner was a former BJP leader who had also worked as a lecturer. TDP's lone woman MP B Shabari defeated P

Brahmananda Reddy from YSRCP with a margin of 1.1 lakh votes to win the Nandyala Lok Sabha seat. A former BJP leader, first-time MP and a medical doctor, 40-year-old Shabari comes from a family of politicians.

L Sri Krishna Devarayalu left the YSRCP in January to join TDP and emerge victorious from Narasaraopeta constituency. He won the 2019 election as a YSRCP candidate from the same constituency but quit the party as Jagan Mohan Reddy was planning to shift him to a different seat.

TDP's Nellore Lok Sabha winner V Prabhakar Reddy was a YSRCP Rajya Sabha

member, who quit the party to join TDP along with his wife V Prasanthi Reddy in the run-up to polls. Prabhakar Reddy was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2018. He defeated senior YSRCP leader V Vijayasai Reddy by a majority of 2.45 lakh votes to emerge a first-time Lok Sabha MP.

M Srinivasulu Reddy, who quit YSRCP citing 'self-respect' issues to join TDP defeated C Bhaskar Reddy in Ongole. He is the father of Raghava Magunta, who is an accused-turned-approver in the Delhi excise policy scam case.

Srinivasulu Reddy was elected from the Ongole Lok Sabha constituency on a YSRCP tick-

et in 2019. The 37-year-old K Ram Mohan Naidu is already a three-time MP from the Telugu Desam Party. He is the son of late TDP leader K Yerran Naidu, who died in an accident more than a decade ago.

Ram Mohan Naidu first entered the Parliament in 2014 from Srikakulam and won from the seat for a third straight time. K Sivanath from TDP defeated his older brother K Srinivas from YSRCP to win the Vijayawada seat by over 2.82 lakh votes.

Sivanath was nominated by the TDP to contest the Vijayawada seat ahead of his brother, which forced the latter to quit TDP and join

YSRCP. Sivanath is a first-time MP.

First-time Lok Sabha MP and TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu's close relative M Sribharat won the Visakhapatnam seat, scoring over B Jhansi Lakshmi by a margin of over five lakh votes.

Owner of Gitam group of educational institutions, Sribharat secured 9,07,467 votes. He is the son-in-law of noted Telugu actor N Balakrishna, who himself got elected as Hindupur MLA. K Appala Naidu, a former journalist won the Vizianagaram seat by a margin of 2.49 lakh votes, to emerge as a first-time MP.

# 'Ties with China must be based on mutual respect'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday thanked China for congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his election victory and said it would continue to make efforts for normalisation of the bilateral ties based on "mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity".

The comments by External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came as relations between India and China remained frosty in view of the lingering border row along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

Jaiswal was replying to a congratulatory message to Modi posted by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on X.

"Thank you @MFA\_China for congratulating PM @narendramodi on his election victory. Will continue to pursue



The comments by External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came as relations between India and China remained frosty in view of the lingering border row along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh

efforts towards normalisation of India-China ties based on mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity," Jaiswal said on X. India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for normalisation of overall ties.

On June 5, the spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry said: "Congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi, BJP and the National Democratic Alliance on the election victory. We look forward to a healthy & stable China-India relationship."

Leaders of four out of five P-5 countries have congratulated Modi on winning a third term. However, there is no congratulatory message yet from Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The permanent members of the UN Security Council, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, China and France are known as P5 nations.

## Akhilesh Yadav to be SP's leader in Lok Sabha

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav will be the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, the formalities for which will be completed in Delhi.

Yadav will resign from the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, where he is the Leader of Opposition, a senior party leader said on Saturday.

Rajendra Chaudhary, the Samajwadi Party's chief spokesperson, told PTI, "It is understood that Yadav will be the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha but there is a formality of choosing the leader of the parliamentary party and this will be completed in Delhi."

"The formality of electing the leader of the parliamentary party will be completed after the swearing-in of the prime minister and the selection of the Lok Sabha's protem speaker," he added.

# 'INDIA not claim to form govt does not mean it won't tomorrow'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday that her party would adopt a "wait and watch" approach on the political situation at the Centre and asserted that the opposition INDIA bloc may not have staked claim to form the government today, but that does not mean it will not do it tomorrow.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting of TMC MPs and senior leaders, Banerjee said she would be pleased if the "weak and unstable" NDA government was removed from power.

"The BJP is forming the government undemocratically and illegally. Today, the INDIA bloc may not have staked a claim to form the government, but that doesn't mean they won't tomorrow. Let's wait for some time," she said.

Ultimately, the INDIA bloc will form the government in



the coming days, the Trinamool Congress supreme asserted.

The TMC had exited the INDIA bloc in West Bengal in January but stated that she would continue to be part of the opposition bloc at the national level.

According to sources, during the closed-door meeting, Banerjee told party leaders and MPs that the "NDA government will not complete its full term."

While talking to reporters after the meeting also, Banerjee expressed confidence that the

"unstable and weak BJP government at the Centre" won't last long.

"The NDA government to be formed will be unstable, BJP has not secured majority; they are dependent on allies. Let's see how long they can get along with their allies," she said.

Banerjee remarked that as the mandate was against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "he should have stepped down this time and allowed someone else to take over."

"The country needs change; the country wants change. This mandate was for change. We are waiting and keeping a watch on the situation," she said. She also announced that the TMC would not attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new government.

Banerjee stated that the MPs in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha would seek the repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

## 2 police outposts, 70 houses torched in Manipur's Jiribam, SP transferred

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Tensions heightened in Manipur's Jiribam district on Saturday after suspected militants torched two police outposts, a forest office and at least 70 houses, prompting the authorities to transfer the superintendent of police, officials said.

A contingent of more than 70 state police commandos was airlifted from Imphal to Jiribam to assist security personnel in their operations against militants, they said.

Meanwhile, around 239 Meitei people, mostly women and children, were evacuated from peripheral areas of Jiribam on Friday, and moved to a newly set up relief camp at a multi-sports complex in the district, the officials said.

According to a senior officer, suspected militants torched more than 70 houses in Lamtai Khunou, Dibong Khunou, Nunkhal and Begra villages. He said the villagers vacated their residences and took shelter in a relief camp.

The SP's transfer order was issued hours after police outposts of Jiri Mukh and Choto Bekra and the Goakhal forest beat office were set on fire this morning, the officer said.

The state government transferred Jiribam SP A

Ghanashyam Sharma to the post of additional director of the Manipur Police Training College, according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms.

M Pradip Singh, who was serving as the additional director of the police training college, will take charge as the senior superintendent of police of Jiribam district.

Reacting to the incidents of fresh violence, newly elected Congress MP from the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat Angomcha Bimol Akoijam urged the state government to protect the lives and properties of the people of Jiribam district.

"I have talked to district officials of Jiribam. Those in the town are being provided security, while those in peripheral areas are not being provided security," Akoijam told reporters here.

Violence broke out in Jiribam in the ethnic strife-torn state on Thursday evening after suspected militants killed a 59-year-old man.

The man, identified as Soibam Saratkumar Singh, went missing after he had gone to his farm on June 6 and later, his body was found, with wounds made by a sharp object, one officer said.



# Development work will continue under Modi: MP CM

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday expressed confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership abilities affirming the slogan "Modi hai to mumkin hai", and said development work won't hamper due to the formation of a coalition government.

"Coalition governments are a part of democracy. This is the speciality of

democracy. 'Modi hai to mumkin hai' (with Modi, everything is possible)," the chief minister told reporters when asked about potential impacts on development work due to the formation of a coalition government at the Centre.

The BJP, which failed to secure a majority on its own in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, has enlisted the support of Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP and the JD (U) of Nitish



Kumar.

Yadav highlighted the democratic nature of coalition governments led in the past by the then prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee, P V Narasimha Rao, and Manmohan Singh.

He recalled that Congress had won 145 and 206 seats in the 2004 and 2009 general elections, respectively, suggesting that the Grand Old Party had failed to achieve a majority on its own. "The BJP won 240 seats in the

recently-concluded Lok Sabha elections, which are more than the tally of constituencies won by the Congress in the general elections of 2014, 2019, and 2024," he said and emphasised Modi's ability to create records and history.

Yadav cited Modi's record of accomplishments, both as Gujarat Chief Minister and as Prime Minister, stressing that development activities would not be hampered despite the coalition government formation.

# LDF govt's progress report a 'joke', says UDF

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The opposition Congress-led UDF on Saturday termed as a "joke" the progress report released by the LDF government in Kerala regarding the work it has done in the past one year, saying it was full of "untruths, exaggerations and falsehoods".

The BJP too criticised the progress report saying that the state government was claiming to have made great progress when people were not getting social security and welfare pensions and unemployment was high in Kerala.

BJP leader V Muraliedharan said that Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's situation was that of a student who has scored zero in all subjects and is embarrassed to face his or her parents.

"However, for the CM to release the progress report of



the government without any embarrassment and blaming the Centre for all the problems, he has to be very thick-skinned.

"He is one of the most thick-skinned CMs Kerala has ever seen -- that is what he showed yesterday," the BJP leader said at a press meet here.

Earlier in the day, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V D Satheesan said that anyone looking at the report would be

amazed by the claims made in it.

Citing the example of the agriculture sector, Satheesan contended that the Left government, when it came to power for a second consecutive term, had promised to increase farmers' revenue by 50 per cent and raise the price of rubber to Rs 250 per kilogram.

"However, what they (state government) did was to write to the Centre to increase the rubber price to Rs 250. The coconut and rice grain collection has failed. The minimum support price of rice grain was reduced.

"The entire agriculture sector is in crisis and on top of that there is the problem of human-animal conflict which the government is unable to control," he contended.

Satheesan alleged that all other government departments, including health, were not functioning properly.

