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There will be a special focus on medicine in

the next five years, with the expansion of

the Aarogyasri scheme cover (medical cover already increased to Rs 25 lakh).

YSR Kapu Nestam scheme will continue for

EBC Nestam amount will continue and will

be increased to 60,000 in four phases.

YSR Rythu Bharosa amount has been hiked

from Rs 13,500 to Rs 16,000. Rythu Bharosa

Rs 50,000 will be given in five installments

under Matsyakara Bharosa scheme.

 Rs 3 lakh interest-free loan under YSR Sunna Vaddi scheme.

Interest rates will be reduced for those buying autos/taxis, Rs 50,000 for autos

Vahana Mitra amount will be increased from

and taxis over the next five years.

Rs 24,000 per annum for five years for

scheme will also be extended to tenant farmers



- Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP leader P4

'Students should be trained as...

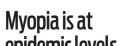
Bharat Scouts & Guides State Chief Commissioner and School Education Commissioner, S Suresh Kumar, has emphasised that scouts should strive towards comprehensive development to serve the country and state with a sense of duty towards national integration. On Saturday, Commissioner S Suresh Kumar supervised the 'Rajya Puraskar Testing Camp', a Scouts residential camp held at the BSG Andhra Pradesh Regional Training Centre in Tadikonda, Guntur. The camp was conducted.

IAF helicopter roped in to...

An IAF helicopter was pressed into service to extinguish the raging forest fires in Uttarakhand's Nainital district on Saturday, a day after the flames reached the High Court Colony in the Pines area. The blaze came dangerously close to the houses in the colony and an Army cantonment around five kilometres away from the Pines, prompting the response by authorities. The Indian Air Force said a Mi-17 V5 helicopter was deployed to assist in the firefighting operations. "With a forest fire building up in vicinity of an Air Force. -PAGE: 5



advertisers amid...



Myopia, or the need for corrected vision to focus or see objects at a distance, has become a lot more common in recent decades. Some even consider myopia, also known as nearsightedness, an epidemic Optometry researchers estimate that about half of the global population will need corrective lenses to offset myopia by 2050 if current rates continue – up from 23% in 2000 and less than 10% in some countries. The associated health care costs are huge. In the United States alone, spending on corrective lenses, eye tests and related expenses may be as high as US\$7.2 billion a year. What explains the rapid growth in myopia? I'm a vision scientist who has studied visual perception and perceptual defects. To answer that

CM unveils Navaratna Plus manifesto

Says YSRCP don't make empty promises

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, on Saturday released YSRCP's election manifesto for next month's general elections. The manifesto promises the enhancement of financial assistance under Amma Vodi from Rs 15,000 to Rs 17,000 per year, zero-interest loans for self-help groups up to Rs 3 lakh, increase of social security pension to Rs 3,500 per month in the last two instalments, and enhancement of Rythu Bharosa amount from Rs 13,500 to Rs 16,000.

'We adhere to the three-capital decision under which the administration would be started from Visakhapatnam after we win the elections. The Legislative Capital will be Amaravati and the Judicial Capital, Kurnool," CM Jagan said.
Addressing A media conference on

Saturday, the Chief Minister affirmed the continuation of schemes like YSR Cheyutha, YSR Kapu Nestham, Shadi Tofa, housing scheme and Arogyasri. The CM said that the manifesto would be a Bible, Quran, and Bhagavad Gita for him and vowed to implement it to the fullest.

CM Jagan claimed that the past 58 months will be etched forever in our country's history as over 99 per cent of the manifesto promises have been successfully implemented by YSRCP. He said over the past five years, over 99 per cent of

EC directive to AP

govt on pension

distribution

The Election Commission

has issued directions to the

AP government regarding

the distribution of pensions.

As the election code is in

force, it is requested that the

beneficiaries are not put to

inconvenience. The guide-lines should be followed for

cash transfer schemes includ-

ing pension that was issued

Secretary K S Jawahar Reddy

to use government employ-

ees as an alternative to volunteers for door-to-door dis-

The EC said that there

have been many complaints

about the way the govern-

ment is following to distrib-

ute pensions. It has come to

their notice that the benefi-

ciaries have faced severe dif-

ficulties. In the previous

guidelines, pension can be

distributed by electronic

means as well as by employ-

advised to make arrange-

ments without causing inconvenience to the beneficiaries.

CS Jawahar Reddy was

tribution of pensions.

The EC directed Chief

on March 30.

PNS VIJAYAWADA



- Pensions will be increased to Rs 3,500 in two installments (Rs 250 in January 2028 and Rs 250 in January 2029). Andhra Pradesh is the only State in the country that provides pensions to 66 lakh people
- There will be no change in schemes like Amma Vodi, Vidya Kanuka and YSR

the Navaratnalu schemes were

executed. The YSRCP government

has deposited Rs 2.68 lakh crore

directly into beneficiaries' accounts

through DBT (direct benefit trans-

fer) and Rs 1.78 lakh crore through

non-DBT methods, said the CM.

for the Amma Vodi scheme, Rs

4,275 crore for Jagananna Vasathi

"We've allocated Rs 26,067 crore

Cheyutha for women.

- will provide Rs 75,000 in four installments.
- increased to Rs 17,000 while Rs 15,000 will be given to mothers.

YSR Cheyutha scheme will be continued,

- Amma Vodi scheme amount will be

Deevena, Rs 12,609 crore to the

Jagananna Vidya Deevena, and Rs

34,378 crore for YSR Rythu

Despite the challenges posed by

the Covid pandemic and revenue

losses that happened thereafter, the

government never made any excus-

es and meticulously executed the

Bharosa," the CM claimed.

compete with Chandrababu's fraudulent promises, but we can show our commitment to the people. This government is different from the previous one -- we don't make empty promises. We deliver,



Jagan betrayed entire Telugu community: Naidu

'If he had implemented 99.5% of manifesto, people's lives would have changed'

PNS ATMAKUR

TDP chief and former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Nara Chandrababu Naidu, while speaking at his Prajagalam meeting in Atmakur, launched a scathing attack on CM Jagan Mohan Reddy for 'betraying Andhra Pradesh and the entire Telugu community'.

