

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 "Harish Rao... you should be ready with a resignation letter in your pocket. I am giving a word with Ramappa Shiva, Thousand- Pillar temple and Bhadrakali Ammavaru as witnesses that I will waive Rs.2 lakh loans by August 15. I will not leave Harish Rao. On that day, it is not going to be like saying: 'I can't find a lighter', after pouring petrol."
 - Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

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Varalaxmi Sarathkumar talks of Sabari, a screenplay-driven THRILLER
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DON'T MISS...

'Hyd is one of the best cities...'

Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary of Industries, Commerce and Information Technology, stated that Hyderabad is one of the best cities to live in because of the retailers. He addressed the third edition of the Hyderabad Retail Summit (HRS) organised by the Retailers Association of India (RAI) at ITC Kohenur on Wednesday. Hyderabad Retail Summit is a content-led platform for industry stakeholders across categories to come together to learn, connect and...

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Election a ritual in remote...

Bikramjyoti Tripura, a 'jhumiya' (shifting cultivator) residing at a remote village in Tripura's Dhalai district said politicians come to his hamlet during elections and though their promises remain unfulfilled, he casts vote every time with the hope of getting electricity at his home and mobile phone connectivity in the area. The main problem of Vidya Kumar Roaja Para village, which is located around 62 km away from Ambassa, the district headquarters of Dhalai...

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Microsoft and Amazon...

British competition regulators said Wednesday they'll scrutinise recent artificial intelligence deals by Microsoft and Amazon over concerns that the moves could thwart competition in the AI industry. The Competition and Markets Authority said it's looking into Microsoft's partnership with France's Mistral AI and the company's hiring of key staff from another startup, Inflection AI. The watchdog also separately announced that it's investigating Amazon's...

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Rampant Sunrisers Hyderabad...

Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to unleash their brute batting power on struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru when the two teams face off in their return-leg fixture of the IPL here on Thursday. Having breached the 250-run mark thrice in this IPL edition itself, Sunrisers Hyderabad are pushing the boundaries of T20 batting with their no holds barred approach. While Mumbai Indians were the first victim of SRH's new-found batting strength this season, RCB bore the...

-SPORTS

CM REVANTH TO BRS CHIEF KCR Let's debate on Kaleshwaram

- 'Harish, be ready with a resignation letter in your pocket'
- 'Warangal fit to be TG's second capital'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has challenged former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to come for a debate on the soundness of the Kaleshwaram project if he has guts and thinks that the project is indeed a wonder as is being claimed by the Bharat Rashtira Samithi.

The Chief Minister pointed out that KCR was an opposition leader who chose not to come to the Assembly but sat in a TV studio for four hours. He said that the Medigadda barrage pillars collapsed possibly because KCR might have designed it in an intoxicated state. Mocking KCR for claiming that Kaleshwaram was his brainchild, he stated that Medigadda and Sundilla barrages had become dysfunctional. People must compare the projects constructed under the erstwhile Congress regime with those constructed under the BRS rule, he underlined.

The CM remarked: "I am telling



CM Revanth Reddy seeking people's support to Congress candidate at a rally held in Warangal on Wednesday

KCR in a straightforward manner. Let us visit Kaleshwaram. There we will discuss the soundness of the project with experts around. KCR

Addressing the Warangal Jana Jata on Wednesday, Revanth Reddy stated that Warangal was fit to become the second capital of the State. Revanth Reddy observed: "What could be happier than Warangal, with its historical background of the Kakatiyas, becoming the second capital?"

should come to Kaleshwaram if he has guts. BRS is not in a position to get deposits anywhere. KCR has been speaking lies despite having been the Chief Minister for 10 years".

Uttam agrees Venkat Reddy has eligibility to become CM

Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy stated that the R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has eligibility of becoming the chief minister in future. Uttam said, "I agree with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's comments in Bhongir that Komatireddy Venkat Reddy deserves to be Chief Minister. Venkat Reddy will get good opportunities in future. I am jealous of Venkat Reddy". While interrupting Uttam's speech, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that he was not greedy for the post of chief minister. Revanth Reddy will continue as the Chief Minister. Uttam spoke like that with the affection he has for him, Venkat Reddy said.



Continued on Page 2

'No one can stop us from coming back'



BRS chief KCR addressing a rally at Miryalaguda on Wednesday

Telangana for mobilizing funds, water and jobs. From then till today, Telangana has been fighting for water. Congress' District Ministers handed over Nagarjuna Sagar to KRMB, to the Centre. The Congress party has been our enemy for sixty years. The Minister here says he would hit farmers with sandals if they asked for Rythu Bandhu. But the Minister should know farmers also have sandals. How did electricity go the moment KCR left as if it is some switch? Surplus electricity is handed over to you; the Congress government is incompetent".

KCR said that under the BRS government, 18 crops were grown and even the tail-end areas irrigated. "Why can't they (present Congress government) give water through Mission Bhagiratha? We have provided crop investment to the farmer like no other state in the country."

Addressing a gathering at Suryapet, KCR said: "We got

Cong slams KCR for distancing from Kaleshwaram design

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Leaders of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee have slammed former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for seeking to distance himself from the damage caused to the Kaleshwaram project by suggesting that he had given "only strategy for Kaleshwaram, but not its design".

The Telangana Congress posted a statement (in Telugu) on its X handle, commenting: "Rupees one lakh crore corruption strategy. KCR has been rightly described as 'Mayala Marati'. In the past, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi had campaigned that there was no wonder like Kaleshwaram and that it was KCR's brainchild. BRS also campaigned saying KCR is 'Kaleshwarrao'. But one flood brought its pillars down. However, KCR is trying to hoodwink people by throwing the blame on officials now. BRS handed over the Kaleshwaram project to Megha Engineering. For, BRS had benefited from Megha Engineering in the form of electoral bonds. After his one lakh crore corruption came out, KCR has been claiming that he was 'strategist'. These words will not last long. People have already kept KCR away. KCR should take rest by desisting from hatching conspiracies."

Cong names candidates for remaining three LS seats

Then Mar Mallanna is party's MLC candidate

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As expected, the All India Congress Committee's Central Election Committee (CEC) selected candidates on Wednesday for the remaining three Lok Sabha constituencies: Karimnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad. The party selected Velichala Rajender Rao for Karimnagar, Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy for Khammam, and Mohammed



Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy receives B-form from Deepa das Munshi

Waliullah Sameer for Hyderabad.

Harish to quit MLA post if farm loans are waived by Aug 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In response to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's pincer as to whether the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) would be disbanded if the Congress government implements its farm loan waiver promise by August 15, senior BRS leader, former minister and Siddipet MLA Harish Rao has offered to quit as legislator if it happens. At a presser



in Sangareddy, he said: "Positions are not important."

Will Revanth Reddy resign from the post of CM if the farmers' loan waiver and promises are not fulfilled?" he countered. Harish Rao said that he would go to the Martyrs Memorial in front of the Assembly on Friday for a discussion on these matters, and suggested that CM Revanth should also come to the spot.

Girls outperform boys in Inter exam

● 62% of students pass Intermediate Public Exam 2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the Intermediate results announced by the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) on Wednesday, 62 per cent students passed the examinations.



Burra Venkatesham, Principal Secretary of Education and Shruithi Ojha, Secretary of TSBIE, declared the results stating that a total of 60.01 per cent of students in the first year and 64.19 per cent in the second year passed the exams. They include both regular and private students and both general and vocational courses. Burra Venkatesham said, "About 4,01,445 second year general

stream regular students appeared and 69.46 per cent cleared the exams as against 67.27 per cent in the last year. But, the vocational stream recorded a three per cent drop in the pass percentage. While 42,723 second-year vocational students took the exams, 63.86 per cent passed as against 66.81 pass percent last year. The Board has conducted Intermediate Public Examinations in March 2024 from February 28 to March 19. About 9,81,003 students appeared for the Intermediate first and second year examinations at 1,512 examination centres."

UPSET OVER RESULTS

8 Inter students end lives

In separate incidents, eight Intermediate students died, allegedly by suicide, after being upset over the results that were announced on Wednesday in Telangana. An intermediate V Vaishali first year student died, allegedly by suicide, at Mudigonda mandal headquarters in the district on Wednesday. Maidam Sathwik (18) from Achalapur village in Thandur mandal, Mancheril, was found hanging after he reportedly failed in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. Gattika Tejaswhini (18) was found unconscious after she allegedly attempted to hang herself after failing in two Mathematics papers at Doragaripalli village in Mancheril mandal. Another Inter student committed suicide in Rajendranagar. A girl named Harini failed in a subject in the first year of Inter and committed suicide by hanging from the fan in the room in Rajendranagar limits.

Continued on Page 2

Stage set for 2nd phase of Lok Sabha polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The curtains came down Wednesday evening on a high-voltage campaigning for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in 89 seats across 13 states on April 26.

Staggered over seven stages, the first phase of the elections held last Friday for 102 seats across 21 states and Union territories saw a voter turnout of around 65.5 per cent.

Polling is scheduled in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, 8 seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, 7 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 5 seats each in Assam and Bihar, 3 seats each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and 1 seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir.

Electioneering ends in 89 seats across 13 states



During the campaigning, Prime Minister Narendra kicked up a row on Sunday while addressing a rally in Rajasthan's Banswara. Slamming the Congress manifesto, he alleged that the opposition party was planning to give people's hard-earned money and valuables to "infiltrators" and "those who have more children" and referred to former prime minister Manmohan Singh's speech in 2006 to contend he had said that Muslims have the "first claim" on the country's resources.

(Thiruvananthapuram), Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh (Cong), former Karnataka chief minister HD Kumaraswamy (JDS).

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Congress will halt all schemes if it gets more seats, warns KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi's working president KT Rama Rao expressed concern that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy would halt all schemes if the Congress were to gain more seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, banking on the assumption that irrespective of fulfilling promises, people would vote for him. "If you want the schemes promised by Congress to be implemented, BRS should win," KTR asserted. KTR took part in a roadshow during the nomination programme of Malkajgiri candidate Ragidi Lakshma Reddy. KTR commented on various issues, including the previous election where Revanth Reddy won in Malkajgiri by a narrow



majority. He emphasised that Malkajgiri has played a significant role in Revanth Reddy's political career, attributing his PCC and CM posts to the people of Malkajgiri. However, KTR pointed out that Revanth Reddy has failed to fulfill his promises to the constituency, being notably absent from parliamentary duties and inaccessible to the people. He accused Revanth Reddy of fielding a dummy candidate from the Congress in Malkajgiri to benefit Modi, noting that such strategies have been deployed in multiple places by the Congress to aid Modi.

INDIA CORNER

Woman hacks husband to death in UP's Ballia village

A woman allegedly killed her husband on Wednesday by attacking him with a machete following a dispute in a village here, police said.



Man standing atop truck dies after his head hits metro station beam

A 20-year-old man standing atop of a moving truck died after his head hit a metro station beam in northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar area on Wednesday, police said.



West Bengal CM Mamata hits out at Rajnath Singhon CAA remark

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday criticised Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for asserting that nobody in the world can stop the implementation of the CAA.



Voting for BJP means backing Ram Rajya: Shah

PNS ■ AMRAVATI



Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said if people vote for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, their votes will go to the patriots, who want to establish a 'Ram Rajya' in the country.

Shah attacked Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "insulting" Lord Ram by skipping the Ayodhya Ram temple consecration ceremony despite being invited.

'INDIA bloc leaders are in jail or on bail, says Nadda

PNS ■ BHAGALPUR/KHAGARIA

Calling the opposition INDIA bloc a group of "Ghamandia" (arrogant) parties, BJP president J P Nadda on Wednesday claimed that majority of the leaders of those "corrupt" parties are either in jail or out on bail.

Gadkari faints while speaking at a rally

PNS ■ YAVATMA (MAHA)

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday fainted while speaking at an election rally in eastern Maharashtra's Yavatmal district.