## Three in running for opposition leader's post in Delhi Assembly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri elected to the Lok Sabha, the BJP will have to pick a replacement from among its seven remaining MLAs in the House.

Bidhuri, who won the Lok Sabha elections from the South Delhi constituency, will have to vacate his seat in the assembly, bringing the BJP's tally down to seven in the 70-member House.

A senior party leader in Delhi said, "The names of Mohan Singh Bisht, Ajay Mahawar and Vijender Gupta are doing the rounds as probable replacements for Bidhuri."

Mahawar, the MLA from Ghinda in northeast Delhi, was convener of the Delhi BJP's poll management committee for the parliamentary elections.

# INDIA CORNER

## Five recruited by banned outfits rescued from Manipur



The Assam Rifles have rescued five youths from Manipur's Tengnoupal district bordering Myanmar, who were recruited by the banned militant outfits - People's Liberation Army and Prepak (PRO)...the statement issued by the security force on Saturday.

The five youths have been handed over to their respective families during an event held at Inspector General Assam Rifles (S) headquarters in Mantripukhuri in Imphal. "The five youths were misguided and recruited for joining PLA and PREPAK (PRO)...the ongoing conflict between the Myanmar army and rebel forces heightened the peril they faced, prompting them to run away from their camps in search of safety," the statement said. Assam Rifles demonstrated steadfast commitment by facilitating their extrication from danger, it said. The operation carried out in Tengnoupal district underscores the pledge of Assam Rifles to uphold peace and security in Manipur, the statement added.

## Una hottest at 40.2 deg C in Himachal, scattered rain likely



There was no significant change in the minimum temperatures across Himachal Pradesh and Una recorded the hottest place with 40.2 degrees Celsius, the local weather office said on Saturday. The Meteorological Centre here also predicted rain in isolated areas in middle and high hills

on Sunday and heatwave in low hills from Monday to Wednesday. The centre predicted rain and issued a yellow warning of thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds at the speed of 30-40 km per hour at isolated places in Chamba, Mandi, Kullu, Shimla and Kangra in Kinnaur and Lahaul and Spiti districts on Sunday. It also issued a warning of heatwave in the low hills of Solan, Sirmaur, Mandi, Una, Bilaspur and Hamirpur from Monday to Wednesday. According to the local Met office, Keylong in tribal Lahaul and Spiti district was coldest at night, recording a minimum temperature at 5.7 degrees Celsius. So far, the rain deficit in the ongoing summer season from June 1 to 8 was four per cent as the state received 15.3 mm rain against average rainfall of 15.9 mm, the Met office said.

## Woman beats up baby, sends video to husband; arrested



A woman was arrested for allegedly beating up her one-year-old child brutally and sending the video of the act to her estranged husband in Kerala's Alappuzha district, police said on Saturday. In the purported video, the woman could be seen hitting

the child repeatedly and saying "watch this and enjoy". Police said a case was registered against the woman who hailed from Kuttampoor in Mannar here based on a complaint by her husband, who comes from Thiruvananthapuram. "As per her statement, her husband married another woman recently and she was frustrated over this. She claimed that this made her beat the child and send the visuals to the man," a police officer said. The woman was arrested today under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Juvenile Justice Act, he added. Further action against her would be decided after consulting with the local child welfare committee as she was the guardian of two children including the victim toddler, police further said.

# AAP demands SC-monitored SIT probe into NEET 'irregularities'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Saturday demanded a Supreme Court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged irregularities in NEET-UG, saying it is a serious matter concerning the future of the country's youths.

The BJP, however, called out AAP for its "double standards" on the exam results.

During a press conference, AAP leader Jasmine Shah slammed the BJP, saying most of the allegations that point to a "big scam" in the exam have come from states ruled by the saffron party. He said the first reports of paper leaks came



from Bihar and Gujarat. Then it was found that out of the 67 toppers, six were from one centre in Haryana's Jhajjar.

The results for the medical entrance exam the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG)

were announced by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday.

"The National Testing Agency is silent over questions on the paper leak and its scope, which could be extensive. Again, grace marks given to some students is also inexplicable and there is no transparency in it," Shah charged.

AAP resolutely stands with the country's youth in this matter as it concerns the future of lakhs of students, he said.

"We demand a Supreme Court-monitored SIT probe into all the irregularities so that the truth comes out," he said. The NTA announced on

Saturday that the Union education ministry has set up a four-member panel to review the grace marks awarded to more than 1,500 candidates in the exam.

The move comes amid allegations of inflation of marks leading to 67 candidates sharing the first rank in the exam.

The NTA denied any irregularities and said the changes made in National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks and grace marks for losing time at the examination centres were some of the reasons behind the students scoring higher marks.

# Alcohol could worsen mood swings leading to bipolar disorder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drinking alcohol could worsen one's symptoms of bipolar disorder by destabilising mood and affecting efficiency at work, and it is not the other way round that is consuming alcohol because of mood swings, a new research has found.

The mental condition is marked by unusual shifts in emotions, energy and activity levels, and can sometimes be accompanied by hallucinations and delusions.

those from the University of Michigan, US, wanted to understand the long-term effects of consuming alcohol on the mood and functioning of adults having bipolar disorder. The findings are published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open.

For the study, the researchers included 584 adults diagnosed with the mood disorder, who had been part of the larger ongoing US-based Prechter Longitudinal Study of Bipolar



Disorder (PLS-BD) for at least five years. Data for analysis was collected over a follow-up period of 5-16 years.

The participants' alcohol habits were assessed using

the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test, a WHO-approved questionnaire to screen patients for problematic and harmful alcohol consumption. Other well-known,

standardised questionnaires were used for gauging the patients' depression, mania or hypomania, anxiety, and functioning.

The researchers found that consuming alcohol more than one's typical levels led to worse depressive and manic or hypomanic moods, along with an affected performance at work.

"A person reporting alcohol use above their own mean amount tended to experience more depressive symptoms at the next time point, but increased depressive symptoms were not associated with

greater subsequent alcohol use," the authors wrote.

"Regarding mania or hypomania, alcohol use exceeding one's own mean amount was associated with an increase in manic or hypomanic symptoms at the next time point, but not vice versa," they wrote.

Medication was also a factor, as the researchers found that harmful levels of alcohol consumption impacted the patients not taking antipsychotic and antidepressant medications to a greater extent, compared to those taking these medications.

# Looking forward to doing 'exciting work' in India, says Elon Musk

PNS ■ NEW YORK

American tech billionaire Elon Musk has said he is looking forward to his companies doing "exciting work" in India, as he congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his historic election victory.

Modi will be administered the oath of office on June 9, his third consecutive term as Prime Minister.

"Congratulations @narendramodi on your victory in the world's largest democratic elections! Looking forward to my companies doing exciting work in India," Musk, 52, said in a post on X on Friday.

Responding to Musk's post, Prime Minister Modi said: "Appreciate your greetings @elonmusk." Modi said the talented Indian youth, the country's demographics, predictable policies and stable democratic polity would continue to provide the business environment for all its partners.

The congratulatory message came two months after the CEO of the electric carmaker Tesla and microblogging plat-



Responding to Musk's post, Prime Minister Modi said: "Appreciate your greetings @elonmusk." Modi said the talented Indian youth, the country's demographics, predictable policies and stable democratic polity would continue to provide the business environment for all its partners

form X in April postponed his proposed visit to India due to very heavy Tesla obligations. Musk -- who was expected to be in India on April 21 and 22 and scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi -- later wrote on X that he is looking forward to coming to India later this year.

In June last year, Musk met with Modi during the latter's US visit and stated that he planned to visit India in 2024 while expressing confidence that Tesla would enter the Indian market soon. His proposed visit had raised

expectations that he would announce plans for electric car maker Tesla to set up shop in the country, along with his satcom venture Starlink.

It was also expected that Musk would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments could be to the tune of billions of dollars and the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest.

Not just electric cars, he is also eyeing the Indian market for his satellite internet business Starlink, for which regulatory approvals are awaited.

Musk had in the past sought import duty reduction in India for it to be able to sell Tesla cars in the country.

Musk's plan to visit India in April came on the heels of the government announcing a new electric vehicle policy, under which import duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of US\$ 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla.



# GSTN rolls out form for tobacco manufacturers to report inputs, outputs to tax authorities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Network (GSTN) has rolled out a special form for manufacturers of pan masala and tobacco products to report inputs and outputs procured with tax authorities to check evasion.

This new form GST SRM-II came within a month of GSTN rolling out form GST SRM-I for registering machines of such manufacturers.

"The second form namely Form GST SRM-II is also available on the portal. Taxpayers dealing in the manufacture of Pan Masala and Tobacco products can now report the details of inputs and outputs procured and consumed for the relevant month," GSTN said in an update to its

taxpayers on June 7.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the newly available Form GST SRM-II requires detailed monthly reporting of inputs and outputs.

"This form aims to enhance transparency and accountability in the manufacturing process of Pan Masala and Tobacco products. Taxpayers must meticulously document their procurement and consumption of inputs to avoid any discrepancies and ensure accurate tax filings," Mohan said.

Taxpayers are advised to familiarise themselves with the details and instructions provided in these forms to ensure seamless compliance and avoid any potential penalties, he added.

# Sri Lanka has made 'strong progress' on debt restructuring front: IMF

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's macroeconomic policy reforms have started to "bear fruit" and the country is expected to reach agreements with external commercial creditors soon, the IMF has said ahead of the second review of its US\$ 2.9 billion bailout programme to the cash-strapped country.

Addressing a press conference on Friday, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Communication Department

Director Julie Kozack asserted that Sri Lanka has made "sufficiently strong progress on the debt restructuring front."

She said that the island nation's programme performance is "strong", with most quantitative and structural conditions for the second review met or implemented with delay, adding that reforms are still ongoing in some areas.

The second review of the

IMF's Extended Fund Facility under the US\$ 2.9 billion bailout of Sri Lanka has been set for June 12.