He highlighted that the upcoming polls are very crucial, and it can potentially change the State's future. People should vote for TDP if they want jobs. If they want ganja, they should vote for YSRCP," he said. The TDP chief highlighted the sorry state of affairs in Andhra Pradesh and said: "Other than CM Jagan, Vijaysai Reddy, Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, YV Subba Reddy, and Sajjala Rama Krishna Reddy, no one in the State

benefited during the past five years." Further, the TDP chief lambasted Jagan for spreading lies and not doing anything for the development of Andhra Pradesh. "CM Jagan said that he implemented his manifesto by 99.5 per cent. If he had implemented it, the lives of the people would have changed and their income increased. The expenses of the people have increased and their revenue has decreased during the

Jagan Reddy regime," he added. Asserting that he must protect the State and its people from the injustices perpetrated by Jagan, the TDP chief vowed to complete all irrigation projects in the State, including the Polavaram project. "We will interlink Godavari, Krishna, Penna, and Vamsadhara rivers, providing water to every acre in the State," he

Adult US TikTok users spend an average of 54 minutes on the app on any given day, more than Instagram, Snapchat or YouTube according to research firm eMarketer. If TikTok were to along with younger, smaller emerging rivals — would be scrambling for those valuable minutes of people's attention. But with an actual ban still likely years away, it's not clear what app will be its biggest beneficiary. Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, may see more



epidemic levels...

question, first let's...

Transformative blueprint for AP's future: Botsa

Stresses government's efforts to uplift marginalised communities

State Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has lauded Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's 'bold manifesto', describing it as a significant milestone for Andhra Pradesh's future. Speaking to the media people on Saturday, Satyanarayana emphasised the transformative potential

of the manifesto, which outlines nine pivotal promises. These commitments," he asserted, "pave the way for comprehensive change, with a renewed focus on social welfare, economic empowerment, and inclusive

Highlighting the manifesto's significance, Minister Satvanaravana reiterated YSRCP's dedication to prioritising development and welfare of the people. He likened the manifesto to sacred texts such as the Bible, Ouran, and Bhagavad Gita, emphasising its role as a guiding principle for the party. Drawing a comparison with the previous government's performance, Satyanarayana outlined the accomplishments of YSRCP, including the successful implementation of various welfare schemes benefiting millions of citizens. He assured voters of the party's commitment to fulfilling its promises, citing past achievements as

evidence of their dedication.

government's efforts to uplift marginalised communities, including SC, ST, BC, and minority women. Initiatives such as financial assistance, educational support, and increased pension for grandparents and widows were highlighted as means to alleviate financial burdens. Addressing concerns regarding the state capital,

> affirmed the government's commitment to administrative decentralisation. Plans were detailed develop Visakhapatnam as the executive capital, Amaravati as the legislative capital, and Kurnool as the judicial capital, ensuring

Satyanarayana

equitable development across regions. Refuting allegations of economic mismanagement, Satyanarayana emphasised prudent fiscal policies under the YSRCP government. Efforts to enhance GDP, increase per capita income, and invest in human development were highlighted as evidence of the government's commitment to fiscal discipline. The Minister urged voters to support the YSRCP symbol

and stressed the importance of the

manifesto in safeguarding the interests

of the populace. He encouraged every household to familiarise themselves with the man-

'Chandrababu considers manifesto as a joke' will be considered as Bhagavad

PNS VIJAYAWADA

minister Machilipatnam MLA Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) has said that the Opposition alliance of TDP, BJP and JSP is once again getting ready to cheat the people of Andhra Pradesh through false promises in the name of Super 6

Chandrababu Naidu gave people false promises and came into power. Jagan Mohan Reddy has imple-



Prasada Rao said that the manifesto said Bharmana.

Gita, Quran and Bible by YSRCP. He said that they have implemented 99 percent of the promises made to the people in the manifesto in 2019. He criticised Chandrababu for considering the manifesto as a joke. The Opposition alliance said 20 lakh jobs will be given, but they did not even provide 20,000 jobs od 2014 to 2019. To Speaking at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli on Saturday, and the promises given now will come to power in 2014, Chandrababu gave false promises Nani said that in 2014, TDP chief also be strictly implemented. Addressing the media at off. He cheated the women who Srikakulam, Minister Dharmana believed him and voted for TDP,

BJP wants to 'snatch away' reservation, says Rahul Gandhi

PNS NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday claimed that it is clear from the statements of BJP leaders that their objective is to destroy democracy by changing the Constitution and "snatch away" the reservation of Dalits, backward classes and tribals.

Gandhi asserted that as long as the Congress is there, no power in the world can take away reservation from the deprived people.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi

said, "It is now clear from the statements of BJP leaders and those close to Narendra Modi that their objective is -- destroying the democracy of the country by changing the Constitution. To snatch away the reservation of Dalits, backward classes and tribals and end their participation in running the country.'