The BJP leader was campaigning at Pusad which comes under the Yavatmal-Washim Lok Sabha constituency. As he suffered a fainting fit, the security personnel accompanying him carried him off-stage.

Modi & Shah are sellers and Ambani-Adani are buyers'

PNS ■ KALABURAGI (KARNATAKA)



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah with selling state-owned factories established decades ago to industrialists Ambani and Adani.

Kharge told the crowd. Kharge slammed the Prime Minister over his statement that the Congress plans to give people's hard-earned money and valuables to 'infiltrators' and 'those who have more children'.

'Chandrayaan-3 beyond mere call to embrace space studies'

PNS ■ KOLKATA



Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman S. Somanath has said the essence of Chandrayaan-3 extends beyond a mere call to embrace space studies; it urges participation in the broader realms of engineering and science, fostering a dynamic scientific community.

and engineering and improvement in the working environment. The success and enthusiasm in the moon mission brought that excitement," he said. "We are very good in the IT sector and continue to be one of the leading employers, but now we have started electronics. If you are looking into electronics industries, we are not looking at the top. We are supplier of systems. But not the creator of hardware systems. Slowly that is coming in," he said.

Destruction of forests is destruction of humanity: Murmu

PNS ■ DEHRADUN



President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday emphasised re-evaluating the standards of development and said the destruction of forests is, in a way, the destruction of humanity. "Unsustainable exploitation of resources has brought humanity to a point where the standards of development have to be re-evaluated," Murmu said.

Forest Academy here. She mentioned the Anthropocene Age, which is the period of human-centric development, and said "We are not owners but trustees of the earth's resources" and hence our priorities should be human-centric as well as nature-centric.

ty is a very important task which we have to do very quickly." The president said that human life can be saved from crisis through conservation and promotion of forests and wildlife. "We can repair the damage at a faster pace with the help of science and technology. For example, the Miyawaki method is being adopted at many places. Artificial intelligence (AI) can help in identifying suitable areas for afforestation and area-specific tree species," President Murmu said.

to assess various such options and develop solutions suitable to India's geographical conditions. Referring to the mass hunting of wild animals during the British period, the president said that when she visits museums where animal skins or severed heads adorn the walls, she feels that those exhibits are telling the story of the decline of human civilisation.

BJP, PM diverting people's attention from real :Priyanka

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged on Wednesday that prices of essential commodities are rising under BJP's rule but Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the saffron party are diverting attention from real issues even during the election campaign.

constituency where her brother Rahul Gandhi is seeking re-election, she said the BJP government led by Modi failed to address issues like price rise and unemployment. She accused Modi of manipulating people's votes for the BJP on the basis of religion and stated that the Lok Sabha election is an opportunity to "protect democracy" and the Constitution of India.

petrol, diesel and other essential commodities have risen "exponentially" in the last 10 years of the BJP's rule. Similarly, she stated that the unemployment rate has increased. She lamented the absence of any debate in the country during the general elections regarding unemployment and what the Modi-led government has done to alleviate the rising prices of essential commodities.

18 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada

PNS ■ DANTEWADA

As many as 18 Naxalites, including a militia platoon section commander and three women, surrendered on Wednesday in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada, a senior police officer said.

of Kakadi Panchayat Krantikari Mahila Adivasi Sangthan (KAMS) of the banned CPI (Maoist), and Hungi Oyam (20), a member of Hurrepal Panchayat. "The 18 Naxals laid down arms in front of police and CRPF officials. They were part of Bhairamgarh, and Malanger area committees of the Maoists in south Bastar," Rai said.

WHO calls for equitable health access

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

WORLD MALARIA DAY

On World Malaria Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasised on the need for heightened focus on addressing the obstacles to health equity, gender equality and human rights in malaria responses.

Wazed said in recent years, global efforts to reduce malaria have stagnated, posing a significant threat to public health and exacerbating inequalities within communities. Everyone has the right to quality, timely and affordable malaria services, yet this remains elusive for many, perpetuating a cycle of inequity that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable among us, she stated.



Infants and young children, especially those under five, are particularly affected, with disparities in access to education and financial resources compounding their risk, Wazed said, adding that pregnant women also face heightened risks as pregnancy reduces immunity to malaria, making them more susceptible to infection and severe disease.

Election a ritual in remote Tripura village!

PNS ■ CHAWMANU (TRIPURA)

Bikramjoy Tripura, a 'jhumia' (shifting cultivator) residing at a remote village in Tripura's Dhalai district said politicians come to his hamlet during elections and though their promises remain unfulfilled, he casts vote every time with the hope of getting electricity at his home and mobile phone connectivity in the area.

remote village. There is no electricity, mobile connectivity or health-care facility in our village, he said. "The Lok Sabha election is coming and we all will vote on April 26 but it remains a five-year ritual for us because it will bring no solution to our problems", the 41-year-old said. "During monsoon, the village which houses 763 jhumia families, all involved in shifting cultivation, remains cut off from the rest of the state. The road from Chawmanu to Vidya Kumar Roaja Para (Thalcherra) turned into a death trap because of the lack of repair for the past several years. Jhumia families living in 11 villages need to travel 10 to 20 km on



travel 10-12 km which is close to Chawmanu block headquarters," he said. Chardene Tripura, an elderly woman, echoed the same problems of her native village Vidya Kumar Roaja Para (Thalcherra). "We have not seen our MLA

Shambu Lal Chakma for many months. He does visit us when the election comes. Hope he will visit our village soon to seek votes", said the 54-year-old woman. "The village falls under East Tripura Lok Sabha constituency which goes to voting on April 26. We have a ration shop at our doorstep but it opens once a week. The jhumias who come from interior hamlets face trouble if they don't get ration stuff on the scheduled day. Several people are living in remote habitations after Vidya Kumar Roaja Para, who have to travel several kilometres on foot to get rice, salt, kerosene and sugar", said Bishayna Tripura, husband of Chardene Tripura.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Turncoats

Former Veep Venkaiah Naidu flags party-hopping, calls for strengthening anti-defection law

The pervasive trend of politicians of all hues switching parties, for better career prospects or in pursuit of election tickets especially ahead of Assembly or Lok Sabha polls, is nothing new. This phenomenon, commonly known as party-hopping, has now been flagged by former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu as particularly damaging to our democracy. It also raises questions about the efficiency of the anti-defection law in curbing such practices. The law, enshrined in the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, was introduced to deter elected representatives from switching allegiance to other political parties after being elected. The law aims to maintain stability and integrity within the political system by penalising defections and preserving the sanctity of electoral mandates. However, despite its existence, party-hopping remains a disturbing trend in Indian politics. Politicians often defect from their original party to join another for a ticket, ministerial position or personal ambitions. Additionally, the anti-defection law is limited in its scope and does not address the broader issues of political morality and ethics. Politicians often exploit legal loopholes and engage in prolonged legal battles to circumvent disqualification, thereby escaping accountability for their actions. This not only undermines the democratic process but also erodes public trust in the political system. However, the toothlessness of the anti-defection law and the failure to effectively address this issue reflect deeper systemic challenges within the political system.



So, why is the anti-defection law still toothless in addressing this issue? One of the primary reasons is the loophole in the law that allows for defection without disqualification under certain circumstances. The law permits defection if one-third or more of the members of a legislative party together decide to join another party, effectively legitimising mass defections. This provision has been exploited by political parties to engineer defections and destabilise rival Governments. Moreover, the anti-defection law lacks stringent enforcement mechanisms and timely interventions. While the law penalises individual defections, it does little to address the systemic factors that incentivise party-hopping, such as the allure of power, patronage politics and lack of internal democracy within parties. Furthermore, the anti-defection law is subject to political manipulation and selective application by ruling parties. To strengthen the anti-defection law and address the scourge of party-hopping, comprehensive reforms are necessary. This includes closing loopholes, imposing stricter penalties for defections, enhancing oversight mechanisms and promoting internal democracy within parties. There needs to be a concerted effort to foster a political culture based on principles of integrity, accountability and ethical conduct. Urgent reforms are needed to strengthen the law, uphold democratic principles and restore public trust in the integrity of the political process.

PICTALK



Devotees carrying holy water from Ganga river wait in queues to perform 'puja' at Vindhayachal Dham, in Mirzapur PTI

Graft dominates election discourse

Mounting concerns over corruption and economic uncertainties are shaping the contours of the political contest



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Innocuous developments are unfolding amidst the growing fervour of the impending elections. Despite concerns of the RBI regarding inflation, escalating toll rates, and transportation costs, the nation finds itself amidst a politically charged atmosphere. Nonetheless, certain court rulings are adding intrigue to the evolving scenario. In addition to the impact of electoral bonds, which have added colour to the political landscape and influenced prices, three other judgments are exerting significant influence. These include the Supreme Court's hearings on the Voters Verifiable Print Audit Trail (VVPAT), commonly known as the voting slip; a judgment regarding the denial of payment to Reliance Infra for the Delhi Airport Metro EPL; and the severe criticism of Patanjali's owners, who are contemners of court orders regarding their advertising. These developments are intensifying the dynamics of the electoral contest.



Not less interesting is the ED mounting fresh money laundering probe into the Chhattisgarh liquor scam and the ED linking Kerala CPM leaders to bank fraud. Could there be more arrests even after Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Kavita of BRS? Will prices take a backseat to politics and court rulings, or will they remain pressing concerns alongside these factors? Voters, though reticent, are far from oblivious. Whether attending rallies of prominent leaders or not, they are keenly aware of every development that influences their lifestyle. Conversations range from questioning why individuals with questionable backgrounds align themselves with the BJP to analysing defections from BJP to Congress factions. Both voters and party members evaluate the potential implications of each unfolding event, particularly returning officers of Chandigarh municipal polls and Himachal defections. Corruption is not a non-issue. Arrests of select opposition State leaders on corruption charges by central investigative agencies such as CBI, ED, and income-tax department are unlikely to change

the general public perception that corruption pervades all political parties. Many view the pre-election arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as a strategic move aimed at thwarting the popular politician's participation in the election campaign, rather than a genuine effort to address corruption. It leads them to think that possibly price surges of many medicines and commodities or galloping rises in tolls have electoral bond connections. Former Vice President Venkaiah Naidu's recent remark on corruption involving all parties has given it a new dimension for the voters to rethink the extent of the impact of corruption. Amidst the dropping of corruption charges against former Union Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, allegedly implicated in an Rs 25,000-crore aircraft purchase scandal, questions arise as to why Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal faces arrest for his alleged involvement in a Rs 100 crore State liquor policy issue. People ponder whether the Air India sell-off was conducted transparently or mired in controversy. The action against Kejriwal has spurred opposition unity, evident from the overflowing rally at Delhi's Ramlila Ground. The recent Supreme Court decision concerning Reliance Infra's Delhi Airport Metro's EPL has prompted questions