Kozack confirmed that the IMF's Executive Board will meet to discuss the second review and the Article IV Consultation.

Under Article IV of the IMF's Articles of Agreement, the global lender holds bilateral discussions with members, typically every year, with a staff team visiting the country, collecting economic and financial information, and discussing with officials the country's economic development policies.

"In Sri Lanka, we do see macroeconomic policy reform starting to bear fruit," Kozack said, adding that "commendable outcomes" include rapid disinflation, robust reserve accumulation, and initial signs of economic growth while preserving the financial system's stability.

# CCI proposes amendments to general rules, seeks stakeholder feedback

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) has sought stakeholder comments on the proposed amendments to the CCI (General) Regulations, 2009, following recent changes to the Competition Act.

The amendments came from the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023, which introduced new provisions and updating the existing ones in the Competition Act, 2002. The CCI has proposed updates to align the general regulations with the latest framework.

As part of the proposed changes, the competition watchdog has detailed a process for implementing and monitoring its orders under various sections of the Act. This includes the appointment of independent agencies to oversee the implementation of the orders.

These agencies, which could include, accounting firms, management consultancies, or professional organisations, will ensure compliance and reporting to any non-implementation to the CCI.

Further, it will also maintain the confidentiality and



Further, payment to the agencies will be made by individuals or entities involved in proceedings, who have filed applications under the CCI (Settlement) Regulations, 2024, or the Competition Commission of India (Commitment) Regulations, 2024

avoid conflicts of interest.

Additionally, CCI also holds the authority to suspend or terminate the engagement of these agencies as necessary.

Such decisions, including revocations, will be recorded in writing and are not subject to judicial review.

Further, payment to the agencies will be made by individuals or entities

involved in proceedings, who have filed applications under the CCI (Settlement) Regulations, 2024, or the Competition Commission of India (Commitment) Regulations, 2024.

The payments are to be deposited with the regulator or as directed, contingent on the satisfactory performance of the agencies' responsibilities.

In addition, one major change under the new draft is the procedure for imposing penalties. The amendments stipulate that no penalty order or direction under the norms will be made unless the affected party has received a show cause notice or has been given a reasonable opportunity to present their case.

The competition watchdog has invited stakeholders to submit comments on the draft amendments by July 8.

In April 2023, "the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023 was passed by the government incorporating certain new provisions in the Act and amending certain provisions previously existing ones."

"This created a need for amendment/ repeal/ overhauling of the various regulations framed by the CCI as well as for introduction of certain new ones," CCI said in a consultation note.

The draft amendments are designed to incorporate changes from the Competition Amendment Act of 2023.

CCI has emphasised these changes will strengthen the regulatory framework and effective enforcement of the competition norms in India.

# UP RERA sets format for possession letters to flat buyers

PNS ■ NOIDA

To prevent arbitrariness being done by promoters through the offer of possession letters sent to flat buyers and to eliminate the disputes arising between them due to this, the UP RERA on Saturday said it has made available a model format of the letter on its website.

The Uttar Pradesh Real Estate Regulatory Authority (UP RERA) recalled its order issued on May 29 in which it had clarified that the promot-

ers will issue an offer of possession to the allottees in the same format as available on the portal.

It had also directed project promoters to make no binding conditions on the allottees in any way through the offer of possession letter, the UP RERA said in a statement.

"The promoters send 'final demand letter' and 'final demand notice' using the name and language of 'Offer of Possession', which creates confusion among the allottees,

and it carries some binding conditions. 'Offer of Possession' should be meant only for the purpose of taking possession," UP RERA Chairman Sanjay Bhosreddy said.

"Hence, we have made available a model 'Offer of Possession' on the portal and any other format of letter will not be valid. This will remove confusion among the stakeholders and help in disposal of disputes related to it," Bhosreddy added.

# 'Expedite revenue collection'

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren has directed the Commercial Tax department to expedite revenue collection in order to achieve the Rs 26,000 crore collection target in the ongoing fiscal, officials said on Saturday.

So far Rs 3,500 crore tax collection has been made against a target of Rs 6,000 crore for the first quarter.

The officials said that the directions were given in the course of a review of the Commercial Tax department. Soren also directed the department to prepare a comparative report by obtaining

GST-related assessments in this context from states like Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

According to the Commercial Tax Department, an amount of Rs 165 crore sanctioned by the Centre as GST compensation in 2021-22 was still pending.

The officials informed the CM that the department is making efforts to increase the revenue through schemes like one-time tax settlement. They also advocate for the need to fill up the vacant posts of Additional Commissioner and Joint Commissioner in the Commercial Tax Department.

# 'Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi top UK's investment flows from India'



PNS ■ LONDON

Maharashtra followed by Karnataka and Delhi are the top three states of India bringing in foreign direct investment (FDI) into the UK, according to a new joint report produced by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the High Commission of India in the UK.

"Indian Assets: Charting the Journeys of Indian Companies in the UK", launched in London earlier this week, revealed that companies headquartered in Maharashtra brought in the highest amount of FDI into the UK at 20 per cent in 2023, followed by Karnataka (12 per cent) and Delhi (8.6 per cent).

Completing the top 10 tallies are the states of Gujarat (7.1 per cent), Tamil Nadu (6.7 per cent), Telangana (6.5 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (5.9 per cent), Haryana (4.5 per cent), West Bengal (3.14 per cent) and Kerala (3.05 per cent) -- making up 78 per cent of the total FDI from India into the

UK.

"As India and the UK continue to evolve and navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing global landscape, I believe that our businesses reimagining the India-UK corridor will realise our shared vision and aspiration for a secure and sustainable future prosperity," said Vikram Doraiswami, the Indian High Commissioner to the UK, who launched the report in London.

The analysis finds the leading sector bringing in FDI from India in terms of the number of companies and employees is IT and software, highlighting the achievements of Indian companies in the UK across sectors such as automotive, electric car batteries, diagnostics and healthcare, and technology.

It also spotlights the positive impact Indian companies can have on heritage British brands and how the value of these legacy brands is retained and protected when acquired by Indian companies.

"Today, Indian companies

with operations in the UK have integrated themselves into the British economy, making their mark in industries in almost all leading sectors. Their ability to adapt, innovate, and forge meaningful partnerships has not only propelled their growth but has also enriched the economy of the UK and its regions, promoting job creation, driving investment, and fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion," said CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee.

Among some of the other findings of the report, new Indian students cumulatively contributed an estimated GBP 4.3 billion to UK universities against the backdrop of a 5 per cent increase in UK student visas last year.

It also showcases the robust relationship that Indian companies have across different UK regions, with the West Midlands, London and the north-west being the top recipients of Indian FDI in the UK across the fields of automotive, software and IT services and energy.

# MONEY MATTERS

## Bajaj Housing Finance files papers for Rs 7,000-cr IPO



Bajaj Housing Finance has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 7,000 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares of up to Rs 4,000 crore and an

offer for sale (OFS) of equity shares worth Rs 3,000 crore by parent Bajaj Finance, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The share sale is being conducted to comply with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) regulations, which require upper-layer non-banking finance companies to be listed on stock exchanges by September 2025. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to augment the company's capital base to meet future capital requirements. Bajaj Housing Finance is a non-deposit-taking housing finance company registered with the National Housing Bank since September 2015. It offers financial solutions for purchasing and renovating residential and commercial properties.

## Excise case: Delhi court grants interim bail to businessman Arora



Delhi court has granted two-week interim bail to businessman Amit Arora, the director of Gurugram-based Buddy Retail Pvt Limited, in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam. Special judge for ED and CBI matters, Kavari Baweja, noted in an order

passed on June 6 that the accused's wife had to undergo a surgical procedure and he needed to take care of her. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and BRS leader K Kavitha, among others, are currently in judicial custody in the case. The judge noted the submissions made by senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for the accused, that father of the accused's wife had already expired and her mother was stated to be aged around 72 years and a resident of Mohali, Punjab, and her two brothers were residents of Bangalore and London, UK. The judge further noted that no other family member, cousin etc. stays in the house or even in the proximity and hardly visit the applicant's house in order to take care of the wife and children.

## SECI invites bids for 5.39 L MT/annum green ammonia



State-owned Solar Energy Corporation of India has invited bids for the selection of ammonia producers for the annual supply of 5.39 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of green ammonia. The bids are invited under SIGHT Programme of the National Green Hydrogen

Mission (NGHM). According to the statement, Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) has issued a Request for Selection (RfS) of green ammonia producers for the production of green ammonia in India through cost-based competitive bidding under Mode 2A of SIGHT programme of the NGHM being implemented by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE). The bidding for a total available capacity of 5.39 lakh Metric Tonnes (MT)/annum of Green Ammonia intended for production and supply will be carried out through e-bidding followed by e-Reverse Auction process. Green Ammonia produced will be supplied to the fertilizer companies, it stated. The MNRE had earlier issued the Scheme Guidelines for implementation of SIGHT Programme - Component II: Incentive for Procurement of Green Ammonia Production (under Mode2A) of the NGHM. SECI has been appointed as implementing agency for this Scheme.

# 'Modi good not just for India but for entire South Asia'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi guarantees stability not only in India but in the entire South Asia region, a prominent Pakistani American businessman said Friday as he congratulated the people of India on the peaceful and successful conduct of the world's largest democratic exercise.

"I have always said that Modi's leadership is necessary for India's future stability, preventing multiple parties from coming and destabilizing the constitution. Modi's leadership is a guarantee of India's stability and future of India," Pakistani-American businessman Sajid Tarar said in an interview.

"...Modi is not only good for India, but he is also good for Pakistan as well. The allegations against him that he is anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan is politically motivated," he said adding that the relationship with Pakistan would improve and there would be an increase in trade between the two South Asian nations



With Modi coming to power for a third term, people in Pakistan hope that this will result in an improvement in its relationship with India, he said.