Women surge in Vizag politics

Despite lacking prior political affiliations, they have earned reputation

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a notable trend, numerous women have secured victories in legislative assemblies within Visakhapatnam district, marking a significant shift in the political landscape. Despite lacking prior political affiliations, these women have earned commendable reputation as public representatives. However, their journey has been riddled with challenges, with many unable to secure re-election and several facing defeat in subsequent

The narrative of female representation in parliamentary roles dates back to 1989 when Uma Gajapathiraju, the spouse of Pusapati Ananda Gajapati Raju, the ruler of Vizianagaram in pres-

ent day Andhra Pradesh, clinched victory from the Visakhapatnam parliamentary seat under the Congress banner. Though her tenure was short-lived, it set a precedent. Daggubati Purandeshwari followed suit in 2009, securing the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha seat and later serving as a Union Minister, bolstering the reputation of women parliamentarians. In subsequent elections, names like Kothapalli Geetha and Dr. Bhishetti

parliamentary domains. Transitioning to Assembly elections, the journey has been equally eventful

Satyavathy, among others, were

added to the roster, emphasising the

growing presence of women in



'Can Indian space agency find water on moon?'

PNS BENGALURU

When Indian Space Research Organisation chairman S Somanath threw the floor open for questions over Instagram on Saturday, not only did people want to know about next Chandrayaan, asteroid missions and space stations, but also if ISRO can find water and if ISRO can teach 10year-olds to build nano satellite. But with only an hour earmarked for #asksomanathisro, Somanath could only answer a fraction of the questions posted by aspiring scientists and space enthusiasts. Questions on water on the moon and nano-satellite classes for 10-year-olds have to wait till next session.

Space enthusiasts' poser to ISRO chief Somanath

The session on April 27, between 6pm and 7pm, was attended by nearly 1,500 people. Somnath chose questions aimed to encourage students and enthusiasts to pursue careers in science and technology, even geology, emphasising that ISRO offers diverse opportunities beyond just astronaut roles. Answering a question on whether it would be possible for humans to build a fully sustainable space colony, ISRO chief said it is not likely in the near future. "There are huge technical chalSomnath chose questions aimed to encourage students and enthusiasts to pursue careers in science and technology, even geology, emphasising that ISRO offers diverse opportunities beyond just astronaut roles.

elsewhere. It also requires huge investment, so in the immediate future I don't see it happening," said Somanath.

Somanath also talked about how ISRO is actively working on sample ration with NASA to jointly build a lenges to create a planet like earth return missions, where spacecraft

collect samples from celestial bodies (such as the Moon or asteroids) and bring them to Earth for analysis. Answering a question which wondered whether ISRO's collabosatellite equipped with advanced fea-

tures such as large reflectors and high antennas for clear data transmission for US\$ 1 billion is expensive, Somanath said considering what the ISRO is getting in return,

the cost is justified Continued on Page 2







Gandhi Bhavan needs deep cleaning

backyard before pointing a finger at somebody else's. The Telangana unit of the Congress may be on cloud nine, having come to power 10 long years after the parent party was driven out of undivided Andhra Pradesh. Since the party over the party unit's return to power is obviously over, it is high time TPCC had a close look at the Gandhi Bhavan, which has been the undivided Congress party's headquarters since the late fifties. Although many legendary chief ministers have graced its portals, today 'Gandhi Bhavan' is deliberately mispronounced by some; instead of stressing the vowel 'a' in Gandhi, they utter it

like schwa, making it sound like gandhi (dirty). Deep cleaning of Gandhi Bhavan is the need of the hour. Later

the party unit can focus on the mainthe party unit can focus on the maintenance, before thinking about hygiene in other places. Gandhi Bhavan is once again a buzzing place now, but quite nauseating with pervasive cobwebs, grime, dust and peeling plaster, to name a few. It is a different matter that the Congress party is going to get a new party office. "They can't replicate a new party office. "They can't replicate certain memories of this building in the new structure", seasoned observers

NETAS WARY OF CAMPAIGN IN HEAT WAVE

Politicians like to address crowds in jam-packed stadiums or grounds. But the current heat wave has changed the perspective of some netas about an election campaign. With road shows extending into the afternoon, at least some politicians are trying to be considerate towards visitors, whether mobilized or otherwise. One such campaign in

t makes sense to clean up one's own Nalgonda district, which was supposed to close by noon, ended at 2:00 pm. Visibly anxious, Minister Komatireddy Venkateddy urged officials not to let the women who had come to step out of their vehicle. He said, 'In this heat, many won't even have footwear; we cannot risk their health for our campaign". The saving grace is that crowds these days, if any, are thin between 12 pm and 4-00 pm, going by drone shots of campaigns.

IS IT DOUBLE-ENGINE OR DOUBLE-FACED?

People know enough about the let thrown by Chief Minister Revanth

Bharatiya Janata Party's refrain about

providing 'double-engine' sarkar. Right

now in Andhra Pradesh, people are

witnessing that the saffron party can

be 'double-faced' as well. In fact, peo-ple are wondering whether the BJP's much-touted alliance is with the

mucn-touted alliance is with the Telugu Desam Party or the YSR Congress Party. For, the acts and statements of BJP's national leaders are working against the interests of TDP, while tending to be in favour of YSRCP by default.

TDP supremo Chandrababu had

struck an alliance with the BJP to

enhance his party's winning chances.

Following the alliance, the TDP has

surely lost the support of Muslim minorities. Even as TDP is struggling

to attract at least some sections of

Muslims, Union Minister Piyush

Goyal, after meeting Chandrababu,

declared that BJP was against reserva-

tions for Muslim minorities. This one

statement has prompted almost all

Muslims in Andhra Pradesh to become

supporters of Jagan and his party YSRCP. A wag commented: "The BJP has alliance with TDP to ensure the victory of YS Jagan in the coming Assembly elections". **SEALING RESIGNATION**

LETTER WITH SENTIMENTS

Former minister T Harish Rao unwittingly exalted all journalists to the stature of 'intellectuals' by putting in his papers before them at the Telangana Martyrs Statue in Gun Park on Friday, while picking up the gaunt-

Reddy. Having offered to give his resignation letter to 'intellectuals' while challenging Revanth also to follow suit, Harish gave his

resignation letter to journalists noticeably on a sentimental note. He recalled that even journalists had played a key role during the Telangana statehood movement. The timed spotlight on journalists' role during the T movejournalists role during the 1 movement also led to illuminating discussions among fraternal colleagues. What stood out in these discussions was that those journalists who had danced to the tunes of a particular than the stood in a big way. political party benefited in a big way, while journalists who had sweated it out during the T movement were still facing troubles. Ironically, some of them are in deep trouble for having participated in the movement! A senior scribe recalled dharnas and other forms of protests by scribes at Gun Park during the Telangana movement, and said: "On hindsight, it appears to have been in vain".