THE COURT'S REJECTION OF PATANJALI'S APOLOGY IN A CONTEMPT CASE STEMMING FROM MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS CONTRAVENING ITS ORDER SERVES AS A STARK EXAMPLE OF HOW THE RULE OF LAW CAN RECTIFY CORRUPT PRACTICES

about corporate exploitation of public sector Delhi Metro. The Court overturned its own 2021 order directing Delhi Metro to pay Reliance Infra Rs 2782 crore, which had ballooned to Rs 7686 crore with accrued interest. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, along with Justices R Gavai and Surya Kant, justified this drastic action, citing a 'miscarriage of justice' resulting in an 'undeserved windfall' for Reliance Infra. This ruling, following closely after the electoral bond controversy, has heightened voter scepticism. Had Delhi Metro been forced to pay, it could have burdened commuters with significantly higher fares. Likewise, the court's rejection of Patanjali's apology in a contempt case, stemming from misleading advertisements contravening its order, serves as a stark example of how the rule of law can rectify corrupt practices, unveil false brand images, and maintain price stability. The court's warning to be prepared for consequences, along with its criticism of the Uttarakhnad Government, underscores the power of legal intervention. Erratic power bills and arbitrary demands in UP and many States are also potential issues. Each of these cases, people realise, are instances of political linkages affecting price rises and profiteering. The glaring lapses on the part

of the executive and administration add to the woes of the people and the breakdown of the law-and-order machinery. The judiciary is uncovering corrupt practices that impact economic and administrative systems, consequently rising cost of living. Dainik Bhaskar has done a study on prices in Rajasthan. It finds that compared to 2019, prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas increased by 42 per cent; food items cost 34 per cent more; medicine prices for diabetes and heart diseases rose by 54 per cent and people's dining outside has been reduced by 40 per cent. Pulses have become costlier by 20 per cent, vegetables by 233 per cent; taxi fares by 67 per cent, edible oil 100 per cent, and FMCG rose by 60 per cent. Salaries during the period for different classes have risen by 11 per cent to 26 per cent. Price concerns persist, with numerous unnecessary infra, road airport and metro projects shocking even political workers. However, this doesn't diminish the significance of religious fervour surrounding the Ram temple and Modi's assurances, which remain potent issues in certain regions, albeit overshadowed by economic factors and caste considerations. Amethi and Raebareli, however, remain in focus, more than Varanasi. (The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EMBRACING NANO INFLUENCE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The rising power of nano influencers", published on April 24, this is my response. The rise of nano influencers marks a shift towards authenticity in social media marketing. These individuals, with modest followings of 1,000 to 10,000, offer brands a refreshing avenue to connect with consumers. Unlike macro and celebrity influencers, nano influencers embody relatability and community-driven engagement. Their appeal lies in their resemblance to ordinary individuals—friends, family and colleagues—eschewing the polished facades of traditional influencer marketing. This authenticity fosters genuine rapport and trust, essential commodities in an era inundated with impersonal ads. Brands increasingly gravitate towards nano influencers for their cost-effectiveness and heightened engagement rates. Moreover, their endorsements carry the weight of peer recommendations, bolstering consumer confidence and purchase decisions. Yet, challenges persist. Identifying influencers aligned with brand values and managing logistics pose hurdles. Nonetheless, the allure of genuine connections propels brands towards embracing nano influence, fostering deeper, more meaningful consumer relationships amidst the din of commercialism. Meera Iyer | Bhopal

Unveiling historical wounds



Apropos the news article, "Historic legal battle unfolds over Gyanvapi", published on April 24, this is my response. The ongoing legal battles concerning worship rights at Gyan Vapi, from Varanasi courts to the Supreme Court, resonate with ethical implications. Both sides' legal prowess seems even-

ly matched, yet the essence of the dispute is far from symmetric. One side defends worship rights, while the other asserts property ownership, blurring the lines of justice. The roots of this conflict delve deep into history, where Aurangzeb's divisive legacy still casts its shadow. Reverend Sherring's accounts vividly depict the systematic desecration of Hindu temples under Mughal rule, highlighting a painful chapter often overlooked. The struggle over Gyan Vapi transcends legalities; it's a battle to reclaim dignity and heritage. As the judiciary delves into this sensitive matter, it must recognise the injustice endured, ensuring that this trial isn't merely legalistic but a reaffirmation of justice for a wounded community. History's scars must not dictate the present; it's time for healing and restoration. Divya Menon | Chennai

Samaj provided a platform for empowerment and caste equality, echoing the need for grassroots movements in contemporary times. Moreover, Phule's forward-thinking educational reforms, such as vocational training and multilingual education, mirror present-day policies like the New Education Policy, of 2020. Embracing Phule's vision means prioritising the inclusion of marginalised groups in all spheres of society, from politics to education. As we commemorate Phule's legacy, it's imperative to mainstream the periphery, ensuring every citizen's voice is heard and valued. By doing so, we honour Phule's spirit and move closer to realising his dream of a truly egalitarian society. Kavita Mehra | Jaipur

ETERNAL QUEST FOR LIBERATION

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The Mysteries of Afterlife", published on April 24, this is my response. The Upanishads, with their timeless wisdom, unravel the intricacies of existence

Nurture workplace safety and inclusivity

Effective workplace safety and inclusivity initiatives demand a holistic approach, addressing fundamental needs while nurturing higher aspirations



SMITA SHETTY KAPOOR

In the ever-changing landscape of workplace safety and inclusivity, this journey is quite often likened to Maslow's theory where foundational components set the stage for higher aspirations. Like Maslow's hierarchy that progresses from physiological needs to self-actualisation, our modern-day approach must deal with basic requirements before going up to more ambitious aspirations. The demand of today goes further than what organisations aspire for but rather addresses what is most urgent at the particular moment. Statistics indicate a diverse workforce composition inclusive of X-Gens, Millennials, Gen Zs and soon Generation Alpha. As this demographic shift occurs, are we ready? What kind of policies and practices should be considered for this new era?



Safe Workplaces: Organisations are increasingly investing in creating both physically and psychologically safe environments. Initiatives encompass Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies, which not only ensure workplace safety but also serve as a magnet for high-performing employees. ESG's emphasis on societal contributions resonates with individuals seeking purpose beyond monetary benefits. **Respectful Workplaces:** Establishing psychologically safe environments mandates clear policies, including Codes of Business Conduct, Grievance Redressal protocols and Workplace Harassment guidelines (including Prevention of Sexual Harassment). Additionally,

dedicated committees should address issues promptly while proactively working on prevention initiatives. **Diversity and Inclusion:** To remain relevant, organisations must adopt equal employment policies, refine communication practices, foster employee resource groups and establish Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) councils. Failure to prioritise these initiatives could deter potential candidates and partners, underscoring their importance in today's landscape. **Flexibility:** Sensitivity toward employees' diverse needs is paramount. Accommodations for special circumstances, accessibility for differently-abled individuals, gender-neutral facilities and amenities such as nursing spaces are essential. **Appreciation:** Cultivating a culture of appreciation is pivotal for fostering a sense of belonging among employees. Initiatives such as team bonding activities and addressing unconscious biases contribute significantly to creating supportive environments. This culture of appreciation propels individuals

toward self-actualisation, the pinnacle of Maslow's theory, counteracting toxicity and promoting inclusivity. **Training and Development:** Prioritising continuous training and development programs is essential to cultivate a culture of growth and inclusivity within organisations. By equipping employees with the necessary tools and resources to excel, companies demonstrate their unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment. **Accessibility and Accommodation:** Guaranteeing accessibility for all employees, irrespective of their physical capabilities, is imperative to foster inclusivity. This involves implementing measures such as installing wheelchair ramps, providing ergonomic workstations and offering assistive technologies to facilitate equal participation in the workplace. Additionally, organisations need to establish policies that address accommodation requests promptly and with utmost respect for employees' needs and preferences. (The writer is founder Kelp; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN NAVIGATING WORKPLACE ANXIETY

The pressure to consistently perform and deliver causes stress and anxiety



SAKSHI SETHI

In today's fast-paced and competitive work environments, it is not uncommon for employees to experience feelings of stress, worry and anxiety. While it is commonly associated with professional settings, at the same time it is important to recognise that similar dynamics even occur in educational environments, particularly at the school level. One of the primary contributors to workplace anxiety is the pressure to perform at a high level consistently. Employees often face demanding deadlines, complex projects and performance expectations that can create a sense of overwhelm and inadequacy.

Workplace anxiety can manifest in various forms, ranging from mild nervousness before a presentation to debilitating panic attacks triggered by overwhelming workloads or toxic office dynamics. Left unaddressed, it can have detrimental effects on both individual well-being as well as organisational productivity. Various studies and researchers have found a negative correlation between workplace anxiety and job performance that indicates that higher levels of anxiety are associated with lower performance ratings across various job tasks and responsibilities which brings in a dire need for employers to understand the root causes of workplace anxiety and implement strategies to mitigate its impact. By understanding the root causes of anxiety and implementing strategies to address them, not only the schools but also the organisations can create supportive environments where all members of the community can thrive. The recent concept of 'Unhappy leaves' which isn't even a standard term in employment or HR terminology, could soon refer to situations where employees take leave from work due to dissatisfaction, stress or burnout caused by their job or work environment. Employees might take such leave to address their mental health, seek new opportunities or simply take a break from the stresses of their current job.



Addressing workplace anxiety requires a multi-faceted approach that involves both the individual experiencing the anxiety and the organisation. Today, an increasing number of employers are becoming aware of the adverse effects that stress can have on an employee's performance and are offering different programs to help employees manage stress in their lives. This approach is an initiative that will prove to increase workplace performance as well as employee loyalty and retention in the long run.

Employers must work to improve employee satisfaction through measures such as providing support for mental health, fostering a positive work environment, offering opportunities for professional development and addressing any concerns or grievances that their employees may have.

On an individual level, employees can take proactive steps to manage workplace anxiety and safeguard their well-being which may include practicing self-care activities such as regular exercise, mindfulness meditation and relaxation techniques to reduce stress levels. Setting boundaries, prioritising tasks and seeking social support from colleagues or professional networks can help alleviate feelings of anxiety and promote resilience in the face of workplace challenges. Organisations and schools can implement policies and practices that promote work-life balance, stress management and mental health awareness. Providing access to resources such as counselling services, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and wellness initiatives can equip employees with tools and strategies to cope with workplace anxiety proactively and foster positive working relationships for creating a psychologically healthy workplace. Remember that overcoming workplace anxiety is a journey and it may take time to find what works best for you.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

The democratic status of India under scanner



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

The latest report from the V-Dem Institute categorises India as one of the 'worst autocracies' globally, significantly undermining its democratic reputation

The Gothenburg-based V-Dem Institute's report on Democracy Report 2024 claims that India has been reduced to the status of an "electoral autocracy" in 2018 and has further downgraded to "one of the worst autocracies". The report categorically found that almost all elements of democracy have worsened in more countries than improved and the report also singled out freedom of expression, fair elections and freedom of association/civil society as the three most affected elements of autocracy. There is ostensibly a clarion call for India to take on this global index based on arbitrary methods. The time has come to decolonise the democracy index and frame a domestic democracy index in the global area.

Suffice it to say, that this report based on faulty methods has shaken India's sentiment. The dichotomy is quite apparent that India has been measured in a biased manner in the scale. The flawed methodology and nonchalant attitude of people who helm the global index have put India on a declining global index. The global criticism has allegedly hurt India's sovereign ratings. The Indian Government publicly rejected this global democracy index, arguing that Delhi did not need the sermons. India has accused the rank and file of hypocrisy, calling them self-appointed guardians of the world who find it very difficult to stomach the fact that no one in India seeks their approval.

Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) gives an overview of the State of democracy in 165 independent countries and two territories. This includes almost the entire world population and most of the world's States (micro States are not counted). Rated on a scale of 0-10, the democracy index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, Government activity, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. Based on the results of various indicators in these categories, each country is classified into one of four regime types - "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime". Note that since 2015, the EIU has observed a decline in democratic standards in India. While democracy can be subjective, the EIU Democracy Index is based on five key indicators - the electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of Government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties. It is criticised that this democracy index sent out faulty information to the entire world.

According to the EIU Democracy Index, India's civil liberties score was lower than in 2014. Civil liberties are assessed by freedom of expression, freedom of speech, restrictions on the Internet, the independence of the judiciary of the State and the ability of citizens to address their complaints to citizens. The perceptions of human rights, perceptions of religious discrimination and whether the Government uses new risks and threats as an excuse to limit civil liberties. Since 2017, civil liberties scores have been in free fall. It was 7.35 in 2017 and 2018, then dropped to 6.76 in 2019 and bottomed out in 2020 at 5.59.

In 2021 and 2022, India's civil liberties score was 6.18 and by 2023 it had fallen again to 5.88, the score of Ghana, Thailand, Ecuador and Guatemala, all of which have lower Democracy index scores than India.