Responding to a question, Tarar said he was expecting that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would partici-

pate in the swearing-in ceremony of Modi and added that it was "disappointing" that so far there has been no congratulatory message from him.

"...Modi is not only good for India, but he is also good for Pakistan as well. The allegations against him that he is anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan is

politically motivated," he said adding that the relationship with Pakistan would improve and there would be an increase in trade between the two South Asian nations.

"Today, Pakistan is facing political instability and is in the midst of an economic crisis. Observing that Pakistan has been China's proxy against India, he hoped that Islamabad would try to move away from that and improve its ties with New Delhi," Tarar said.

He said like India, Pakistan also needs strong leadership to handle political instability and economic issues. No Prime Minister has completed a full term, contributing to the country's problems, Tarar added.



# DISCOVER THE DESERT SERENGETI AND ENCHANTING ISLAND OF BUTTERFLIES

Sharjah creates a 'la African Safari' in the Desert and its commitment to nature shines at Al Noor Island, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

Sharjah, a jewel in the crown of the United Arab Emirates, boasts a captivating terrain that marries the charm of golden deserts with the allure of pristine coastlines along the Arabian Gulf. The landscape is punctuated by rolling sand dunes, tranquil oases, and rugged mountains that rise in the eastern region, creating a picturesque backdrop to its vibrant cityscape. Sharjah's climate is characterized by its arid nature, with hot summers that see temperatures soar, and mild, pleasant winters that offer a refreshing respite. The gentle coastal breeze, coupled with the serene desert air, weaves a unique atmospheric tapestry, making Sharjah a place of both stark beauty and subtle elegance. However, it lacks the lush green vegetation and abundance found in tropical climates. Yet, this absence is masterfully compensated by human ingenuity, as nature is carefully crafted and enhanced through thoughtful intervention.

Sharjah has been a beacon of cultural heritage in the region. However, not many people know its commitment towards nature. In fact, it has one of the rarest treats around the world to showcase which has never tried elsewhere on the large scale. Sharjah's commitment to preserving nature and promoting biodiversity is exemplified through its innovative projects, notably creating Serengeti and Savana in the heart of the desert and organising the African Safari in the desert. As if that was not enough it also has a full-on nature conservation project at in Al Noor Island which hosts thousands of species of plants and birds and has a unique Butterfly House. These initiatives reflect Sharjah's dedication to balancing development with sustainability and fostering a deep respect for the natural world.

## A 'LA AFRICAN SAFARI' IN THE DESERT

Sharjah's African Safari, set against the backdrop of the Arabian Desert, is a testament to the emirate's vision of creating unique and sustainable tourism experiences. This ambitious project recreates the diverse ecosystems of Africa, providing a sanctuary for a wide range of species in an environment that mirrors their natural habitats. The African Safari in Sharjah is not just a tourist attraction; it is a conservation effort aimed at protecting endangered

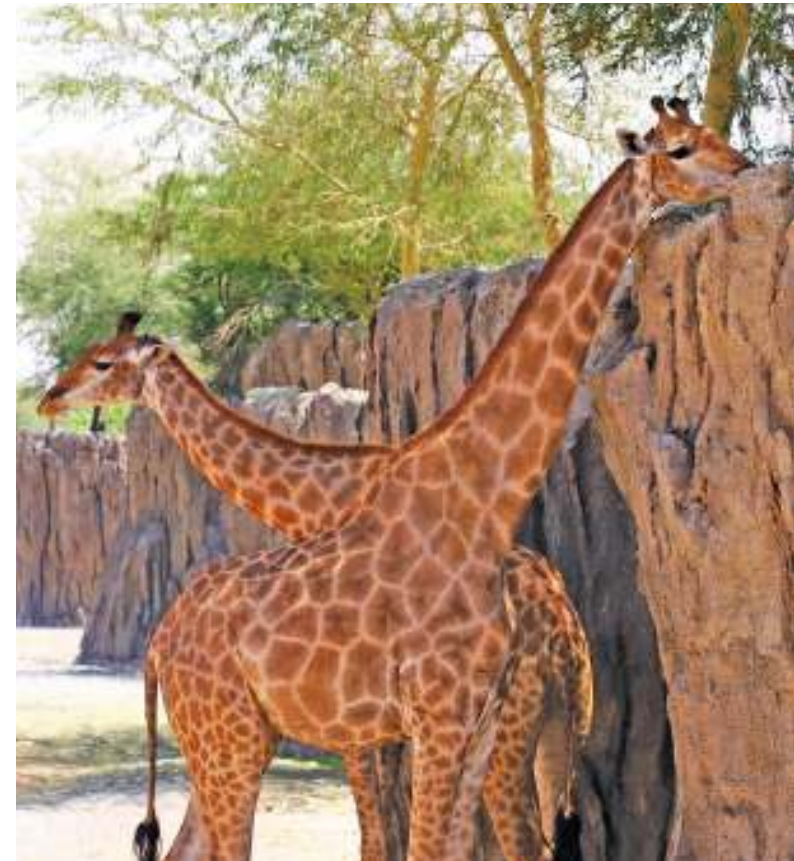


species and educating the public about wildlife and ecosystems. The park hosts animals such as giraffes, zebras, elephants and various species of antelope, living in conditions that closely resemble their native habitats. This approach ensures that the animals can exhibit natural behaviours, contributing to their well-being and offering visitors an authentic experience. Sharjah's African Safari employs sustainable practices to minimise its environmental footprint. This includes the use of renewable energy sources, water conservation techniques, and eco-friendly infrastructure. The park also engages in breeding programs for

endangered species, playing a crucial role in global conservation efforts. By fostering a connection between visitors and wildlife, the safari park encourages a greater appreciation for the natural world and the importance of its preservation.

## AL NOOR ISLAND: WHERE SERENITY AND ART COME TOGETHER

Nestled in the heart of Khalid Lagoon, Al Noor Island is a testament to Sharjah's vision of blending nature, art, and culture. Since its opening in 2015, this picturesque island has become a beloved destination for both locals and



tourists, offering a serene escape and a feast for the senses. Al Noor Island is more than just a park; it is an embodiment of Sharjah's commitment to enhancing the quality of life through innovative public spaces that foster a connection with nature and the arts.

Al Noor Island spans 45,470 square meters and is adorned with a rich variety of flora, creating a verdant oasis in the middle of the city. The island's landscaping features over 70,000 plants and trees from around the world, carefully curated to thrive in the local climate.

This lush greenery provides a habitat for diverse wildlife, including numerous bird species that find sanctuary on the island. The meticulously maintained gardens offer visitors a tranquil environment to unwind and connect with nature.

## The Butterfly House

One of the island's crown jewels is the Butterfly House, an architectural marvel that houses over 500 exotic butterflies. The structure itself, designed with intricate latticework inspired by Islamic art, is a sight to behold. Inside, the climate-controlled environment mimics tropical conditions, allowing butterflies to flourish year-round.

Visitors can walk among the butterflies, witnessing their delicate beauty up close and learning about their life cycles and ecological importance. The Butterfly House is not only a visual delight but also an educational experience, emphasizing the significance of conservation.

## Art Installations and Sculptures

Al Noor Island is dotted with stunning art installations and sculptures, seamlessly integrating art with nature. These pieces,

created by renowned artists from around the world, add a layer of cultural richness to the island. Notable installations include the "OVO" art sculpture, a glowing egg-shaped structure that symbolizes rebirth and renewal, and the "Torus" sculpture by David Harber, which captures the interplay of light and shadow.

The island caters to visitors of all ages with its well-designed children's playground and exercise facilities. The playground is equipped with safe, modern equipment that encourages imaginative play, while the exercise stations offer adults a chance to stay active in a scenic setting.

## Night Illumination

As the sun sets, Al Noor Island transforms into a magical landscape illuminated by artistic lighting. The island's pathways and installations glow with soft, colourful lights, creating an enchanting atmosphere. This nighttime transformation offers a unique experience, making evening visits to the island particularly memorable.

Al Noor Island exemplifies Sharjah's dedication to sustainability and environmental preservation. The island employs eco-friendly practices, such as using solar energy for lighting and maintaining a commitment to water conservation. These efforts ensure that the island remains a green and sustainable haven for future generations.

Al Noor Island also plays a vital role in community engagement and education. It regularly hosts workshops, guided tours, and cultural events that promote environmental awareness and appreciation for the arts. These programs aim to foster a sense of responsibility and connection to the natural world among visitors.

Al Noor Island as its African safari is a shining example of Sharjah's innovative approach to nature conservation with cultural enrichment. This serene oasis offers a retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life, inviting visitors to explore its lush landscapes, admire its art installations, and engage with its diverse flora and fauna. Through Al Noor Island, Sharjah demonstrates its commitment to creating spaces that nurture the soul, inspire the mind, and promote a sustainable future. Whether you're a nature lover, art enthusiast, or simply seeking peace and tranquillity, Al Noor Island is a destination that promises to captivate and inspire.

# Bookmark these boutique destinations for a summer getaway

BY RUPALI DEAN

## STERLING PARK, KALIMPONG

Where? Ringkingpong Rd, Kalimpong, Khasmahal, Kalimpong, West Bengal. Nestled in the scenic mid-range of the Himalayas, at a lofty 4,100 feet above sea level lies Kalimpong—a perfect fusion of serene mountain vistas and vibrant cultural encounters, offering an enchanting getaway for those in search of an unforgettable holiday experience. This cultural hub, blending influences from Indian, Chinese, Nepalese, and Tibetan traditions, provides a captivating and immersive retreat.