> (With inputs from SNCN Acharyulu, Naveena Ghanate and K

Machilipatnam produced highest number of 5 ministers

Four ministers from Nandigama served the State, three from Mylavaram and Vijayawada West

75 Machilipatnam Assembly Constituency

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Machilipatnam Assembly constituency, previously known as Bandar, has played a significant role in the political history of the combined Krishna district. It has produced the highest number of ministers -- a total of five -- since the establishment of this constituency. Similarly, the Nandigama Assembly segment has produced four ministers, while the Mylavaram and Vijayawada West segments have produced three ministers each, who have served the State in various capacities.

Since the 1985 Assembly elections, the MLAs who represented the Machilipatnam Assembly constituency have assumed one of the posts in the government. In the TDP's NTR government, Vaddi Ranga Rao served as a minister. Firstly, he was elected from Bandar on the Janata party ticket in 1978 and later joined TDP, winning the 1984 by-elections as an MLA. Also, he was elected from the Bandar segment in the 1985 elections, and then NTR took him into his Cabinet.

After that, in the 1989 elections, the Congress party came to rule. Perni Krishna Murthy was elected as an MLA on the Congress

'Oppn bloc cannot

three-digit figure'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

on Saturday targeted the Congress-led INDI alliance, say-

ing it is mulling to have five

prime ministers in five years if

Addressing a rally at Kolhapur

in western Maharashtra, Modi

said the opposition bloc cannot

even reach a three-digit figure or

"at the doorstep of forming a gov-

ernment, but has plans to have

one prime minister every year if

In Anakapalli district lies the

TDP candidates emerging vic-

torious six times. Originally

known as Chodamallapuram,

the region was christened by

King Upendra, amalgamating

the names of his parents. Over

time, Chodamallapuram

evolved into Kasta Chodavara.

The constituency's formation

dynamic

they get a chance".

PNS ANAKAPALLI

politically

even reach a

PNS ■ KOLHAPUR

ticket and he served as the Information and Public Relations Minister in Marri Chenna Reddy's Cabinet. Earlier, he served as Municipal Chairman for the Machilipatnam Municipality.

Later, Nadakuditi Narasimha Rao, who was elected as an MLA in the 1999 elections, served as BC Welfare and Fisheries Minister. After the State bifurcation, in the 2014 elections, Kollu Ravindra, son-in-law of former minister Nadakuditi Narasimha Rao, served as Excise and BC Welfare and Sports Minister in

PNS VIJAYAWADA

State Chief Electoral Officer

Mukesh Kumar Meena said that

in the scrutiny held on Friday,

503 nomination papers for 25

(PCs) and 2,705 nominations for

175 Assembly constituencies

(ACs) have been approved. In a

media release issued on Saturday,

the CEO stated that 183 nomi-

nations of PCs and 939 nomina-

tions of ACs were rejected after

government.

In the previous elections, YSRCP's Perni Venkatramaiah alias Nani was elected and assumed the R&B and Information & Public Relations Minister post.

The Nandigama Assembly segment has produced four ministers. After the establishment of TDP, in the 1983 elections, Vasantha Nageswara Rao contested on the TDP ticket and was elected as an MLA. He served as Home Minister in NTR's first Cabinet. Also, he won in the 1985 elections and served as

503 nominations for 25 LS seats

2,705 nomination papers approved for 175 Assembly seats

A total of 686 nominations

were filed for 25 PCs and

3,644 nominations for 175

ACs during the period from

and Srikakulam PC has the

lowest number of 16 nomina-

tions. In terms of approved

nominations, Nandyala PC is

in first place with 36 nomina-

tions. Meanwhile, only 12

nominations were approved

for Rajahmundry PC, the last

KSNS Raju of TDP and Karanam Dharmashree of

April 18 to 25.

Later, in the 1989 elections, Mokkapati Venkateswara Rao (Congress) served as Marketing Minister in the Marri Chenna Reddy's Cabinet. In the 1994 elections, Devineni Venkata Ramana (TDP) won from Nandigama and served as Education Minister in Chandrababu Naidu's cabinet.

The Mylavaram Assembly constituency also produced three ministers for the State. Of them, Chanumolu Venkata Rao (Congress) has served as ministwice. Sobhandreeswara Rao (TDP) and Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao also served as ministers before and after bifurcation.

The Vijayawada West constituency has produced three ministers for the State. For the first time, in the 1972 elections, Asif Pasha (Congress) was elected as an MLA from the Vijayawada West. He served as the Minister of Justice.

After that, MK Baig (Congress) served as the Technical Education Minister in Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy's Cabinet. After the State bifurcation, in the 2019 elections, Velampalli Srinivasa Rao was elected for a second time.

He served the State as the Minister for Endowment in YS

The highest number of

nominations was filed for

Tirupati AC (52), and the least

number of eight nominations

nations have been approved for

Tirupati AC and the least

number of six nominations for

Chodavaram AC, said the

added that nominations can be

withdrawn till April 29.

Mukesh Kumar Meena

on the list.

Guntur PC has the highest were filed for Chodavaram

CEO.