While the civil liberties scores of developed countries have not improved over this peri-



THE LATEST REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) REPORT SAYS INDIA'S RANKING IN THE 2023 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX HAS FALLEN TO 161 OUT OF 180 COUNTRIES. IN COMPARISON PAKISTAN FARED BETTER IN TERMS OF MEDIA FREEDOM, RANKING 150TH AN IMPROVEMENT FROM 157TH LAST YEAR

od, India's deterioration has meant that India no longer ranks above them in this parameter. Precisely, according to the report declining civil liberties have affected India's democracy scores. As a result, the Indian Government decided to create its framework for democracy ratings after it was downgraded by international groups and indices. It contacted the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), one of India's largest think tanks, which has partnered with the Government on several projects and initiatives.

According to the EIU Democracy Index, national elections will be held in 2024 in eight of the world's ten most populous countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia and the United States. There are no choices in half of them for free and there is no lack of justice and many other prerequisites of democracy, such as freedom of speech and association. Not surprisingly, elections in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Russia - where opposition forces are subject to State repression - do not lead to regime change or democracy. Elections in the United States, Brazil, India and Indonesia - all classified as "flawed democracies" - at least offer the possibility of change, although they are also likely to see incumbents or anointed followers win. The EIU Democracy Index's position on India's elections is problematic in terms of the methodology used in the study.

The World Happiness Report is a publication that contains articles based on respondents' ratings of their own lives and national happiness ratings, which the report also correlates with various life (quality of) factors. In March 2024, Finland was declared the happiest country in the world seven times in a row. However, India is currently ranked 126 out of 146 countries with a happiness score of 4.054. India is lower in the happiness index than its neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and China. The decline in happiness levels is closely linked to India's deepening mental health crisis, exacerbated by the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pan-

dem. However, one can understand the situation in China. Then China can be ahead of India in terms of the happiness index.

In the report, experts from fields such as economics, psychology, survey analysis and national statistics discuss how well-being measures can effectively measure national progress and address other related topics. Each report is structured into chapters that address the issue, delving deeper into topics related to happiness such as mental health, the tangible benefits of happiness, the role of ethics, political implications and links to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) approach to measuring subjective well-being and other international and national initiatives.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) publishes a World Press Freedom Index every year. RSF is an international non-Governmental organisation whose mission is to protect and promote media freedom. It is headquartered in Paris and has consultative status with the United Nations. This annual World Press Freedom Index aims to "compare the level of press freedom for journalists and the media in 180 countries and territories" with the previous calendar year. The latest Reporters Without Borders (RSF) report says India's ranking in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has fallen to 161 out of 180 countries. In comparison, Pakistan fared better in terms of media freedom, ranking 150th, an improvement from 157th last year. In 2022, India was ranked 150th on the scale. However, the press freedom index of India seems manufactured or could be based on flawed methodology. The history of Pakistani journalism has been turbulent, with periods of relative openness interspersed with severe restrictions on press freedom, especially during the military dictatorship. Similarly, press freedom in Afghanistan has been dismal for years. Even two years after the fall of Kabul, we hear almost every day from Afghan journalists, both

domestic and in exile, about the hostile environment they face.

The Committee to Protect Journalists' attempt is to provide support and assistance to journalists in exile. Since 2021, Afghan journalists have become one of the largest groups of journalists in exile receiving annual grants from CPJ, contributing to a 227 per cent jump in the CPJ grants to journalists in exile over the three years 2020-2022. It received increasing reports of Afghan journalists in exile who were targeted in immigration-related incidents. Afghan journalists seeking asylum in Pakistan told us they have been arrested and blackmailed for overstaying their visas and many are living in hiding and in fear. Then how India can be put below Pakistan and Afghanistan's press freedom index on the scale of press freedom?

The importance of methodology in any study remains vital. Research methodology is a way of explaining how the researcher intends to conduct his research. It is a logical, systematic plan for solving a research problem.

It provides researchers with a road map to ensure that their research is systematic, rigorous and objective. Without a well-defined research methodology, it is difficult to obtain accurate and reliable results, draw meaningful conclusions and contribute to the data set. Research methodology lends legitimacy to the research and provides scientifically sound results. It also includes a detailed plan to help keep researchers on track, making the process smooth, efficient and manageable. The methodology of the researcher allows the reader to understand the approach and methods of concluding. However, the methodology used in the democracy index has invited numerous issues. At this juncture, when the entire world is conspiring against India in terms of the democracy index, India must decolonise the index.

(The writer is an associate professor at the School of Management, Presidency University Bengaluru; views are personal)

Determining the limits of corruption, the Indian way

The recent raids on public functionaries and private individuals speak volumes about the deep roots of corruption still existing in Indian society

Whether it is the issue of electoral bonds the liquor policy of Delhi or many others involving politicians, bureaucrats and even private individuals, perhaps after some hiatus, the ghost of corruption is back haunting the national discourse at present. People may have different perceptions and views on the prevalence of corruption in India depending upon their experiences, knowledge or even interests. Some may think that corruption is highly prevalent within the Government functionaries and in the political class, whereas others may opine that corruption of some form or the other exists in every sphere including in the private sector, even in small businesses. While there may



SIDDHARTH MISHRA

be some others who may justify corruption and yet others who vehemently criticize it. Does it mean that it is how one looks at the scenario that shapes the societal perspectives in this regard and if it is treated as true, does it require looking at the whole issue from different perspectives? Speaking honestly, corruption seems to be prevalent in all walks of life irrespective of whether it is the public or pri-

private sector. There is some other form of corruption visible everywhere in this country. However, the form of corruption that usually becomes the talk of the town is the Governmental or the political class corruption. By that account, for that matter, should even a rickshaw puller or a vegetable or fruit vendor asking for more than the genuine price or overcharging not amount to corruption? Should not the boss, in a private enterprise, dominating, harassing or seeking undue favours from subordinates as a condition of promotion, be seen as corrupt? Ironically, the law does not seem to be treating such attitudes as, falling in the purview of, and, requiring to be prohibited by corruption law, though perhaps, the law

might be providing some other type of remedy in such cases. It is not just that the corruption is not confined to the Government sector, rather monetary is also not the only type of corruption that exists. Other forms of corruption do exist in this country that usually go unnoticed or unchecked. Arrogance in people in power, delaying even genuine work and harassing, or humiliating ordinary people unnecessarily should amount to corruption. Public functionaries take oaths before assuming office and vow to remain honest in their duties, they hold public offices as the trustees for people, who have faith in them and it is their primary duty to serve the common people

and refrain from breaching people's faith. Scores of people throughout the country face tremendous challenges, harassment and humiliation in getting work done in the Government departments at every level but public memory is short-lived and people easily forget such issues as time passes. There is no doubt that corruption is not in the interest of the society or the State. Therefore, to curb the menace of corruption, the subsequent Governments have adopted numerous legal measures including the enactment of laws and the establishment of enforcement machinery. However, as is evident from the recent incidents of corruption, all such measures do not seem to deter people from

involving in acts of corruption. Does it mean that the laws have failed to curb corruption or is it that the laws per se cannot provide a solution to this problem? Does one need to look beyond the legal measures to get rid of this menace that is eating into the vitals of this country?

Can this country do away with the menace of corruption through law and its enforcement? If that was true, then this country would have become corruption-free long back. Does it mean that corruption inherently exists in ourselves and has acquired the status of an accepted norm and it is not possible to get rid of corruption in this country? The question that arises is whether corruption has become a way of life in this

country and whether should people now stop criticising corruption or people involved in it. Moreover, another disturbing aspect is whether involvement in corruption attaches any stigma or invites social backlash to the accused any longer. Doubts do exist about whether considerations of a person's involvement in corrupt practices weigh on people's psyche while making choices, especially political ones. Does this all not call for revisiting the whole gamut of social, educational and cultural moorings. The recent raids upon public functionaries and private individuals speak volumes of the deep roots of corruption still existing in Indian society.

The author recalls a high-ranked IT officer, who was

once involved in the anti-corruption raids, telling him that one of the former bureaucrats who was raided for unaccounted assets, had illegally acquired numerous properties, most of which were not even ever seen or visited by him. That officer sadly quipped, 'how much corruption would or should one do and that there has to be a limit to corruption'. This Statement unfortunately and ironically seems to resonate with the general sentiment of the masses who seem to have painfully accepted administrative or political corruption as fait accompli, but wish that at least 'they must do it in limits'.

(The author is a Sr Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, the University of Delhi; views are personal)

Hyderabad

the pioneer

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Thursday
April 25, 2024

Celebrating the women performers, the 'Tawaifs' and the 'Baijis', *The Pioneer* takes you through *The Courtesan Project*. In an exclusive chat with the founder, we discuss more in detail about the project.



Rediscovering legacy of Tawaifs and Baijis with The Courtesan Project

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Did you know that the highly trained courtesans of Awadh in the 18th and 19th centuries were known as 'Tawaifs', the trendsetters of their era? They combined Persian and Indian elements to create the classic Kathak dance and the ethereal dadra and thumri music, raising the bar for style and sophistication. They were not only exceptional artists but also highly regarded conversationalists and etiquette instructors.

Manjari is the creator of *The Courtesan Project*, an idea that has grown to become one of the most popular dance revival movements in existence today—giving women a voice and acknowledging their centuries-long creative contributions to theater, film, and other performing arts. *The Courtesan Project* is well-known, adored, and valued all over the world for its distinctive storytelling that brings to light the underappreciated stories of dance and music!

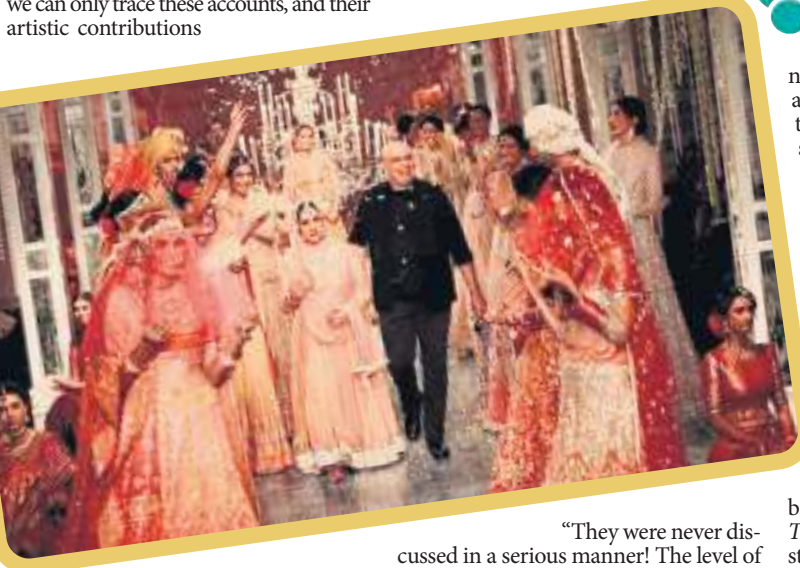
"Let's say 1999, when I met a 'Tawaif' by the name of Zareena Begum," the founder recounts in an exclusive conversation with us for the special weekly column. "I was a rookie in this field of dancing. The term 'Tawaif' among the Kathak community was unfamiliar to me. I recall her putting her hands out in front of me and questioning how I was meant to dance to a song sung by a 'tawaif' because I came from a wealthy household. I didn't understand! I became even more motivated to test this notion we're discussing after observing the stigma."

This initiative serves as a platform to educate the public about former courtesans and the detrimental effects that discriminatory practices had on their lives. Through cultural action, they are promoting the much-needed space for them as 'artists' in society. The creator goes on, "I also manage a foundation where I provide medical and financial support to our community's elderly musicians. I began my investigation into the music connected to 'Tawaifs' without considering any stigmas at this point. I discovered that they had to sing from the doorway and were never permitted into the affluent homes. Why was this, I wondered? This social order is terrible."

Thus, the founder felt it was imperative that she share 'Tawaif's' inspiring tales with the world and showcase their artwork. This relates to gender in the arts and

how the performer's gender influences the work going forward! The enigmatic dancers known as Tawaif and Nachawali are not included in the history of performing arts documentation, while their male counterparts are named 'Ustads' and the amazing women are simply called 'Nautch Girls'.