Perched atop a hill with a panoramic view of the snow-capped Himalayan peaks, Sterling Park Kalimpong resides in a historic edifice once owned by the Maharaja of Dinajpur, allowing guests a peek into a majestic bygone era. The vistas of Mt Kanchenjunga and other majestic peaks like Pandim and Narsingh, alongside the historic Jelep-la and Nathu-la Passes, resonate with old tales of the Silk Trade Route winding through Lhasa to Tibet. This mountain retreat, situated away from the urban hustle of downtown Kalimpong, exudes an aura of old-world charm with its colonial-era architecture adorned with intricate woodwork, vintage furnishings, and spacious verandahs, transporting guests



back to a nostalgic age. The lavishly appointed rooms and suites boast breath-taking views of the majestic Himalayas, creating a perfect sanctuary for relaxation. Guests can unwind on the cosy patio, indulge in the finest Darjeeling tea, or revel in the tranquillity of the lush courtyard surroundings. The signature restaurant, Kokomendo, beckons visitors with a diverse array of Indian, Continental, Chinese, Nepalese, and Tibetan delicacies. Together with Sterling Park Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Gangtok Orange Village, they form a delightful mountain circuit in the Eastern Himalayan foothills, promising an

unforgettable journey for nature and culture enthusiasts alike.

## BAREFOOT BUNGALOW, CHAMBA

Where? Buranskhanda, Chamba-Mussoorie Road, Buranskhanda, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

Set amidst the enchanting Himalayan landscape, Barefoot Bungalow, a luxurious 3-bedroom homestay in Buranskhanda, offers a sublime escape from the routine of daily life. Located just 25 kilometres from the renowned hill station of Mussoorie, this serene refuge captures the essence of tranquillity and natural beauty in the Garhwal Himalayas.



At the heart of Barefoot Bungalow lies a deep commitment to hospitality, where a dedicated team of professionals ensures that guests are pampered and well looked after. This pet-friendly haven features a personal butler and a talented in-house chef named Arjun, who delights guests with delicious home-cooked meals. The cosy wooden interiors create a warm hill station ambience, perfect for creating memorable evenings by the bonfire, accompanied by live music performances or the inviting glow of an indoor fireplace. Guests at Barefoot Bungalow can indulge in a culinary delight at the glasshouse restaurant, where they

can watch their meals being freshly prepared in a live kitchen setting. The expansive 14,000-square-foot private garden, embellished with ponds and meticulously landscaped, provides a lush sanctuary for relaxation and reflection. And to top it all off, sweeping views of the majestic snow-capped Himalayan range serve as a breath-taking backdrop to this picturesque retreat.

## ONENESS, RISHIKESH

Where? Rishikesh, Badrinath Highway, Byasi, Uttarakhand. Cocooned within a Lower Shivalik mountain valley, 30 kilometres away from Rishikesh, this resort is

a harmonious blend of river, flora, and fauna, inviting guests to embark on a mesmerizing journey where nature's wild beauty takes centre stage and showcases a diverse array of Sal, Haldu, Figs, and Mulberry trees, forming a biodiverse sanctuary. This lively mountain retreat encourages visitors to immerse themselves in the wilderness, surrounded by monkeys, langurs, wild cats, the elusive Black Bear, and the captivating Scarlet Minivet. It's commitment to ecology shines through in the careful planting of 30,000 saplings of over 50 medicinal plants, fostering a flourishing ecosystem that embodies the ethos of the resort.

As the Ganges flows below, resonating with the sacred energy of Devprayag, spirituality becomes intricately woven into the fabric of Oneness. Guests can luxuriate in unparalleled comfort within the Luxury Cottages, each intricately designed to provide a unique and immersive stay. From the spacious and finely appointed rooms to the breath-taking views of the gardens and mountains, every aspect has been thoughtfully curated to offer an unforgettable escape. Beyond being just a resort, on offer is an immersive journey.

Engage in a variety of inclusive activities, ranging from leisurely beach moments to captivating stargazing sessions. For our younger guests, an array of kid's activities awaits. Furthermore, optional activities such as Fun Family Float and Memory Plantation present distinctive and memorable experiences. Go for an adventure intertwined with the allure of unspoiled wilderness. Your expedition commences with experienced guides guiding you through a brief hike, unveiling the untouched beauty of the Lower Shivalik mountains. The path then seamlessly transitions to a unique river crossing experience via a raft, adding a touch of thrill to your sojourn.

(Awarded the 'Best food writer in the country' by the Indian culinary forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel)

"If you can reach out and touch and love and be with wildlife, you will forever be changed, and you will want to make the world a better place."  
— Terri Irwin



# INVASIVE SPECIES THREATEN WAYANAD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Senna spectabilis planted with good intentions has become an ecological nightmare, swiftly overtaking large areas of the sanctuary. Its unchecked growth not only threatens biodiversity but also triggers a chain of ecological and economic repercussions, affecting both wildlife and local communities

Approximately one-fifth of the Earth's surface is threatened by invasive species. These biotic invaders, benefiting from rapid reproduction and a lack of natural predators, outcompete native species for vital resources like food, water, and habitat, posing a significant threat to biodiversity and ecosystem stability.

The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS), nestled in the heart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR), is a biodiversity hotspot, brimming with a rich variety of flora and fauna. The sanctuary serves as a habitat for a substantial population of Asian elephants, along with over 3,700 documented species of plants and animals. Spanning an area of 344.44 km<sup>2</sup>, the sanctuary is comprised of four distinct ranges: Sulthan Bathery, Muthanga, Kurichiat, and Tholpetty. Each range, with its distinct characteristics, adds to the rich tapestry of the WWS, making it a vital and vibrant hub of ecological diversity. However, this ecological paradise is under severe threat from several invasive species, including *Senna spectabilis*, *Lantana camara*, and *Acacia* species. This is particularly noticeable in the case of *Senna spectabilis*, which has proliferated aggressively throughout the WWS and beyond, affecting the NBR and the corresponding ecological continuum of three southern Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. A decision made in good faith by the forest department in 1986 to plant *Senna spectabilis*, an ornamental tree with striking yellow flowers, has morphed into an ecological disaster. Little did one know, that this tropical American tree had a notorious history of invading continents, including parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia. By the time the mistake was realized, *Senna* had stealthily spread into many parts of the sanctuary. It expanded from covering less than 16 km<sup>2</sup> in 2013-2014 to 89 km<sup>2</sup> in 2019 and now stands at a staggering 123.86 km<sup>2</sup>. Considering the total area of the sanctuary is 344.44 km<sup>2</sup>, *Senna* has already engulfed 35% of it. If this trend is not curbed, the entire sanctuary could be swamped within a decade, turning it into a dense *Senna* forest.

A 2021 study has revealed that the Asian elephant, a significant inhabitant of the sanctuary, is aiding the spread of the invasive *Senna spectabilis*. The elephant's dung provides a fertile environment for the *Senna* seeds to sprout, with a single pile of dung found to contain



BKP SINHA



ARVIND K JHA

approximately 2000 seeds. The study also found other mammals, such as the chital and the Indian crested porcupine, contributing to the spread of *Senna*. The researchers observed that the fruiting period of *Senna* trees in the summer coincides with a high concentration of elephants in Wayanad due to their seasonal migration. This synchronicity could potentially expedite the plant's dispersal across the landscape, particularly in micro-habitats commonly inhabited by elephants.

A single *Senna* pod harbours over a hundred seeds, and a medium-sized tree can yield at least one lakh seeds. The invasive nature of the *Senna* species has had a significant impact on the local ecosystem. It has displaced native vegetation by monopolizing the area and inhibiting the growth of species like grass, bamboo and several other minor forest produce.

The *Senna* tree employs a unique method of colonizing its surroundings. It releases specific substances, known as allelochemicals, either directly onto the target plants or indirectly into the surrounding soil. These allelochemicals interfere with the normal growth processes of other plants, providing the *Senna* tree with a competitive advantage. The dominance of the *Senna* tree has significant implications for the livelihoods of rural and tribal people who rely on non-timber forest produce, like amla or gooseberry, for sustenance. Many edible items like berries, mushrooms, and wild tubers, which were once a significant part of the tribal diet, are gradually disappearing from the forest.

The bitter leaves and irritating bark of *Senna* do not find favour with herbivores resulting in a decline in their numbers in the area. This has had a cascading effect on the region's tiger population, which has decreased from 120 in 2018 to 84 in 2023. The scarcity of prey in the *Senna*-dominated areas is believed to be driving tigers to migrate in search of richer hunting grounds. Similarly, elephants are moving into areas outside the forests in their quest for food and water. Unfortunately, this has led to increased human-elephant conflicts, resulting in a backlash against the preservation efforts of elephants. The ecological disruption has had an unexpected benefit for local communities. With fewer wildlife incursions, settlements near the jungle have seen a significant drop in crop damage and cattle lifting incidents. The data from the past three years shows a downward trend in compensation claims



by farmers for crop raids. In the fiscal year 2021-22, there were 734 cases of crop damage reported in the border agrarian hamlets of WWS. This figure fell to 475 in 2022-23, and in 2023-24, the number has further decreased to just 93 cases. Similarly, cattle lifting cases have also seen a decline, from 83 cases in 2021-22 to a mere 19 in 2023-24. While the decrease in human-wildlife conflict might be viewed as a positive development by those seeking to address this issue, the underlying causes warrant serious concern. Locals like Mr. Stanley Augustine, a member of the Biodiversity Management Committee of Poothadi village, find these changes deeply troubling, particularly from the standpoint of the rural economy. The area is witnessing a worrying decline in agricultural productivity and an increasing trend of farmers abandoning their paddy fields. The forests too are under mounting pressure. The real challenge, therefore, lies in re-establishing equilibrium in the WWS while simultaneously securing the future of the human communities in the area. In response to these challenges, the Forest Department has launched an initiative known as the 'Senna Eradication and Forest Regeneration

Project'. The project, supported by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, has a budget of Rs 5.31 crore. The initiative is currently being implemented in the Kurichiat and Muthanga forest ranges, to eradicate *Senna* from 1,672 hectares. To further support this initiative, the sanctuary authorities are exploring partnerships with the newsprint industry, taking inspiration from Tamil Nadu. The state government there has allowed the Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Ltd (TNPL) to extract invasive trees like Wattles and *Senna* for paper production. In return, TNPL compensates the Forest Department and employs various extraction techniques, attempting to turn an ecological challenge into an opportunity for resource utilization. In some areas, invasive plants, including *Senna*, are being repurposed to manufacture furniture. *Senna*, in particular, is valued as a timber source for making lightweight furniture and other wooden products. There is hope that policy changes could permit the extraction of *Senna* from forest areas and its subsequent sale outside. Such changes could potentially motivate the local community to actively participate in clearing the forest of this invasive plant.