20 Cambodian soldiers killed in explosion

PNS CAMBODIA

An ammunition explosion at a base Saturday afternoon killed 20 soldiers and injured several others, Prime Minister Hun Manet said.

Hun Manet said in a Facebook post that he was "deeply shocked" when he received the news of the explosion at the base in Kampong Speu province. It was not immediately clear what caused it. Pictures from the scene showed several badly damaged buildings still smoldering, at least one with its roof blown off, and soldiers receiving treatment in a hospital. Other photos showed houses with holes in their

Four buildings — three for storage and one work facility - were destroyed and several military vehicles damaged, Col. Youeng Sokhon, an army officer at the site, said in a brief report to army chief Gen. Mao Sophan, posted on social media. He added that 25 villagers' homes were damaged as well.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham Krishna Paksha Tithi: Chaturthi: Apr 27 08:18 AM to Apr 28 08:22 AM Apr 28 08:22 AM to Apr 29 07:57 AM Nakshatram: Apr 28 04:28 AM Moola: to Apr 29 04:49 AM Purva Ashadha Apr 29 04:49 AM to Apr 30 04:42 AM 4:57 PM to 6:32 PM Rahukalam Yamagandam: 12:13 PM to 1:48 PM Varjyam: 02:22 PM to 03:58 PM 3:22 PM to 4:57 PM Gulika: 10:24 PM to 12:01 AM Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:48 AM to 12:38 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Partly Cloudy Temp: 43°° Humidity: 47%

Updated: April 27 2024 5:00 PM

Sunset: 6:26 PM

CEO Mukesh Kumar Meena participates in 3k walk for young voters

10.30 lakh young voters enrolled from State

PNS VIJAYAWADA

of Andhra Pradesh, Mukesh Kumar Meena, recently stated that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has successfully encouraged approximately 10.30 lakh young people to register as new voters in the State.

This large number of young voters participating in the upcoming general election is expected to help the EC conduct an efficient election. Meena emphasised that voting is not just a right, but also a duty and responsibility.

As part of an awareness programme for young voters, Mukesh Kumar Meena participated in the 3k walk organised by 'Lets Vote' organisation at the NTR Stadium in Guntur on Saturday. Meena

Continued from Page 1

manifesto.

CM unveils...

CM Jagan said that the way poll promises were

implemented in the last 58 months will be remembered

for the years to come. The Chief Minister said that he

stood by the people with a smile whenever there were

ery of welfare schemes to the people at their doorstep

ument, unlike the colourful promises made by others

during elections. The party distributed its manifesto to

the government officials and the people. Our party also

shared the progress report with the people on the poll

However, he failed to fulfil the promises made in their

He also accused Chandrababu of deceiving the peo-

ple regarding loan waivers to farmers, Dwakra loans,

beyond Singapore and building a hi-tech city in every

and zero-interest deductions. He remarked that

Chandrababu had lied about developing the State

said people believed the words of the Opposition

Leader and elected his party to power in 2014.

promises made to them during the 2019 elections in the

Taking a dig at TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, Jagan

any problems. The State government ensured the deliv-

even during challenging times like the Covid pandemic.

Jagan emphasised that the manifesto is a sacred doc-



administered the oath to the young voters. District . Collector M Venugopal Reddy, Joint Collector Ğ Raja Kumari, and other dignitaries

attended the event. CEO Meena mentioned that the first list of electors issued in October 2023 included only 2.50 lakh voters in the age group of 18-19 years. This was a poor number when compared to the

number of young people in the State. However, with the trations and voluntary organisations, the number of young voters has reached 10.30 lakh. Furthermore, Meena stat-

ed that the Election Commission of India aims to register approximately 83 per cent polling in the upcoming general elections, whereas the polled vote percentage in the previous election was only 79 per cent.

Meena urged young voters to cast their votes right and create awareness among others to improve the poll percentage. Meena also pointed out that the poll percentage in 18 urban Assembly constituencies was below 68 per cent, which needs to be improved before the polling day on May 13.

Two held for chain snatching; property worth Rs 2 lakh recovered

PNS HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (South East) Zone in coordination with the IS Sadan police on Saturday arrested two persons involved in chain snatching and seized property worth Rs 2 lakh. The accused were identified as

Garala Prasad Goud (27) a dancer and resident of Ibrahimpatnam ; Vadtyavath Ganesh (21) a dancer and resident of Saroornagar. Apart from a 9.9 gram gold chain, the police seized a two-wheeler and two mobile phones from the accused.

Goud planned to snatch chains; both the accused targeted isolated places. Ganesh who is also a rapido rider showed Goud places under IS Sadan police limits. On April 16, the two accused spotted a lady walking by herself.

YCP gearing up for fourth consecutive face-off

Chodavaram: A historic battleground of political dynasties



in 1947 saw the inclusion of various divisions from neighboring constituencies, shaping its electoral landscape.

In the electoral saga spanhas maintained a stronghold, winning the constituency six

Balireddy Sathya Rao, Vechalapu Palaveli, and KSNS Raju have left their mark, with multiple victories under their belt. The past decade witnessed a recurring showdown between KSNS Raju and Karanam Dharmashree. Their rivalry intensified in the 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections, with each representing major political parties. Raju emerged victorious in 2009 and 2014 under

like Goonuru Errunaidu, in 2019 under the YCP flag, marking a significant shift in

ning from 1951 to 2019, TDP times. Notable TDP stalwarts

the TDP banner, but Dharmashree clinched victory cal rivalry in the region.

power dynamics.

As the constituency braces for yet another electoral showdown, both Raju and Dharmashree, representing their respective parties, gear up for the fourth consecutive faceoff. With Chodavaram's political narrative revolving around these two leaders for over a decade, the upcoming elections promise to be a testament to the enduring legacy of politi-

Women surge in Vizag...