Additionally, she recalled asking the tawaifs' sponsors, "I was told straight out that Sufi has a strong brand, so why would you want to work with the tawaifs? It provided me with yet another perspective on the project I was working on. We were not sponsored! However, I have a strong sense of stubbornness, so I went ahead and paid for the concert myself. However, I first gave a two-hour session to get people talking about Tawaif culture. 'Tawaif' isn't a terrible word, in my opinion! In their faces, the cultural minister consented to attend." These women were the first to perform as women in the major Hindi film industry after moving from Kotha to become a part of the Parsi theatre. The accounts of women who sang for India's independence have been lost to history; we can only trace these accounts, and their artistic contributions



are mainly still unacknowledged! Their art is highlighted by this endeavour now. Bravo! "I must admit that, despite what I was told, the media solely seeks financial benefit. This was disproven when 32 prominent newspapers covered the 'tawaif' without the support of sponsors! I was unable to even send out formal invitations as we do now, so I invited everyone—including the ministers—by writing simple letters. The 'tawaif' asked, 'Log humse abhi bhi mohabbat karte hai?' (People still love us?) as she broke down in tears.

There, my project won! I obstinately became more involved in this project moving forward," continues Manjari Chaturvedi. The founder has taken her passion for classical dance and transformed it into something more than just a means of expression. Under her direction, it is a kind of narrative form, as well as a cultural rebirth. *The Courtesan Project*, aims at documenting the historically extraordinary role of the 'Tawaif' in artistic life—as muse to poets and painters, writers and kings, musicians and leaders—and is the most evocative example of this. By doing this, she aims to restore the respect that these denigrated women deserve for their education and performance art, their wit and intelligence, their creativity, and their unadulterated sexual might.

Her personal experiences provided more insightful commentary. "I could sense how only sniggering conversations were held about the 'tawaifs' in the drawing rooms," she said.



Bollywood is to blame for the incorrect portrayal of 'tawaifs' in society. I began talking about dance and how it's associated with 'tawaifs'. Students began learning more about this culture as a result of the *Courtesan Project*. They even wrote a departmental book on them locally! The interest that authors and PhD candidates began to show in them for books or research papers was another way that the project had an impact. I won't name them, but a huge filmmaker is filming a picture about them; his writers sat down while I was in seminar. A movie on 'tawaifs' would never have attracted anyone's attention ten years ago. What unexpectedly occurred? It's my project's impact!

Even the one that was produced was a complete failure! My concert served as inspiration for *Bombay Begums* as well. However, since these movies would stop at nothing to get money, I'm not concerned about them."

There have been hundreds of concerts, including Manjari Chaturvedi's performance art of the 'tawaifs', four significant seminars, three Tedx speeches, and several other talks and lectures under the umbrella of *The Courtesan Project* series. Many historical walks have been inspired by the 'tawaifs', and the majority of singers and dancers currently use the 'tawaifs' art form in their performances. The 'tawaifs' are in style, and there are countless Instagram reels of them. This is the direct outcome of the last 14 years' worth of work that has led to a cultural rebirth. The contemporary classical dancer who aspires to be recognised among the singers and dancers of the past is challenging society's expectations of individuals and how the past has viewed female stage artists. She is making a bold statement by titling her event *Main Tawaif*, and that is admirable, and only a strong performer like her can transcend the existing narrative and craft a new one from the perspective of women. This is necessary to finally recognise the tawaif's performance art, to go past the jeers and drawing room giggles that come with the word 'tawaif', and to finally recognise their place in the annals of performance art history! Manjari herself had to wait for ten long years to use the name 'tawaif' in a classical concert without facing backlash. A contemporary classical dancer who is at last hoping to provide the performers and vocalists of the past some recognition. She is challenging stereotypes!

"They were never discussed in a serious manner! The level of academic interest does increase when you do seminars. Even the word 'Tawaif' was forbidden to be used in the lectures! I was astonished to hear that some institute staff members referred to the dancing performances as 'Mujras'! Observe the irony; the same institute was the scene of *Mughal-e-Azam*." So, she offered the younger generation a different perspective on the talented female artists who, up until now, have only been the subject of disparaging remarks that may have been heavily influenced by Bollywood. "I was addressing prejudices.

'No longer confined to handful of favourites'

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Popularly known for his ability to play various roles on television, Aamir Ali mesmerised the audiences yet again with his captivating performance in *Lootere*, streaming on Disney+ Hotstar. For those unaware, he had previously collaborated with the ace filmmaker Hansal Mehta once again post-*Faraaz*.

Getting candid with *The Pioneer*, Aamir, who plays the character of Ghulam Waris, reveals, "Initially, working with directors like Hansal sir, Shailesh sir, and Jai was a dream come true. *Lootere* intrigued me; its storyline was unlike anything I had ever encountered. In television, characters are often limited to hero and heroine archetypes, but in OTT, the diversity and complexity of roles are fascinating. *Lootere* delves into the gripping tale of a cruise ship crew comprising Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, held captive by Somali pirates with no hope of escape or rescue for the enslaved."

As we went on further in this chat, the actor couldn't praise the show enough. The reason, you wondered, is that he shares, "It's truly groundbreaking for Indian OTT. The production, featuring both Indian and African actors, is unparalleled. Its bilingual format, a bold move, sets it apart from the rest. I'm grateful to Hotstar for believing in Hansal Sir and Jai's vision."

Filming *Lootere* was an immense challenge for everyone involved, from actors to makers and technicians. Shooting in Cape Town, Africa, presented formidable obstacles with its harsh temperatures and unpredictable weather conditions. The decision to film solely at live locations added another layer of complexity to the production process. Despite having security measures in place, he reveals, "The cast and crew found themselves navigating unfamiliar terrain, immersed in the vibrant yet challenging environment of African slums reminiscent of Mumbai's Dharavi."

Portraying a character who shuns violence yet possesses a knack for getting things done was a fascinating challenge for him. And so, he drew inspiration from real-life individuals whom he knew and admired, crafting a character that resonated deeply with him. "This character became a source of inspiration, embodying traits I found truly admirable. In one pivotal scene, as my character engages in conversation with another individual, tension mounts as a gun is suddenly pointed in his direction. However, as the scene unfolds, it becomes evident that my character maintains complete control of the situation. Through his sharp intellect and quick thinking, he skillfully navigates the encounter, effortlessly turning the tables in his favour. This moment serves as a testament

ACTOR AAMIR ALI, WHO WAS RECENTLY SEEN IN HANSAL MEHTA'S *LOOTERE*, GETS CANDID WITH *THE PIONEER* IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT, AS HE DISCUSSES THE SERIES, SHOOTING IN CAPE TOWN IN EXTREME TEMPERATURES, HIS INCLINATION TOWARDS OTT, AND MORE.

to his astuteness and cunning nature. Watching the show will reveal why this character holds such significance for me as their journey unfolds on screen, showcasing the depth and complexity of their beliefs and actions."

The excellence of *Lootere*, he says, lies in its ensemble cast, comprised of incredibly talented actors who seamlessly embody their characters. Each actor was carefully selected not for their name recognition but for their ability to authentically portray their roles. He further shares, "The casting process was meticulous, ensuring that every actor perfectly fit their character, enhancing the authenticity and depth of the narrative. What truly sets this show apart is the remarkable chemistry between the cast members, evident in the nuanced reactions they elicit from one another. It's through these genuine interactions that the true essence of acting shines, demonstrating the importance of strong reac-

tions in creating compelling performances." Watching shows on international OTT platforms ignited a deep passion within him, sparking a desire to be part of such groundbreaking projects. "It was a dream I held close to my heart to explore the realm of OTT content in India and make a mark in the industry. As I embarked on this journey, I found myself living the dream I once envisioned. Being part of *Lootere* was the realisation of that dream—a moment of profound fulfillment and joy. I had longed to delve into the world of OTT shows, and now, having accomplished it, I feel a sense of gratification beyond measure."

Exploring the vast landscape of OTT platforms and world cinema, he says, has broadened his horizons in ways he had never imagined. "While I once admired iconic characters like Amitabh Bachchan's portrayal in *Agneepath* or Aamir Khan's roles, the diverse range of characters now available on OTT platforms has expanded my appreciation. No longer confined to just a handful of favourites, I find myself drawn to a multitude of characters from various shows and films. This newfound perspective has inspired me to seek out diverse roles and stories that challenge me as an actor."

Next in line after *Lootere* is a project titled *Doctors*, helmed by Siddharth P. Malhotra. "I'm eager to dive into this new venture, exploring the intricacies of the medical world and delving into complex characters under Malhotra's direction. As I continue to embrace the ever-evolving landscape of OTT content, I look forward to pushing boundaries and venturing into uncharted territory with each new opportunity that comes my way," signs off Aamir on a happy note.



Deep brain stimulation's impact on advanced parkinson's management

Parkinson's disease (PD), a degenerative condition of the nervous system, is a movement disorder characterised by slowness of movement, resting tremor (shaking of limbs), rigidity (stiffness), and postural instability (imbalance).

ADVANCED PARKINSON'S DISEASE MANAGEMENT:

Medical management remains the first line of treatment in patients with PD. Patients respond well to medications that temporarily replenish dopamine (L-dopa) or mimic the action of dopamine. However, as the disease duration increases, the requirement of L-dopa increases and the medical management of advanced Parkinson's disease can be quite challenging.

The most troublesome effects of L-dopa as the disease advances, usually after several years of treatment, are an end-of-dose reduction in efficacy, the more precipitous "on-off" phenomenon, and the induction of involuntary "dyskinetic" movements. This is when patients are evaluated for

Deep Brain Stimulation - a surgical procedure that helps people with advanced PD improve their quality of life.

DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION :

Deep Brain Stimulation involves applying high-frequency electrical stimulation to specific structures in the deep areas of the brain. Deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery was first approved in 1998 to treat Parkinson's disease (PD) tremor, then in 2002 for the treatment of advanced Parkinson's symptoms. It is now widely accepted as an effective, safe, and standard treatment worldwide.

The procedure involves placing a thin metal electrode into one of several possible brain targets and attaching it to a computerised pulse generator, which is implanted under the skin in the chest below the clavicle.

In DBS surgery, electrodes are inserted into a specific area of the brain (generally the subthalamic nucleus STN or the Globus pallidus GPi), using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and recordings of brain cell activity during the procedure.



This is the part of the procedure where the patient is awake. A second procedure is performed under General Anaesthesia (GA) to implant an IPS, impulse generator battery (like a pacemaker). The IPG is placed under the collarbone. The IPS provides an electrical impulse to a part of the brain involved in motor function.

ROLE OF DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE :

DBS is highly effective for patients who suffer from disabling tremors, wearing-off spells, and dyskinesias induced by medication. Although DBS significantly improves the quality of life in PD patients, it is not a cure and it does not

slow PD progression. It gives a good quality of life for 10-15 years depending on the age and stage of PD when DBS was performed. Most people after undergoing DBS, experience a considerable reduction of their PD symptoms, and their medications can be greatly reduced. However, it does not improve speech or swallowing issues, thinking problems, or gait freezing.

Like all brain surgeries, DBS carries a small risk (<5%) of complications. It can be procedure-related (haemorrhage that may be silent or symptomatic, transient confusion, infection), device-related (breakage of leads), or stimulation related (usually eliminated by adjusting stimulation settings). This is often avoided with stringent patient selection criteria, meticulous planning, and strict asepsis during DBS surgery. A controller is given to patients who undergo DBS surgery to turn the device on or off.

DBS surgery does not cause any damage to healthy brain tissues or nerve cells. It only interrupts abnormal electrical signals from targeted areas in the brain. It is a reversible procedure unlike other proce-

dures used in the treatment of PD like lesioning which involves irreversibly destroying tissues in a specific area of the brain.