The process of removing the *Senna* tree, however, is fraught with challenges. Traditional methods such as uprooting, girdling, and herbicide application for eliminating *Senna* from the area are labour-intensive, costly, and environmentally damaging. Uprooting large *Senna* trees could disturb the soil, leading to erosion, especially in hilly areas that receive high rainfall.

Techniques like girdling and felling can inadvertently harm non-target species. Moreover, the use of herbicides may contaminate water sources and negatively impact the area's biodiversity. Additionally, the resilience of the *Senna* tree is evident in its ability to regenerate from lateral roots, which complicates its eradication. Given these challenges, it is clear that innovative and sustainable strategies are needed to manage and ultimately remove the *Senna* species while simultaneously assisting the re-establishment of local species.

As we forge ahead, conservation measures must be holistic, encompassing not only the immediate environs of the sanctuary but also the larger watersheds and catchment areas that feed into the rivers. This holistic approach is particularly significant for Wayanad, the source of the Kabini River. The health of this river is essential for sustaining the lives and livelihoods of communities across Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Notably, initiatives are in progress to increase the flow of the Kabini River—a major tributary of the Kaveri River—to address the issue of water scarcity in Bengaluru.

The situation in Wayanad is a stark reminder of the domino effect triggered by the introduction of invasive species. The ecological and economic ramifications are far-reaching, impacting not just the wildlife within the sanctuary but also the lives and livelihoods of communities dwelling in its vicinity and beyond. The fight to save Wayanad is a race against time. If immediate and decisive action is not taken, the future of this biodiversity hotspot and the well-being of the millions who depend on it hang in the balance. Wayanad's plight serves as a cautionary tale, urging us to prioritize rigorous scientific evaluation before introducing any new species in an area and to act swiftly and collaboratively in the face of ecological threats posed by invasive species.

(The writers are Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed are personal)



**GAJRAJ RAO**, the Newgen method actor, redefines the cinematic experience by performing even non-descript roles with élan. This journey explores the nuances of his method acting, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

# THE METHOD HIS MADNESS

Gajraj Rao, a name that resonates with authenticity and a deep understanding of character portrayal, has carved a niche for himself in the Indian film industry through a blend of meticulous method acting and a rich repertoire of roles. Rao's journey from the sidelines to the spotlight is a testament to his dedication, perseverance, and exceptional talent. Gajraj Rao's foray into acting was marked by a series of small but significant roles that gradually built his reputation as a reliable character actor. Born in Durgapur, Rajasthan, Rao's initial years in the industry were filled with struggles and uncredited roles. His career began in the late 1990s, with minor roles in films and television. However, his ability to imbue even the smallest roles with depth and realism did not go unnoticed. Rao's breakthrough came with the 2018 film *Badhaai Ho*, where he played Jeetender Kaushik, a middle-aged man who discovers his wife's unexpected pregnancy. The film's success catapulted Rao into the limelight, earning him critical acclaim and several awards. His portrayal of Jeetender Kaushik was lauded for its warmth, subtlety, and humor, marking a significant shift in the perception of middle-aged characters in Indian cinema. What sets Gajraj Rao apart is his approach to method acting. Rao's dedication to his craft involves deep immersion into his characters. He often spends extensive time understanding the background, motivations, and nuances of the roles he portrays. This approach allows him to deliver performances that are both authentic and relatable. Method acting, a technique pioneered by Konstantin Stanislavski and later popularized by Lee Strasberg, emphasizes the psychological and emotional aspects of character development. Rao's use

of this technique involves drawing from his own experiences and emotions to bring a character to life. His preparation often includes detailed research, observing people with similar backgrounds to his characters, and even adopting their mannerisms and speech patterns. Rao's impact on modern Indian cinema extends beyond his performances. He represents a shift towards more realistic and nuanced storytelling in Bollywood. Films like *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* and *Lootcase* further showcase his versatility, moving away from stereotypical depictions to more layered and authentic characters. In contemporary cinema, method actors like Gajraj Rao are redefining the narrative. They are moving away from the star-centric approach to one that values story and character depth. This trend is visible in the rise of content-driven films and web series that focus on everyday stories and real-life issues. And the time is ripe for such experiments. "Twenty years back I, Pankaj Tripathi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and many others could not imagine of getting a significant role. Hindi cinema is more democratic and character

driven and gives chance to everyone," says Rao. Method actors today are increasingly collaborating with directors and writers to develop well-rounded characters. They are involved in the creative process from the early stages, contributing to script development and character arcs. This collaborative approach results in performances that are not just believable but also deeply engaging. While method acting is rewarding, it is also challenging. The emotional toll of deeply immersing oneself in a character can be significant. For Rao, balancing the intense preparation required for his roles with his personal life is a constant challenge. However, his passion for acting and his commitment to his craft continue to drive him forward. "I have theatre background where script is very important which all of us cherish. Then we prepare for the role meticulously. What viewers see on the screen is culmination of that preparation," Looking ahead, Gajraj Rao's journey seems poised for further success. With the increasing popularity of OTT platforms and a growing

audience for nuanced storytelling, actors like Rao are likely to find even more opportunities to showcase their talent. His upcoming projects are eagerly awaited by fans and critics alike, who expect nothing short of brilliance from this seasoned actor. Gajraj Rao's journey as an actor is an inspiring tale of perseverance, talent, and the power of method acting. His contributions to Indian cinema have paved the way for more realistic and relatable storytelling. As he continues to explore new horizons, Rao remains a beacon of authenticity and excellence in the world of acting, embodying the transformative power of method acting in modern cinema. In the film *Maidaan*, Gajraj Rao excels in his role by bringing a nuanced depth and authenticity that enhances the movie's historical and emotional landscape. The film, directed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, chronicles the golden era of Indian football from 1952 to 1962, focusing on the life of Syed Abdul Rahim, the coach who led the Indian team to remarkable victories. Rao portrays a pivotal character whose support and conflict with the protagonist add layers to the narrative, showcasing his ability to seamlessly blend into the historical setting while delivering a performance that is both compelling and resonant. His meticulous approach to embodying his character contributes significantly to the film's overall impact, making *Maidaan* a captivating tribute to a lesser-known yet glorious chapter of Indian sports history.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer

**WHAT SETS GAJRAJ RAO APART IS HIS APPROACH TO METHOD ACTING. RAO'S DEDICATION TO HIS CRAFT INVOLVES DEEP IMMERSION INTO HIS CHARACTERS. HE OFTEN SPENDS EXTENSIVE TIME UNDERSTANDING THE BACKGROUND, MOTIVATIONS, AND NUANCES OF THE ROLES HE PORTRAYS. THIS APPROACH ALLOWS HIM TO DELIVER PERFORMANCES THAT ARE BOTH AUTHENTIC AND RELATABLE**

## Reflections on Acting, Challenges and Audience Influence

**MAHESH THAKUR** shares insights into his illustrious acting career, spanning television and cinema. From memorable roles to industry evolution, he reflects on the challenges and successes that have shaped him as an artist. In a conversation with **SAKSHI PRIYA**, he also opens up about his recent show *Aangan Aapno Kaa*, shedding light on his experience playing a father's role in this heartwarming project

**What motivates you to continue acting and how do you view the role of the audience in your career?**

I get the audience's love and reaction. Being an actor means experiencing the audience's reactions, which keep me going. They encourage me to do better. I would say it is the audience that inspires me to act.

**Among the numerous characters you've portrayed, which role has been the most memorable for you and why?**

I think a role that is very different from my personality would be Tej Singh Oberoi from *Ishqbaaz*. That character is nothing like me and I had to create a persona that was really nasty, cunning and thought differently. It's a really interesting character that I played, so I would definitely give credit to that role. Generally, the roles I play are similar to my personality and I feel that's not very challenging but the role in *Ishqbaaz* was challenging. Playing the honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also challenging because it is difficult to embody a character who is very much in the public eye. Another challenging role was playing Sadhu Vaswani. All these characters are memorable because they are different from who I am.

**You've often played positive characters. Did you relish the opportunity to portray a villain in *Ishqbaaz*, and how did you approach that transformation?**

First of all, in television, we have very different ways of working. The episodes and scripts come on set, so we don't have time to

do much homework. My basic approach in the initial days when I worked on any television character, which is very different from the rest, is to do a lot of reading. I read one to six episodes, and once I am done with reading, I try to get into the character and experiment with different voice modulations in my own space. I try taking pauses when delivering dialogues and ensure that I don't repeat certain expressions. In *Ishqbaaz*, my character was so negative that I didn't want my kids to watch it, as they were very young at that time.

**What have been some of the biggest challenges and successes in your acting career and how have they shaped you as an artist?**

One of the biggest challenges in my acting career was transitioning to television. When I started doing daily soaps, I realised that you put in just as much hard work as you do in films but it's for one telecast. After that, it's gone and often forgotten. As actors, we used to be very particular about giving a fantastic shot, striving for perfection. However, in television, you don't have much time. You get only a few minutes and maybe 4 to 5 takes to get the shot right. No matter how perfect a shot I gave, there was always room for improvement, but in television, it often goes unnoticed because it airs only once and then it's long gone. This was a learning experience for me, helping me understand that, at the end of the day, actors are a product of the writing and direction. It's not just about the actor. Many actors in the

industry think it's all about them, believing that their performance alone makes a movie or show a hit. But that's not true. It's teamwork that makes a project successful. TV has taught me humility as an actor. It made me realise that while an actor might attract the audience for the initial viewing, it's the combined effort of the entire team that makes a lasting impact.