Continued from Page 1

Boddu Kalavati's victory in 1972 from the Madugula constituency marked a pivotal moment, yet subsequent opportunities eluded her. However, her legacy paved the way for successors like Allu Bhanumathi and Rajana Ramani, who made significant strides in assembly politics. Notably, the rural landscape, once less visible in terms of female representation, witnessed a shift with names like Vangalapudi Anita and Giddi Iswari making their mark in the 2014 elections. The momentum continued in 2019 with Kottagulli Bhagyalakshmi's victory, highlighting a trend of increased female participation in rural constituencies.

As the political stage evolves, the upcoming elections promise another chapter in the narrative of female representation. Candidates such as Botsa Jhansi, Kothapalli Geetha, and Chetty Tanujarani are set to contest for parliamentary seats, while others like Vangalapudi Anitha and Giddi Ishwari vie for assembly segments. With each election, the spotlight on women in politics grows brighter, underscoring their indispensable role in shaping the socio-political land-

'Can Indian space...

Continued from Page 1

He also explained about nano satellites and how it is now possible to make satellites weighing less than 1 kilogram that are as efficient as 100-kilogram satellites.

He also answered questions about exoplanets, space junk and Chandrayaan 4. Earlier on March 2, Somanath had interacted via Instagram answering select questions from the audience focusing on providing insights and guidance. His engagement through Instagram allows direct interaction with space enthusiasts as well as creating awareness about ISRO's work.

The next Instagram session will be in May for which the date and time will be announced soon, he said. SDP

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YSRCP complains against JSP chief, TDP leader

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP leaders lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan and TDP leader from Denduluru, Chintamaneni Prabhakar for allegedly violating the election code of conduct. They stated that Pawan Kalyan, on Friday, Pawan Kaiyan, on Friday, made inappropriate person-al remarks against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and YSRCP leader Rapaka Vara Prasad in Rajole during the election campaign. These comments are against the Model Code of Conduct, and YSRCP has requested that appropriate action should be taken.

In another complaint, the YSRCP leaders alleged TDP Chintamaneni Prabhakar made derogatory remarks and insulting comments against Dalits in Denduluru on Friday. Therefore, YSRCP has asked that necessary actions be taken against Prabhakar. The Commission is expected to review the complaints and take appropriate action.

Central MLA Malladi Vishnu, State grievance cell president Ankamreddy Narayanamurthy, and legal cell leader Srinivas Reddy have provided evidence to the election officer along with the complaint.

RECEIVING FORM-12

APJAC-Amaravati thanks EC for extending deadline

Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, the chairman of Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee-Amaravati (APJAC-Amaravati), and Palisetti Damodar Rao, the secretarygeneral, have requested the Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh, Mukesh Kumar Meena, to ensure that all employees who are drafted for election duty receive Form-12 from the respective Returning Officers without any issues.

They have also asked the CEO to make sure that employees who are not interested in submitting their Form-12 application, such as home and PWD voters, declare their disinterest to avoid any adverse comments or disturbances on the issue of postal ballot.
The APJAC-Amaravati

leadership, consisting of Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, Palisetti Damodar Rao, AP Revenue Services Association general secretary K Ramesh Kumar, and others, met Additional CEO MN Harendra Prasad and submitted a representation in this regard at the secretariat at Velagapudi on Saturday.



APJAC-Amaravati chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarlu and other leaders submitting a representation to Additional CEO Harendra Prrasad on Saturday

Bopparaju Venkateswarlu spoke to the media and thanked the Election Commission for extending the time up to May 1 for receipt of Form-12 applications from those voters who are on election duty.

Later, Bopparaju Venkateswarlu spoke to the media and thanked the Election Commission for extending the time up to May

1 for receipt of Form-12 applications from those voters who are on election duty.

Many employees who are drafted for election duties,

particularly from OPOs, BLOs, Sector Officers, SSTs, VVTs, VSTs, police personnel, drivers and others, have not received postal ballot applications, they

In this context, at the request of the APJAC-Amaravati, the Election Commission extended the time to receive the postal ballot, he added. Therefore, all employees who are drafted for election duties should submit Form-12 to their respective Returning Officers to avail of their postal ballot, he added.

88.74 % candidates appear for POLYCET-2024

The POLYCET -2024 entrance examination for admissions to polytechnic diploma courses was conducted across the State on Saturday. The entrance exam was conducted from 11 am to 1 pm in all 442 examination centres. A total of 1,59,989 candidates had registered for the examination, out of which 1,41,978 (88.74 percent) students turned up. The examination was conducted smoothly with the cooperation of district collectors, and Police, Medical, Health, Electricity, Transport and other government departments.

AP State Skill Development

Department Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar, Technical Education Department Commissioner, State Technical Education Training Board Chairman Chadalavada Nagarani personally inspected various centres. While Suresh Kumar visited Andhra Loyola College in Vijayawada city, Nagarani visited entrance examination centres in various districts. The exam centre set up at Zilla Parishad High School in Tadepalligudem of West Godavari district was first inspected by Nagarani and later she inspected the Kasturba Municipal High School, Government Junior College and CR Reddy





Polytechnic centres in Kotadibba, Eluru town.

Nagarani said that the primary answer key will be made available on the website https://apsbtet.ap.gov.in on April 30. Steps are being taken to release the results before May 10. She said that necessary activities have been prepared to start the academic year in the first half of June.