IDEAL PD CANDIDATE FOR DBS :

- The patient has had PD symptoms for at least five years.
- S/he continues to have a good response to PD medications, especially carbidopa/levodopa, although the duration of response may be insufficient (Levodopa responsive).
- Age group of 40-70 years.
- The patient has "on/off" fluctuations despite regular medication dosing.
- S/he is unable to tolerate PD medications due to side effects.
- Tremors that are not well controlled with medication.
- Severe dyskinesias.
- The patient should be cognitively intact.

(The author, Dr. Sathwik R Shetty is a Consultant - Neurosurgery at Manipal Hospital.)



Retailers Association of India (RAI) hosted the third edition of Hyderabad Retail Summit (HRS), held at the Hotel ITC Kohenur in Hyderabad. The highlights of the summit were the in-depth panel discussion on topics such as The Modern Retail Renaissance: Innovations and Consumer-Centric Strategies, Retail Revolutionised: The Technological Transformation, and Revolutionising the Indian Grocery Industry: Technology, Supply Chains, And Logistics.



Vision IAS conducted a seminar on UPSC preparations on Wednesday in Hyderabad. The seminar focused on the UPSC preparations. The toppers of the institute; AIR - 36, Ayushi Pradhan, and AIR-50, K N Chandana Jahnvi, gracing the event and sharing some effective strategies for the examination.



Himalayan Pine Com, presented the Global Sustainability Discussion and Awards 2024. This inspiring event, held at The Historic Red Fort (Lal Qila), brought together distinguished guests, environmental advocates, and cultural luminaries to commemorate World Earth Day and champion sustainability efforts worldwide. Amidst the iconic setting of Lal Qila, esteemed attendees engaged in insightful discussions on pressing environmental challenges and innovative solutions. The event served as a platform for knowledge exchange, fostering collaborations aimed at driving positive change on a global scale.



Atal Incubation Centre - Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology and Thermo Fisher Scientific, partner to enable research initiatives in the country.



Reliance Jewels, continues its tradition of celebrating festivals with unique and exquisite collections, by introducing the Vindhya collection on Akshaya Tritiya this year. Ninth in its iconic 'Jewels of India' collection series, collection is inspired by the rich artistic traditions of Madhya Pradesh. Fashion icon and Bollywood diva Disha Patani unveiled the exclusive festive collection at a special event at the Reliance Jewels' store in Varanasi.

LISTINGS

Amazon miniTV forays into Tamil, Telugu language

Amazon miniTV - Amazon's free video streaming service known for its diverse and rich selection of original and dubbed content is gearing up to unveil exciting news for a much wider audience with its latest announcement. Expanding its reach, the streaming service has launched an extensive bouquet of over 200 shows and movies dubbed in Tamil and Telugu language. The exciting line-up of dubbed titles includes marquee and fan-favourite Hindi originals of miniTV such as *Hunter - Tooteega Nahi Todega*, *Physics Wallah*, action-packed patriotic series *Rakshak - India's Braves*, a young romance series *Highway Love*, amongst others. In addition to this, viewers will also get to enjoy a repertoire of Hollywood blockbuster movies dubbed in Tamil and Telugu, including timeless classics such as *Twilight*, *Now You See Me*, *Hunger Games* series, *the Step Up* franchise, *Red*, and more. In pursuit of a more holistic content offering, the service will also bring to its customers Korean, Turkish and Mandarin shows dubbed in Tamil and Telugu languages.

MAX RE THINKS 'SIZE LABELS'

Max Fashion announces the launch of Max Urban. Designed exclusively for the country's burgeoning youth market, the brand aims to redefine style, self-expression, and the shopping experience for a youth market. Urban's bold, progressive aesthetic product line is a reflection of today's youth-confident, unapologetic and fearless! The "Love Labels" brand campaign from Max Urban takes a bold and empowering approach to size and fit. Rather than perpetuating traditional size labels, the campaign dispenses with the concept entirely redefining them as affirmations of self-love and body positivity. The campaign film follows a narrative that celebrates the diverse and ever-changing shapes and sizes of people. The brand aims to help customers find clothes that fit them perfectly, creating a unique shopping experience that uplifts and empowers. The traditional size abbreviations of "XS," "S," "M," "L," "XL," and "2XL" have been reimagined as inspiring labels like "Xtra Special," "Stunning," "Magical," "Lit," "Xtra Lit," and "Xtra Xtra Lit."

NUEGO LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST LONG-HAUL ELECTRIC AC SEATER + SLEEPER BUS

NueGo, a pioneer in sustainable mass mobility, is set to revolutionise the long-distance travel journey with the launch of India's first intercity electric bus service. This is a significant step towards decarbonisation and creating a more sustainable public transportation ecosystem in India. NueGo deployed multiple seater + sleeper buses on its major routes across India such as Bengaluru - Chennai, Bengaluru - Coimbatore, Vijaywada - Vizag, Delhi - Jaipur, Delhi - Amritsar. NueGo is planning to expand its operations by launching new routes and building charging infrastructure to ensure smooth on-road operations. NueGo is also actively hiring across genders to increase inclusivity in its workforce and is the only bus brand to have women coach captains.

NatureFit and Raheja's Mindspace partner to offer Comprehensive Corporate Wellness Solutions

NatureFit has partnered with Raheja's Mindspace Business IT Park to serve as its dedicated Wellness partner for Preventive Wellness and Indian System of Medicine. This strategic collaboration aims to deliver integrated healthcare solutions to employees across Mindspace's Pune and Mumbai locations. Through this partnership, NatureFit has provided its wellness solutions to over 1.5 Lakh employees at Mindspace Business IT Park. By conducting 35+ health camps and organizing various health and wellness events like Yoga Day celebrations, Fitness Carnivals, and targeted

Seminar on blue-collar recruitment in Hyd

Vahan Technologies organised a seminar on blue-collar recruitment in Hyderabad on Saturday. Vahan focuses on blue-collar and gig recruitment, the fastest-growing segment in recruitment driven by growing demand from industries such as food delivery, quick service, e-commerce and manufacturing. As per Niti Aayog, there will be 2.35 crore gig workers by 2030, growing 200% between 2020 and 2030. Addressing the seminar, Siddharth Chauhan, Head - Supply Acquisition of Vahan Technologies, shared details about the growth of the recruitment industry, especially the blue-collar segment, owing to the rising popularity of gig working in the country. Facilitated by the world's cheapest data and growth in the smartphone market, the blue-collar space and gig working segment is growing rapidly and is expected to become a significant part of the workforce.

THE SEEFAH TAKEOVER

This April, Zega - the award-winning pan-Asian restaurant at Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, is set to host a culinary spectacle featuring the renowned expat Thai Chef Seefah Ketchaiyo. Celebrated for her innovative takes on Asian street food, she along with co-founder Chef Karan Bane is ready to whisk Zega away on a flavorful odyssey, mirroring the lively streets of Bangkok for a dining encounter like no other. Some of the signature specials one could look forward to include E San Grilled Pork, Southern Thai, Crab Curry, Steam Seabass with spicy lemon broth. **When:** Today and tomorrow, **Venue:** Zega, Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, Lunch Hours: 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM, Dinner Hours: 7:00 PM - 2:00 AM, For Reservations Call: 91001 19443

Bangur Cement launches an innovative multimedia campaign inspiring citizens to Vote

Bangur Cement unveiled a new multimedia campaign inspiring the citizens of the nation to exercise their right to vote. The campaign, "Vote Solid, Desh Solid", highlights the importance of each individual's vote in making the nation more solid. The campaign is innovative because it is a sequel to the previous brand launch campaign featuring popular Bollywood star Sunny Deol. The key message of the campaign is "Vote Solid, Desh Solid". Just as Bangur Cement helps you build a solid home, you can help build a solid nation by exercising your right to vote.

CURTAIN RAISER

The Brunch Palette

Experience The Brunch Palette at Food Exchange, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, a culinary and artistic adventure like no other. Delight in a symphony of flavors, featuring global and regional delights, each dish crafted to perfection. Enjoy the serene outdoor ambiance, savor diverse brunch offerings, and take a refreshing plunge in our pool amidst scenic beauty. Join us with your loved ones for an extraordinary Sunday brunch, where you can indulge in this sensory journey, letting creativity

flow while painting your unique creation. Embark on an adventure that tantalizes taste buds and ignites the imagination.

Where: Food Exchange Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, Hyderabad, Telangana.

When: 28th April 2024

Time: 12:00 PM onwards

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



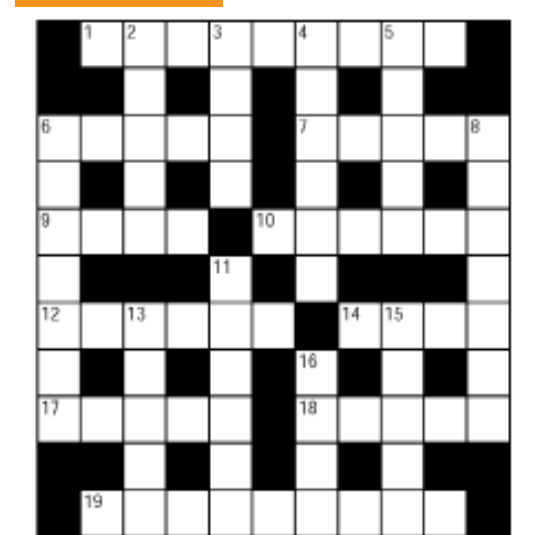
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



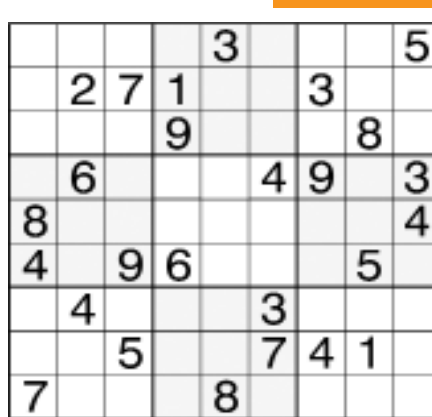
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 6 7 6 3 2 4 5 1 9
 9 4 1 6 5 8 3 7 2
 2 3 5 9 1 7 4 6 8
 4 6 8 2 9 5 1 3 7
 7 2 3 1 8 6 9 4 5
 1 5 9 4 7 3 2 8 6
 5 1 7 8 4 2 6 9 3
 6 9 2 7 3 1 8 5 4
 3 8 4 5 6 9 7 2 1

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

ACROSS

- This accompanies thunder
- Leaving
- Correct
- Find these in a nest
- A large old fortified building
- Use this with a sewing needle
- A heavy metal
- A restaurant customer
- Embraces
- Yummy brown stuff

DOWN

- Time of darkness
- Welcomed
- A weekday
- Cloth
- A large farm in America
- One fifth of forty
- Travel by yacht



GINGER MEGGS



Varalaxmi Sarathkumar talks of Sabari, a screenplay-driven thriller

PNS | HYDERABAD

In anticipation of the upcoming release of *Sabari*, a gripping action-thriller directed by Anil Katz and produced by Mahendra Nath Kondla, talented actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar recently engaged in a candid conversation with the media. The film, presented by Maharshi Kondla under the Maha Movies banner, is set to hit theaters on May 3, promising audiences an exhilarating cinematic experience.

Reflecting on her journey with *Sabari*, Varalaxmi revealed, "I first heard the story of *Sabari* even before I signed *Krack*. I was captivated by the plot from the outset and immediately agreed to be part of the project. It presented a unique challenge and allowed me to explore different facets of my acting beyond the negative roles I've often portrayed."

Regarding her role in *Sabari*, Varalaxmi shared insights into her character as a single mother grappling with personal challenges. "My character in this film is quite different from my previous roles," she explained, adding, "It's a relatable portrayal of a woman dealing with family issues, and the mother-daughter dynamic plays a pivotal role in the narrative."