**You've seen the television industry evolve over the years. How do you think it has changed, and what are your thoughts on the current trends in TV shows and content?**

Yes, definitely. The sensibility has changed. Audiences are now more open to rich subjects and they have a say in what they want to see. You can't disregard the audience today. You have to be very careful. People always try to bifurcate between whether a film is for villagers, town people or two-tier towns. I think that divide is disappearing. We have to ensure that the content generated is not just to cater to one segment, as the divide is reducing between these three categories, thanks to the internet. Everyone now has access to all sorts of content. So, as a content creator, you have to keep everyone in mind, not just a single type of audience.

**Looking back on your time working with Sridevi, is there a specific scene or moment from *Malini Iyer* that stands out in your memory?**

Sridevi Ma'am was and will always be a legend because she was one of the first heroines where movies were made if she said yes to a project, like



*Chandni, Lamhe*, and all these beautiful films she was a part of. No matter how much I say about her or praise her, it will always be less.

**Recently, you are working on a project, *Aangan Aapno Kaa*. How has your experience been playing the father's role in this project?**

I am playing the character of a dad, and it's great. As I said, you need a good team of actors, and we have a very good team here,

**fantastic team of women involved, from the director to the producer?**

*Dil, Dosti Dilemma* was great fun because we had a fantastic team filled with women, from the director to the producer. It was nice seeing all the women coming into action and working so brilliantly as a team. I enjoyed my time in *Dil, Dosti Dilemma*, and it was shot beautifully. The story was one of the simplest out there on the streaming platform. You can watch it and have a great time with your loved ones. It was an extremely sweet story, and I just loved working on the project.

**How do you approach acting in different mediums like films, television and web series? Do you have a preference among these mediums?**

An actor is always an actor; they should not choose any medium. The only difference between TV and film is not that much. The major difference between working in front of the camera and on stage is significant. When you go on stage, there is a difference in working in front of the camera. In front of the camera, you have to take care of lights, know which dialogue to say and when and work with the cameraman, co-actors and director, so there are lots of things happening in one shot. It's pretty complicated for a person who starts straight in TV and film because lots are happening on sets. When you do a stage, it's all about you. You forget your line, you're supposed to carry on; you are not supposed to stand blank on the stage because you have a live audience watching you. So, that's more challenging.

**What was your experience like working on *Dil, Dosti Dilemma*, especially considering the**

I feel, for actors working on stage because it's all about dialogue delivery, trying to work on body language, so much is happening on stage that it's more of a challenge rather than working in the medium of TV and film. Acting on TV and film is also challenging but not as challenging as the stage. Also, if you're good on stage, it doesn't mean you can be good in front of the TV and camera because you have to control your expression and not go too loud because TV is a subtle medium. One thing I learned about the theatre is that in theatre, you have to pronounce your words; you cannot speak loudly. The last person sitting on the back bench in the auditorium should be able to listen to you. It's not about raising your voice; it's literally pronunciation which goes right up to the end.

**Many actors look up to your career. What piece of advice would you give to someone just starting out in television acting?**

To all the new actors, hang in there. Hanging in doesn't mean losing your patience, balance or giving up. This is one of the most difficult professions you could choose. If you have multiple choices, I would say let acting be the last one you go for. But if you are going for it, then be resilient. You have to be there because you never know when the right break will happen for you and when things will start working in your favor. Don't give up. If you are an actor, you should think about it as always being an actor; otherwise, you will never get anywhere. So, choose your profession wisely.



# Reminiscences of an aspiring journalist

Journalism has a charm of its own. Back in the late Eighties; while I was eagerly pursuing PG Diploma in Journalism from Rajendra Prasad Institute of Communication and Management, Mumbai (Course offered by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan-Hyderabad branch), my dad drew my attention to an advertisement put out by the Eenadu Group. The advertisement was issued on behalf of 'Newstime', English daily of the group which was then looking for trainee sub-editors/reporters. I applied, though at that point of time I had not completed my journalism course. They held a written test and later I had one round of interview with the editorial head, SR Ramanujan, who was also the daily's Executive Editor. Along with me, three others had cleared the written test and the first round of interview to reach the next level: interview with Ramoji Rao in his cubicle on the fifth floor of the Eenadu building in Somajiguda. With great trepidation I entered what I perceived would be a torture chamber for an 'interview' with the man, who, my friends had forewarned me, was "a very strict man", "stickler for punctuality", "tough taskmaster", this and that. But Ramoji Rao asked me what sounded like straightforward questions drawn from current affairs; nothing else about me, my qualifications, experience or whatever. To be honest, I was not abreast of current affairs then. So, I could give mostly wrong answers or unconvincing ones, often fumbling and bumbling. He listened to all of them poker-faced. Then he took what I perceived was his parting shot: "You don't know what is happening around you and you want to be a journal-



MURALI RAMASWAMY Sr. Journalist

**Hoping against hope, I replied: "No Sir, I would be a flexible peg in any hole" Ramoji Rao laughed heartily, with the cheeks on his face aglow like that of a child. My 'interview' with the Eenadu group's legendary chief ended thus, rather hopelessly.**

ist. If we hire you, don't you think you would be a square peg in a round hole?" Hoping against hope, I replied: "No Sir, I would be a flexible peg in any hole" Ramoji Rao laughed heartily, with the cheeks on his face aglow like that of a child. My 'interview' with the Eenadu group's legendary chief ended thus, rather hopelessly. Subsequently, I got my appointment letter! Frankly speaking, I am still not sure whether it was due to the interview or in spite of it. As a trainee sub-editor/reporter, I learned the ropes the hard way under a

tough taskmaster, Ramanujan, who reflected in *toto* Ramoji Rao's philosophy of giving nothing but the best for readers of Newstime, which unconventionally was never after government or private ads as a matter of policy then. Luckily for me, I never had to go to Ramoji Rao for anything significant after my first and traumatic interaction with him. In my entire 14-year long service or vanvaas in Newstime, I met him maybe three or four times along with others—that is *naluguritho Narayana*, usually to get mementoes or just greet the great personality on special occasions like Newstime anniversary. Since such meetings were few and far between, we had to introduce ourselves every time. Given my 'encounter' with him before I was hired, I always introduced myself rather sheepishly. I did secure All-India Chandrakant Vora Gold Medal and Kulapati Silver Medal as well as cash prize in PG Diploma Journalism course. But, I never had the courage to update him on my academic attainments during such fleeting moments. After all, he was hands-on and practical always. What I appreciated most during my stint in Newstime was the congenial learning atmosphere under a perfectionist boss (Ramanujan) who doubled up as a benevolent dictator. Thanks to him, and his boss who always trusted his lieutenants whole-heartedly, there was little left for me to learn in any other organization thereafter. Learning his never complete, but few organizations foster a culture of learning. Hats off to Eenadu group, whose products hold key positions in media houses (you name it, somebody or the other from Eenadu Group is there or going to be there!).



BUDDHAVARAPU RAJESWARA PRASAD

**A**chieving remarkable heights in every field one chooses is not everyone's cup of tea. Rarest of the rare are those who reach Himalayan heights with perseverance and penchant for perfection. Media baron Ramoji Rao is one among those stalwarts, whose legacy

**We know Ramoji Rao as the one who enriched Telugu media by his singular contribution towards enriching Telugu cinema, with diverse and socially relevant themes, also stands on a high pedestal.**

stands tall and whose motivational spirit is everlasting. We know Ramoji Rao as the one who enriched Telugu media by his singular contribution. His contribution towards enriching Telugu cinema, with diverse and socially relevant themes, also stands on a high pedestal. The movies that Ramoji Rao made were not run-of-the-mill type. They had subjects that were contemporary and socially relevant. Making movies is something and making them with a clearly defined purpose is wholly different. As a movie maker, Ramoji Rao's contribution is great and laudable. He chose objective-

oriented subjects, thereby making movies that left deep imprints on society. Bearing the stamp of a man who strongly believed that cinema could be used as a medium to depict ideals worthy of emulation in society, most of Ramoji Rao's movies went on to become masterpieces, ranking on par with industry classics. For, their subjects are so relevant that even today and they never lose their appeal and contemporariness. From women empowerment to wholesome entertainment, we have every genre from Ramoji Rao, who believed that through cinema one could reform society and purge it of all its ills as



well as obstacles to progress. Almost all of the movies had had something that stirred and stimulated thought in society. He entertained, enthralled, and engaged people with themes that not only got awards, accolades, but wide public appreciation. From *Anandam* to *Mayuri*, Ramoji Rao's movies stand out for their social-

ly relevant subjects. With Prathigatana, he stirred society by elucidating and pronouncing so strongly that oppression and suppression had to face its ugly end. Not only this, in the movie *Mayuri*, the penetrating message conveyed is that nothing can stop a woman if she is determined and committed to her task, physical frailties notwithstanding. *Mounaparatham* is also a movie made to establish the rights of women, who are deceived and oppressed. From establishing the rights of the downtrodden to elevating the concept of self-sustenance and women empowerment, the movies made by the media mogul are very moving and conceptually marvelous. His *Sitara* cine magazine brought richness to cinema journalism and added value to reviews. Concerning cinema Ramoji Rao's contribution is holistic and perennially inspiring.

## EDITORS GUILD HAILS RAMOJI RAO AS TRAILBLAZER

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Editors Guild of India on Saturday condoled the death of its former president Ramoji Rao, the founder of Eenadu daily and the ETV network.