Young voters for leadership that focuses on development

They emphasise the critical need to invest in edu, healthcare & infrastructure

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The youth electorate of the port city is making its voice heard loud and clear, advocating for leaders who prioritise development and job creation. Venturing into the bustling streets of the 'city of destiny', The Pioneer captured the resounding calls for change emanating from the vibrant youth populace. Rooted in a collective yearning for progress, these first-time voters are united in their quest for a leader who champions growth across various sectors. with a particular emphasis on fostering employment opporquality education and health-



Sridevi, a recent graduate eagerly preparing to cast her inaugural vote, precisely encapsulates the sentiments of many when she declares, "Any leader should bring change in people's lives." Her words echo the aspirations of a generation hungry for leadership that steers the state towards holis-

of young voters lies a demand for accessible and accountable governance. Aruna, another third-year degree student, advocates for leaders who remain attuned to grassroots issues and responsive to the needs of the populace. She asserts, "Leaders who possess an understanding of local challenges and are accessible to the people should be entrusted with leadership roles." Raj Gopal, a final-year degree student, echoes this sentiment, stressing the necessity for corruption-free governance and emphasising the importance of transparency and integrity in leadership.

At the core of the aspirations es the critical need to invest in

education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Lakshman Murthy, a secondary school student, calls for radical reforms in the education system, emphasising the urgency of providing accessible higher education opportunities for all segments of society.

As the electoral process

draws nearer, the voices of Andhra Pradesh's youthful electorate stand poised to shape the trajectory of the State's future. With a resolute focus on development, employment, and accountable governance, these first-time voters are poised to usher in a new era of progress and prosperity for among young voters emphasis- mative shift towards a brighter

Stringent action against illegal transportation of money, liquor

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, along with Police Commissioner Ramakrishna, has warned of strict action against those who illegally transport money, liquor, freebies, and other valuable goods. In view of the general elections, they have increased vigilance at all inter-State and inter-district checkposts to prevent the illegal

transportation of such items. Collector Dilli Rao and CP Ramakrishna convened a review meeting with officials from the Police, Excise, Special Enforcement Bureau, Revenue, and other departments. The meeting was held at the Collector's camp office in they discussed the seizures of



goods. They also reviewed vigilance, flying squad activities, and bind-over cases.

During the meeting, Rao and Ramkrishna informed that the district administration had seized 1,052 litres of arrack worth Rs.3.13 lakh and arrested 38 people during the period from March 16 to April 26 after releasing the election schedule. They had also seized ganja worth Rs.16.88 lakh and arrested 29 peddlers in the dis-

The police, Excise, and SEB Koteswara Rao, and others money, liquor, and other authorities are registering cases

of non-duty paid liquor and duty paid liquor that were illegally transported. As per the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, there is no chance for transportation of money, liquor, drugs, jew-ellery, freebies and other valu-

able goods to entice voters. District Assistant Collector Shubham Nikhwal, Superintendent Officer Enforcement Ramakrishna Prasad, Excise

YSRCP govt provided 3.61 lakh jobs: YSRTU chief

PNS VIJAYAWADA

P Gowtham Reddy, the State president of YSR Trade Union (YSRTU), has stated that the YSRCP government provided 3.61 lakh employment opportunities for jobless people within 59 months. He alleged that the Opposition and its associated yellow media are spreading false information in their respective media outlets.

Addressing the media at the YSRCP Central Office at Tadepalli on Saturday, he said that the State government is taking all steps to establish new industries in the State. During the YSRCP's 59-month rule, around 1,56,000 industries were established across the State, he said.

Also, he said that under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the State government paid which had been pending from the previous TDP government.

PENSION SHOULD BE PAID ON MAY 1: BJP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

leader Pathuri Nagabhushanam has stressed that the State government should pay the social security pensions to the beneficiaries on May 1. Addressing the media persons on Saturday, persons on Nagabushanam pointed out that the government was planning to distribute pensions on May 3 and suggested that the officials should act proactively regarding pensions. He said that the officials have shown slackness in handling pensions in April and accused YSRCP leaders of politicising the issue for personal gain. He stated that pensions were

distributed in other States efficiently and questioned why Andhra Pradesh officials, who



seemed to be working in favour of YSRCP, could not do the same. He questioned the Chief Secretary's actions in this matter and demanded that pensions be delivered to homes rather than making beneficiaries wait until May 3. He suggested that the officials assess the feasibility of home delivery of pensions without making excuses about a lack of funds, while alleging that the government officials

were approving bills for their relatives. Pathuri claimed to have evidence of the amounts

billed to various individuals. The spokesperson emphasised that during the COVID-19 pandemic, pensions were distributed without issues and questioned the need for a large administrative apparatus if volunteers were not utilised for pension distribution. He acknowledged that many volunteers were YSRCP workers and urged the ruling party to stop politicising the lives of the poor.

He warned that if people lose their lives while waiting for pensions, it would be considered as killing. Pathuri called for immediate action, suggesting that funds be drawn the day before and delivered to homes

GVMC sets up special desk for campaign board permissions

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Amidst the escalating fervour of the impending Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Legislature General Elections 2024, political parties have intensified their campaign efforts, gearing up for a competitive electoral battle across the region. In a move to streamline the installation of campaign boards, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has established a special desk at its headquarters.

This dedicated desk serves as a centralised point for candidates contesting for seats in both the Lok Sabha and the Andhra Pradesh Legislature to apply for permission to erect campaign boards. The initiative aims to simplify the Constituency Returning



process for candidates and political parties as they navigate the intricacies of election campaigning. Approval for these campaign boards, including those sanctioned by the GVMC, will be granted by the

a designated section has been allocated at the Portico within the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Head Office. Candidates and political

entities keen on availing of this facility are encouraged to submit their applications during office hours, from 10 am to 4 pm on working days. For additional enquiries and information regarding the permission process for new campaign boards, individuals can reach out to the designated phone number: 7396045405.

With the implementation of this initiative, authorities aim to ensure a fair and organised electoral process, providing equal opportunities for all political parties to effectively engage with voters.