Addressing the decision to work with a first-

time director and producer, Varalaxmi emphasised the importance of taking calculated risks in the film industry. "Life is all about taking risks," she remarked. "You can't judge success or failure until a film is made. The director and producer placed their trust in me, and I reciprocated by delivering my best performance."

Discussing her collaboration with producer Mahendra Nath, Varalaxmi praised his professionalism and dedication to the craft. "Mahendra Nath is a genuine person who deeply respects the art of filmmaking," she stated. "He ensures that all aspects of production are taken care of, demonstrating his commitment to quality."

On a lighter note, when asked about her fiancé Nikolai's views on her films, Varalaxmi humorously responded, "Nikolai is a straightforward critic. He doesn't hold back his opinions about my work, whether positive or negative. Fortunately, he appreciates most of my films." The actress also revealed her plans for marriage later this year.

Looking ahead, Varalaxmi hinted at her upcoming projects, including *Kurma Nayaki*, a Tamil film with Dhanush, and *Max*, alongside Kannada star Sudeep. "I have several films in the pipeline. Details will be announced soon as discussions progress," she disclosed.

As *Sabari* gears up for its theatrical release, Varalaxmi's enthusiasm and dedication to her craft

With the much-anticipated film *Sabari*, nearing its release, actress Varalaxmi Sarathkumar interacts with the media here, sharing more insights about the upcoming film.

promise an enthralling performance that audiences won't want to miss. The film's screenplay-driven narrative, coupled with Varalaxmi's versatile acting, is poised to captivate viewers and deliver an unforgettable cinematic experience.



PUSHPA 2 MUSICAL JOURNEY BEGINS

In a blaze of excitement, Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings have set the stage on fire with the release of the promotional teaser for *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. The teaser claimed the coveted #1 spot for an unprecedented 138 hours, with over 110 million views. On Wednesday, the journey of *Pushpa 2* reached another milestone as the first single, *Pushpa Pushpa Pushpa Raj*, from the prestigious T-Series hit the airwaves. Clocking in at 20 seconds, this title track offers a tantalising preview of the musical extravaganza awaiting audiences. The full song, promising to be a mass anthem, is set to debut on the auspicious occasion of May Day, May 1, at 11.07 a.m. Renowned director Sukumar, celebrated

teaser serves as a tantalising glimpse of the cinematic marvel that awaits. In the realm of music, maestro Devi Sri Prasad reigns supreme, showcasing his musical genius with the *Pushpa Pushpa Pushpa Raj* track. The song, a pulsating anthem echoing the movie's tagline, "Pushpa Mass Jaathara," promises to set the stage ablaze and elevate the audience experience to unprecedented heights.



for his visionary storytelling prowess, once again showcases his brilliance with the *Pushpa Pushpa Song* teaser. This promotional snippet captures the essence of the film, leaving viewers clamouring for more. At the helm of this cinematic spectacle is the incomparable Allu Arjun, whose electrifying presence and unwavering commitment breathe life into every frame. His performance in the

Mark your calendars as *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, starring Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead, gears up for a grand worldwide release on August 15, 2024. Prepare to embark on an exhilarating journey that will redefine the action genre and leave an indelible mark on cinematic history. Fahadh Faasil and Anasuya Bharadwaj will play other important roles in this film.

KUBERA MOVES TO MUMBAI

The much-anticipated film *Kubera*, starring actor Dhanush and Rashmika Mandanna, has commenced shooting in Mumbai, according to sources. The bustling streets and iconic landmarks of the city set the backdrop for pivotal scenes featuring the dynamic duo.

Dhanush, known for his versatile performances, brings his trademark charisma to *Kubera*. Rashmika Mandanna, hailed for her captivating screen presence, joins Dhanush in what promises to be a captivating on-screen pairing.

According to sources, the shooting schedule in Mumbai spans 10 days, offering ample time to capture the essence of the narrative against the vibrant urban landscape. Directed by a talented crew led by Karthik Subbaraj, *Kubera* holds great promise with its unique storyline and stellar cast.

Fans of Dhanush and Rashmika Mandanna eagerly anticipate glimpses from the film's sets as the duo embarks on this cinematic journey in the heart of Mumbai. With each passing day of shooting, excitement mounts as audiences await the unveiling of *Kubera*, poised to be a captivating addition to Dhanush's impressive repertoire.



MANJUMMEL BOYS ACTOR ENTERS THE WEDLOCK

Deepak Parambol, riding high on the success of his recent Malayalam film *Manjummel Boys*, embarked on a new journey as he tied the knot with his co-star Aparna Das from the film *Manoharam*. The couple exchanged vows in a traditional ceremony held at the renowned Guruvayur temple in Thrissur district, Kerala, on Wednesday, surrounded by their close friends and family.

Pictures from Deepak and Aparna's wedding quickly spread across social media, capturing the couple adorned in elegant white and gold attire. Aparna looked resplendent in a Kasavu saree, while Deepak exuded charm in a classic Mundu.

Their love story blossomed on the sets of *Manoharam* back in 2019, where Aparna starred in a leading role while Deepak showcased his talent in a supporting capacity. Since then, their bond has grown stronger, culminating in a beautiful union celebrated with traditional rituals and heartfelt moments.

As their wedding photos continue to captivate audiences online, fans and well-wishers eagerly anticipate the next chapter in Deepak and Aparna's lives. The couple's union not only symbolises a personal milestone but also reflects the enduring magic of cinema, where relationships flourish beyond the screen.



Love Me-If You Dare locks release date

Prepare for a thrilling ride with the upcoming romantic horror thriller *Love Me - If You Dare*, starring young hero Ashish and the gorgeous Vaishnavi Chaitanya. Directed by debutant Arun Bhimavarapu, this unique blend of romance and horror has completed filming and is set to captivate audiences worldwide. Blockbuster *Balagam* makers Harshith Reddy and Hansitha Reddy will produce the film under the prestigious DilRaju Productions banner, with Naga Mallidi serving as the film's producer and Shirish presenting it. Amidst the buzz generated by its teaser and chart-topping album, the film's makers have announced its official release date. *Love Me-If You Dare* will hit theaters globally on May 25th, strategically timed for a summer blockbuster. DilRaju and the team are gearing up for creative promotional campaigns to reach a wider audience, confident that this spine-chilling ghost love story will be a resounding success. Accompanying the release date announcement is a striking poster that sets the tone for the film's eerie atmosphere. Featuring Ashish with a shovel in hand and a determined expression, alongside Vaishnavi Chaitanya, the poster promises a gripping cinematic experience. The film boasts a stellar lineup of technicians, with music composed by the legendary MM Keeravani, an Academy Award winner. Renowned cinematographer PC Sreeram will handle the visuals, ensuring a visually captivating narrative, while Avinash Kolla will oversee the art direction, promising an immersive and unforgettable cinematic journey.

Second single from Harom Hara unfolds a love tale

Sudheer Babu's highly anticipated film *Harom Hara*, directed by Gnanasagar Dwaraka of *Sehari* fame, kicked off its musical promotions with the release of its title song recently. Produced by Sumanth G. Naidu under Sree Subrahmanyeshwara Cinemas, the action thriller unveiled its second single on Wednesday.

The soulful melody titled *Kanulenduko*, composed by Chaitan Bharadwaj, has vocals by Nikhita Srivalli with additional vocals by the composer himself. The song, embellished with acoustic guitar, bass, electric mandolin, and keyboard notes, amplifies its impact, complemented by catchy lyrics penned by Vengi. *Kanulenduko* captures Malvika hinting to Sudheer Babu about a rendezvous, unfolding their love journey as they explore different places together. The duo's adorable chemistry in the song is visually captivating, making it an instant hit for its composition and appeal.

The film recently wrapped up its shoot, with post-production progressing swiftly. The official release date for *Harom Hara* will be announced shortly.

Set in 1989 in Kuppam, Chittoor district, *Harom Hara* showcases Sudheer Babu delivering dialogues in authentic Kuppam slang. With the tagline "The Revolt," this high-budget film features Sunil in a pivotal role, with cinematography handled by Aravind Vishwanathan.



Prithvi headlines new project with Rupali, Ambika

In a celebratory event marked by traditional puja rituals, the production commenced on Wednesday for a new Telugu film under the banner of Rachit Siva, RR Creations, and Palik Studios. IIT Krishnamurthy fame young hero Prithvi is set to lead the cast, with Rupali and Ambika as the heroines. The movie, helmed by director Palik Srinu, promises to be a captivating blend of romance, sentiment, and comedy.

Jointly produced by Durgam Rajesh, Ravula Ramesh, and TS Raju, the film boasts an experienced team of technicians. John Bhusan will compose the music with lyrics penned by Suresh Gangula. Venkat and Nishant will handle cinematography, while Nishant also takes on the role of editor.

The puja ceremony was attended by renowned producer Tammareddy Bharadwaja, who offered his best wishes to the team by clapping for

the heroes and heroines. During the ceremony, senior actress Amani revealed her involvement in the film, expressing excitement about her important role. Describing the film as an emotional comedy with elements of love and sentiment, Amani highlighted its rural backdrop and shared scenes opposite Ajay Ghosh.

Heroines Ambika and Rupali expressed joy at debuting in Telugu cinema with this project. They praised the director and producers for their encouragement and for providing them with this opportunity. Ambika, drawing from her experience in Hindi and Marathi films, underscored the film's emphasis on love, romance,

sentiment, and comedy. Lead actor Prithvi extended gratitude to director Palik for entrusting him with the role and thanked the producers for supporting a family-oriented project. He assured fans that the film's shooting will wrap up soon, promising an engaging cinematic experience for audiences.



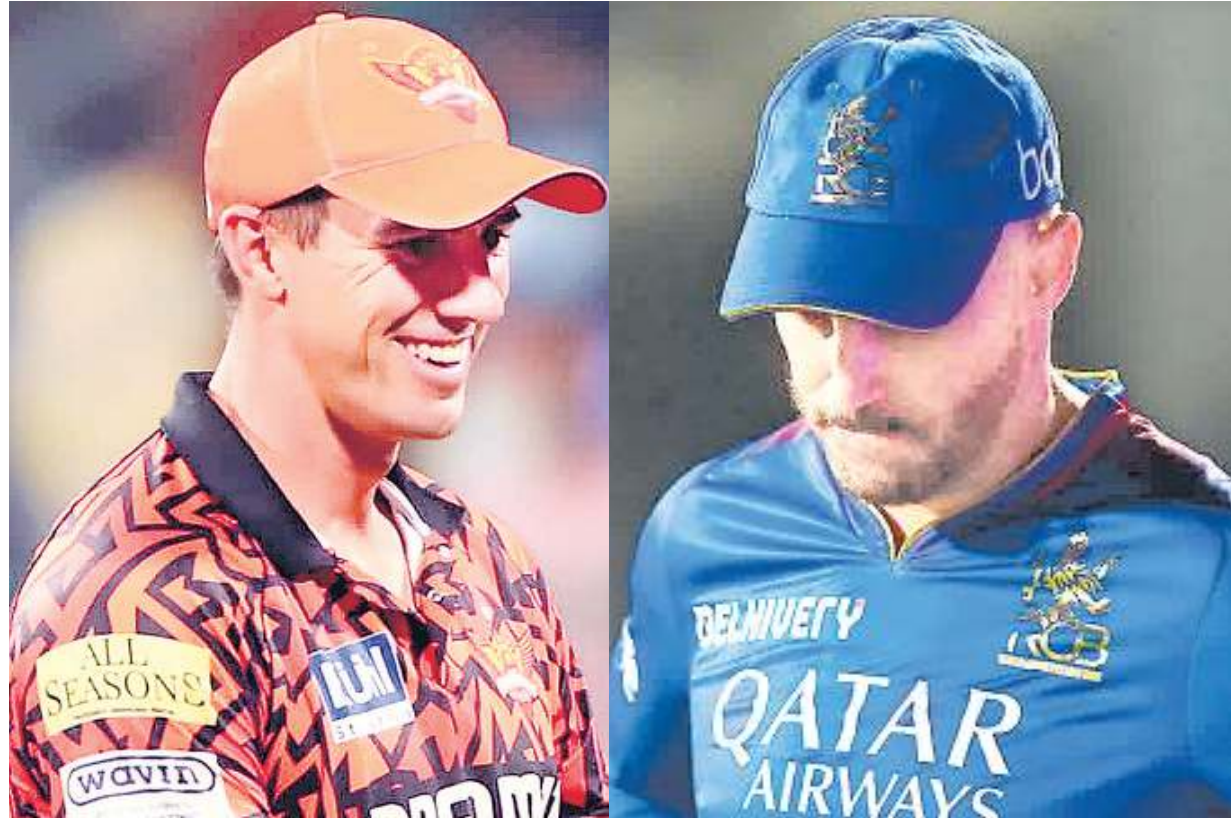


Rampant Sunrisers Hyderabad eye another run fest against bottom placed RCB

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to unleash their brute batting power on struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru when the two teams face off in their return-leg fixture of the IPL here on Thursday. Having breached the 250-run mark thrice in this IPL edition itself, Sunrisers Hyderabad are pushing the boundaries of T20 batting with their no holds barred approach. While Mumbai Indians were the first victim of SRH's new-found batting strength this season, RCB bore the maximum brunt when the Travis Head-led batting line-up powered the 2016 winners to IPL's highest-ever total of 287/3 in Bengaluru. If this was not enough, SRH's carnage against Delhi Capitals - which included a record 125/0 being scored in the powerplay - brought forth the possibility of the 300-run mark being breached for the first time ever in the IPL. And it won't be surprising if