Rao breathed his last in Hyderabad early on Saturday. The Guild said Rao would be best remembered as being a media owner who on several occasions took on the establishment and fearlessly spoke truth to power. "He was a trailblazer in many ways. Besides launching the multi-edition Eenadu daily, he was the head of the Telugu news and entertainment network, ETV, and also set up the Ramoji Film City," it said in a statement. The Guild said Rao would remain an icon and continue to inspire journalists of this country. Rao was a recipient of the Padma Vibhushan.

## APCS PAYS TRIBUTES TO RAMOJI RAO

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

State Government Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad on behalf of the Andhra Pradesh State government paid tributes to media baron Ramoji Rao chairman at Ramoji Group at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad on Saturday.

# Pedaparupudi mourns its greatest son Ramoji Rao

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

A pall of gloom descended over Pedaparupudi village in the Pamarru constituency of Krishna district, the birthplace of Ch Ramoji Rao, following the news of his sudden demise on Saturday morning. Villagers and close associates gathered to pay floral tributes to his portrait and praised his numerous contributions to the village.

The community set up a tent in the village square, where they displayed a portrait of Ramoji Rao and chanted 'Johar Ramoji Rao' in his honour. Members of the Ramoji Foundation, along with several villagers, travelled to Hyderabad to pay their final respects.

Village Sarpanch Ch Sameera, along with friends and villagers, including Paladugu Chandrasekhar, Garapati Baburao, Ratna Prasad (Nani), Kanagala

**Village Sarpanch Ch Sameera, along with friends and villagers, including Paladugu Chandrasekhar, Garapati Baburao, Ratna Prasad (Nani), Kanagala Parvathi, Nagaboina Srinivasa Rao, Paladugu Sandhyarani, Lavanya, and Nagaboina Ramana, were among those who gathered to honour Rao's memory**

Parvathi, Nagaboina Srinivasa Rao, Paladugu Sandhyarani, Lavanya, and Nagaboina Ramana, were among those who gathered to honour Rao's memory. Paladugu Chandrasekhar remarked that Ramoji Rao, who hailed from a humble agricultural background, achieved extraordinary success and his passing has deeply affected the villagers. Chandrasekhar highlighted Rao's significant contributions to both Telugu states and the nation, noting that he was a valuable asset to the Telugu people.

Rao's philanthropic efforts in Pedaparupudi, especially in providing employment opportunities for the youth, were particularly lauded. Ramoji Rao was born on November 16, 1936, in Pedaparupudi, Krishna district, to Venkatasubamma and Venkata Subbarao. His ancestors were originally from Periseppalli village in the district. After the death of his grandfather Ramayya, his family moved to Pedaparupudi. Born just 13 days after his grandfather's demise, Rao was named

Ramaiah in his memory. However, he later changed his name to Ramoji Rao upon joining primary school, a name he carried throughout his life. He was raised with great care as the only son among three children, alongside his elder sisters Rajyalakshmi and Ranganayakamma. Rao's education began in Gudivada High School in 1947, where he completed his schooling before pursuing intermediate and B.Sc. degrees at Gudivada College. On August 19, 1961, Ramoji Rao married Ramadevi, originally named Ramanamma, the second daughter of Tatineni Venkata Subbaiah and Vanidevi of Penamaluru. Pamaru M.L.A. Kumar Raja expressed his grief over Ramoji Rao's sudden passing and extended his deepest condolences to Rao's family. Ramoji Rao's legacy of service and impact on the community and beyond will be remembered and cherished by all who know him.

# Pawan Kalyan condoles death of Ramoji Rao

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Jana Sena chief and MLA K Pawan Kalyan has condoled the death of Eenadu group chairman Ch Ramoji Rao. In a message here on Saturday, Pawan Kalyan said that the sudden demise of Ramoji Rao shocked him.

The journey of Ramoji Rao in the world of media, abiding to the ideologies, which he believed, was unparalleled. "His demise is a great loss to the media sector. I pray to god for his soul to rest in peace," Pawan Kalyan stated. Ramoji Rao strongly emphasized that the media has a social responsibility and created awareness on various issues including the Right to Information Act



and water conservation, The JSP chief added. Pawan Kalyan conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family. Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan paid homage to the mortal remains of Ramoji Rao in Hyderabad. He condoled the bereaved family members. "I thought of meeting Ramoji Rao

after taking the oath. But unfortunately, he passed away. Ramoji Rao has produced hundreds of journalists and most of the present journalists are from Eenadu Journalism School," Pawan Kalyan told the media. He also recalled that Ramoji Rao had strived a lot for the development of Telugu cinema.

# Scribes pay rich tributes

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

The Indian media community is reeling from the devastating news of the passing of Cherukuri Ramoji Rao, media stalwart and head of the ETV Group of Companies. Rao, whose visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to journalistic integrity have left an indelible mark on the industry, passed away earlier this morning, leaving behind a legacy that will be remembered for generations to come. As the news of Rao's demise

spreads, tributes and expressions of deepest condolences pour in from across the nation. Colleagues, peers, and admirers alike are united in grief, reflecting on the profound impact Rao had on the media landscape and beyond. Adapaka Satya Rao, chairman of the joint Andhra Pradesh Press Academy, led the chorus of condolences, expressing deep sorrow at the loss of Cherukuri Ramoji Rao. "Rao's contributions to the media sector were unparalleled, and his passing leaves a void that

will be difficult to fill," remarked Satya Rao, speaking on behalf of the industry. Rao's leadership of the ETV Group of Companies was characterized by innovation, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to delivering quality journalism to the masses. Under his guidance, the ETV network became synonymous with excellence, setting new standards for news reporting and media ethics. Expressions of grief and remembrance flood social media platforms, with col-

leagues and acquaintances sharing heartfelt anecdotes and memories of their interactions with Rao. His mentorship, generosity, and unwavering dedication to the principles of journalism have left an enduring impression on all who had the privilege of knowing him. As the Indian media community comes to terms with the loss of one of its most respected figures, there is a collective sense of gratitude for Rao's contributions and a commitment to upholding his legacy of excellence.

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Rajinikanth, Chiranjeevi, Allu Arjun, Ram Charan and Jr NTR were among the prominent cinema personalities who expressed grief over the demise of media baron Ramoji Rao, the founder of Eenadu Group and Ramoji Film City. Rao, who revolutionised the news and entertainment industry, died at a hospital in Hyderabad early on Saturday. He was 88. In a post on X, Rajinikanth remembered Rao as his mentor and well wisher and said he is "deeply saddened" by his death. "The man who created history in Journalism, Cinema and a great kingmaker in Politics. He was my guide and inspiration in my life. May his soul rest in peace."

@Ramoji\_FilmCity," the veteran star wrote. Chiranjeevi posted an emotional message on X, saying that Ramoji Rao, who was like a mountain that never bowed down to anyone, has reached the heavenly abode. Allu Arjun said Ramoji Rao was a "pioneer and an inspiring visionary" and he has a deep respect for the media baron. "I feel his aura every time I shoot at #RFC. His unparalleled contributions to the media, cinema, and many other industries will never be forgotten. Heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. May his great soul rest in peace," he wrote on X. "The Ramoji Film City (RFC) has been recognized by Guinness World Records as the world's largest film city."

## Rajinikanth, Chiranjeevi, Allu Arjun and Ram Charan pay tribute to Ramoji Rao

Thousands of films, including SS Rajamouli's two-part blockbuster 'Baahubali', in almost all Indian languages and some in Hindi, have been shot at the Ramoji Film City on the outskirts of Hyderabad. "RRR" stars Ram Charan credited Ramoji Rao for transforming the landscape of regional media with Eenadu. "The establishment of Ramoji Film City, the world's largest film studio, has become a landmark destination for filmmakers worldwide. Shri Ramoji Rao Garu will be

remembered forever for his warm personality and remarkable contribution to the Telugu people. My deepest condolences to his family and his admirers," he added. Charan's "RRR" co-star Jr NTR said visionaries like Ramoji Rao are "one in a million". He recalled working on his debut movie "Ninnu Choodalani" (2000), which was produced by Rao. "A media tycoon and a giant of Indian cinema, his absence is irreparable. The news that he is no longer with us is very sad. I will never forget the

memories when I was introduced to the Telugu film industry with the film 'Ninnu Choodalani'. May his soul rest in peace and convey my deepest condolences to his family," he wrote on X. Filmmaker SS Rajamouli, the director of 'Baahubali' and 'RRR', said Rao should be honoured with Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour. "ONE man with his 50 years of resilience, hardwork and innovation provided employment, livelihood and hope for millions. The only way we can pay tribute to Ramoji Rao garu is conferring him with 'BHARAT RATNA'," he wrote on X. Allu Arjun commented on Rajamouli's post, saying, "I had the same feeling in my heart sir. You spoke my heart. Thank you for voic-

ing it." Venkatesh Daggubati said Ramoji Rao garu was a "true visionary whose revolutionary work in Indian media has left an unforgettable legacy." "His contributions to journalism and cinema have inspired so many. He will be missed dearly. Heartfelt condolences to his loved ones. May his soul rest in peace," he added. Actor Kajal Aggarwal said she is deeply saddened by Rao's death. "My heartfelt condolences to his family during this difficult time. His legacy will continue to inspire many. May his soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," read her post on X. Actor-politician Khushbu Sundar wrote, "Deepest condolences at the demise of a legend, a pioneer in the world of cinema, founder of

#RamojiRaoStudios, Shri #RamojiRao gaaru. May his soul rest in peace. Om Shanti." Actor Varun Tej said the demise of Ramoji Rao has left a significant void in the world of journalism and the film industry. "May his soul rest in peace," he posted. Music composer Thaman S recalled the support Ramoji Rao provided him during his journey in cinema. "I am deeply Saddened by the loss of Shri Ramoji Rao Gaaru. He gave us the best recording & technical support in the year 2012 to 2016 when we did all our musical works at Symphony Recording Studios (Ramoji Film City). His support towards our musical journey would always be UNFORGETTABLE," he posted on X.