SRH manage to do the unthinkable and that too against a bowling attack as frail as RCB's, whose struggles with in the bowling department could be gauged with the fact that their best bowler, Yash Dayal, is at 24th spot in the overall list with seven wickets. Placed at the bottom of the pool, RCB have conceded at least 180 in their last five matches. In the last two games, the opponents have raked up totals in excess of 200. RCB batters have worked hard to make up for their severe shortcomings in bowling, but for such a lopsided squad in terms of balance, the task to produce an all-round performance looks nearly impossible. To their credit, RCB fought incredibly hard with the bat but were unfortunate to have lost to Kolkata Knight Riders by a mere one run after conceding 222/6. Moreover, a collective batting effort must have pleased the RCB management to a large extent. He was a victim of a contentious call but Virat Kohli



remains RCB's best batter in the tournament so far, having scored 379 runs to keep the Orange Cap in possession. But hot on his heels are a few others including SRH's Head, who is making most of his purple patch. Head's game is designed not only on aggressiveness and ability to cash in on every opportunity, his ability to find gaps at will makes him a compulsory watch. Abhishek Sharma has flourished in Head's company and Heinrich Klaassen too has made merry with the bat this season. Overall, SRH's compelling shows with the bat have made the job of their bowlers and skipper Pat Cummins easier. SRH are placed comfortably at the third position in the table with 10 points from seven matches. While the journey so far has been fuelled by the batters' fire, SRH would know their bowling would be tested along the way and Cummins' men could do well to watch out against a hurting RCB side.

TEAMS (FROM):
Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat (wk), Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil, Saurav Chauhan.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaassen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan.

Stoinis eager to play for Australia despite missing CA central contract



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Despite missing out on Cricket Australia's central contract for the 2024-25 season, all-rounder Marcus Stoinis wants to use the impact hundred against Chennai Super Kings as a leverage to extend his white ball career beyond the upcoming T20 World Cup. Stoinis, who was not included in the 23-player central contract list, made an unbeaten 124 off 63 balls for Lucknow Super Giants here on Tuesday. However, Stoinis didn't read much into him missing the CA contract which was announced on March 28. "I've got a great relationship with the (Australia) coach (Andrew McDonald). Me not getting a contract, I knew that a while ago. "I think it is great to give younger kids a crack and let them take my spot. I'm absolutely fine with that on the contract list," Stoinis said after guiding LSG to a six-wicket

win over CSK. But the 34-year-old was firm in thoughts about his career with the national team. "But on the playing front, obviously, I want to make sure that I'm there and that's also why it's so lucky for us and for me particularly to have this competition (IPL), that's why I love it so much," he said. The Perth-born player was omitted from Australia's ODIs against the West Indies in January, but he is set to be part of the country's T20I World Cup campaign in the West Indies and the USA in June. Stoinis is most likely to be slotted into No. 5 in the Australian line-up during the marquee event. Stoinis is eligible for Australian selection for the tournament because his current contract for the 2023-24 season will run its course only on June 30. However, Stoinis was clear that he wanted to play for Australia in the white ball series against England (away) in September and against Pakistan at home in November.

Impact player rule: Entertaining cricket but takes all rounders out of game, says Voges

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Joining the raging debate around Impact Players in the IPL, Lucknow Super Giants consultant Adam Voges said he prefers something like the 'Power Surge' rule in the Australian Big Bash League where the batting team gets to decide a two-over phase of fielding restrictions. The Impact Player substitution rule, introduced last season, has been a heavy topic of debate this season with lot of players, including India captain Rohit Sharma calling it detrimental to the growth of all-rounders. Voges agreed and said while the rule makes for entertaining cricket, it hurts all-rounders. "The scores have been going up, and the teams have got genuine batters coming in at number seven or eight, while the batters have gone hard right from the start," the Australian said after the six-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings here on Tuesday night. "Certainly makes for entertaining cricket, but it takes the all-rounders out of the game for a little bit and

their effectiveness. The all-rounder always balances the side and perhaps it is not as important with the Impact Sub," he explained. Asked if the rule is comparable to Power Surge in Australia's Big Bash League, Voges said the latter adds to the contest, and he is a fan of it. Unlike the IPL, which has a six-over power play at the start of the innings, the BBL features a four-over power play. Power Surge is then a two-over phase of only two fielders outside the circle, sought by the batting team at any point following the 11th over of its innings. "I like the Power Surge back at home. It just adds another element to the game. "While chasing, you never feel like you are out of the game. But we have also seen multiple wickets fall during that period," he said. **STOINIS GRABBED CHANCE WITH BOTH HANDS:** Marcus Stoinis' unbeaten 124 ensured that Lucknow Super Giants pulled off a double over defending champion



Chennai Super Kings in the ongoing edition. Stoinis, who has been promising with the bat, was promoted to number three in this clash. Voges said the decision was easy given his successful outing as a top-order batter for Melbourne Stars in the Big Bash League.

"In the first half of the tournament, the number three batting position is something that did not work for us. We gave Marcus the opportunity since he has performed well in the top order in Big Bash," he told reporters here. "He has certainly made the most of it.

He has been hitting the ball well the whole tournament and has always been threatening." LSG's victory was heavily aided by the dew settling in at Chepauk on Tuesday, and Voges felt it was a good toss to win. "At the halfway stage, we could feel the dew on the outfield, and it played a part in the back end of the game. In the end, it was a good toss to win," he added. Voges lauded the hosts for keeping his team under pressure until the final over. "It was a tremendous game of cricket. The batting from both sides was outstanding," he continued. "CSK did put us under pressure with the ball, but it was our best night execution-wise. We needed someone to stand up, and Stoinis played an outstanding innings," he said. The CSK batters did a great job by setting a challenging total of 210 for four, thanks to skipper Rituraj Gaikwad's unbeaten 108, which was also aided by a 27-ball 66 from the in-form Shivam Dube.

OTHER SPORTS

Nadal says he is not 100 per cent fit ahead of Madrid debut

AP ■ MADRID

Rafael Nadal will play in the RMadrid Open despite not being fully fit and didn't seem too optimistic about his chances of being ready for the French Open later this month. Nadal said Wednesday he would not play in Paris if he arrives there feeling the same way that he is feeling ahead of his debut in Madrid this week. "The sensations haven't been perfect this week. If it wasn't Madrid, maybe I wouldn't play. But there are a lot of emotions involved," Nadal said. "I don't

know what's going to happen in the following three weeks. I'll keep fighting and doing the things that I think I need to do to play in Paris. And if it's possible, then it's possible. If not, then not. I'm not going to play in Paris the way I'm feeling today. It was Paris, I wouldn't be playing." The 37-year-old Nadal has said this is likely his farewell year on tour, and is hoping to be competitive one last time at Roland Garros, where he is a 14-time champion. The 22-time Grand Slam winner is a record five-time champion in Madrid, with his last title in the



Spanish capital coming in 2017. He is scheduled to debut on Thursday against 16-year-old American Darwin Blanch. "Hopefully I can play without many limitations," Nadal said. "Then we'll see what happens. If I play without limitations, even if I lose, then it will be positive." Nadal, who had hip surgery last summer, lost to Alex de Minaur in the second round in Barcelona in what was his first tournament in more than three months. "The goal is be on court. Enjoy as long as possible," he said. "I mean, that's the thing. Try to finish the tournament alive in terms of body

issues, and enjoy the fact that I will be able to compete one more time in the professional tour and here at home in Madrid, a place that give me everything, no, in terms of support." He said he is giving himself "a chance" and hopes to "find better feelings" in his body going forward. "I don't lose hope. I just accept the situation that I have today," he said. "I mean, I am not playing bad. It's about more body limitations." He said the "body feelings are not enough good to feel myself playing with free enough in terms of body issues.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings are not looking for a "quick fix" to their issues in the batting department and head coach Stephen Fleming is ready to give the likes of Daryl Mitchell time to get settled in top-three after their fourth loss in eight games. CSK have been juggling batters in the top three through the season. On Tuesday against Lucknow Super Giants, Ajinkya Rahane and Rituraj Gaikwad came to open while Mitchell was promoted to number three from five. In the previous game, Gaikwad pushed himself down to number three to accommodate Rahane and Rachin Ravindra. Following their dramatic loss to LSG at home, Fleming said they need to get their batting combinations right. "It's a mixture of trying to find that (combination) and also form. We're a little bit uncomfortable with some areas, so we're trying to find not a quick fix, but the right combination where players are going to contribute for the back end of this tournament," said Fleming after first loss of the season at home.

Trying to find batting combination that does well for us at back end of IPL: Fleming

Mitchell, who was bought for Rs 14 crore at the auction, has totalled 146 runs in seven innings. Fleming insisted that number three is the ideal spot for the fellow New Zealander. "There's a lot of pressure, obviously. Getting up the order is more comfortable for him. Me putting him down the order in the hitting role wasn't his best position. "So, we've looked to rectify that and get him up the order where he has had his best performances internationally. That might take a little time, but the top three need to contribute the majority of runs. "Rituraj did that today, so hopefully, he can continue his form, and the others can pick that up... We're not firing on all cylinders by any means, but we're in each game asking teams to play well to beat us. We just got to get a little bit better," he said referring to skipper's unbeaten hundred in a losing cause.



While Mitchell's promotion did not yield the desired result, LSG sending Marcus Stoinis to

number three proved to be a game changer as he singlehandedly pulled off a

memorable win for his team with an unbeaten 124 off 63 balls. Fleming, who has

worked alongside the Aussie all-rounder in the Big Bash League for Melbourne Stars,

finding sixes and fours at will. Fleming considers himself among the lucky ones to witness fans' unparalleled admiration for Dhoni across venues. "It's an experience you like to have in the stadium every time he plays. It's been lucky for me to have this magical experience for 16-17 years. "The love for him throughout the world is a testimony to the way he has played the game. People talk about MS as a person, but he is also a great player, and he has done some great things for India and Chennai (Super Kings). "People take time to appreciate it, and we do that every day. We are lucky to have him in our side for so long. So, it's not lost on us, and we enjoy every moment." The CSK-LSG clash witnessed a huge amount of dew coming and Fleming and his team had anticipated it. "Apart from Gaikwad) We saw another great hundred from Marcus Stoinis, and they (GT) answered pretty well. It was a good game of cricket, and we felt we played well given the conditions in the backend, but we did some little things wrong under pressure."