Jyothi Surekha bags hat-trick of gold medals

PNS VIJAYAWADA

attended the meeting.

Asian Games champion Vennam Jyothi Surekha of Vijayawada, representing the Indian archery team, secured a hat-trick of gold medals at the Archery World Cup Stage-1 in Shanghai on Saturday. The World No.3 archer emerged victorious after a fiercely contested final against the top seed, Andrea Becerra of Mexico, in the Compound Women's event with a score of 146=146 (9*-9).

Earlier, in the Women's Compound team finals, Jyothi Surekha, along with Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur, outclassed the sixth-seeded Italy, 236-225. In the Compound Mixed team final, Jyothi Surekha, together with her partner Abhishek Verma, defeated the Estonian Twins, 158-157 to win the gold medal.



Surekha's hat-trick of gold medals helped India dominate the ongoing Archery World Cup Stage-1 with five medals. She earlier bagged three gold medals, winning individual, women's team and mixed team events in Asian Games last year. The present hat-trick gold medal was her second triumph

'Students should be trained as social servants'

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Bharat Scouts & Guides State Chief Commissioner and School Education Commissioner, S Suresh Kumar, has emphasised that scouts should strive towards comprehensive development to serve the country and state with a sense of duty towards nation-

al integration. On Saturday, Commissioner S Suresh Kumar supervised the 'Rajya Puraskar Testing Camp', a Scouts residential camp held at the BSG Andhra Pradesh Regional Training Centre in Tadikonda, Guntur. The camp was conducted from April 24 to 29 and was attended by 138 students and seven Scout examin-

Chittoor, Tirupati, Nellore, Guntur, NTR, Bapatla, and Palnadu.

The camp covered subjects like Scout training, first aid, mapping, star gazing, and more, with a certificate presented to those who passed the exam by the State governor. Participants also learned practical skills such as tent-making, gadget-making, first aid, structure construction, knottying, mapping, stargazing, esti-

mation, and signalling. Commissioner Suresh Kumar emphasised that every school should have a Scout unit to help students learn life skills, develop discipline, and cultivate a sense of duty towards society. He hopes make the State a unique place.

The Scoutmasters have been urged to provide proper training to students and encourage them to become community servants. Commissioner Suresh Kumar pledged to work towards the development of campsites and the Tadikonda Regional Training Centre.

Other attendees included Director Commissioner of School Education Commissioner Ranger BS&G Payyavula Parvathi, District Education Officer & District Chief Commissioner BS&G Guntur P Shailaja, State Organizing Commissioner P Srinivasa Rao, and others.



School Education Commissioner Suresh Kumar interacting with the students who attended the Bharat Scouts and Guides 'Rajya Puraskar Testing Camp at

MBU hosts I-SMAART 2024

PNS TIRUPATI

Mohan Babu University's Department of Mechanical Engineering, School of Engineering, has hosted the highly anticipated International Conference on Sustainable Manufacturing, Automation, Artificial Intelligence, and Robotic Technologies (I-SMAART 2024) with resound-

ing success. Over the past three days, the university campus became a hub of intellectual exchange as experts, researchers, educators, and industry leaders converged to explore the latest advancements and critical discussions in sustainable manufacturing,

One of the conference's main highlights was a thought-provoking panel discussion titled

"The Importance of Core Engineering in Nation's Progress." Esteemed panellists, including Dr G Venkatarathnam from the

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Dr V Dillibabu from Gas Turbine Research Establishment, DRDO, and Dr NL Parthasarathy from Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research and D Damodar Naidu, CEO of Ravand's Plastech, shared invaluable insights on the role of core engineering disciplines in driving national development. The dis-

cussion encompassed various aspects, ranging from space exploration and nuclear energy to the burgeoning electric vehicle sector, highlighting engineering's profound impact on India's future infrastructure landscape and emphasising the significance of initiatives like Make in India.

"I am thrilled by the overwhelming response and the quality of discussions at the conference. Platforms like I-SMAART 2024 play a pivotal role in fostering innovation and addressing global challenges head-on," said Vikas Singh, Chief Growth and Strategy Officer at Mohan Babu



Sharmila's poser: Why was Tribal **University not established?**



APCC President YS Sharmila questioned the Jagan Mohan Reddy headed government why it failed to establish Tribal University and why it gave permission for Bauxite mining in the agency area.

Addressing an election meeting here on Saturday, she recalled that when YS Rajasekhar Reddy was the Chief Minister in the undivided AP state, he did not give permission for Bauxite mining, honoring the demand of tribal people. But the Jagan Mohan Reddy

headed government has given permission for bauxite mining in the agency area, she alleged. Establishment of Tribal University was assured under the AP Reorganisation Act 2014 but the University has not been established so far and questioned who is responsible for the failure.

She also pointed out that seven hydro power projects were awarded to Adani and other such companies and described it as unjust. Sharmila recalled that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy assured of establishing a medical college and engineering college in the region but failed to do so. The SCS is a lifeline to the state but Jagan Reddy failed to exert pressure on the Centre for the same, she lashed out.

"Andhra Pradesh has achieved substantial progress only in cultivation and export of ganja," she ridiculed, deploring that Jagan Reddy has put AP at top borrowing lakhs of crores of debts. YS Sharmila assured of bringing the YSR regime to every household and implementation of agriculture loan waiver up to Rs 2 lakh, if voted to power. She also promised to enhance pensions to Rs 4,000, disabled pensions to Rs 6000 and construct a house for the eligible poor at a cost of Rs 5 lakh, the Congress is voted to power.

Addressing another election meet-ing in Araku, she said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy assured of developing Araku at a cost of Rs 600 crore but he did not extend even Rs 6 lakh for the development. "If the Araku valley had been developed as a tourist center it would have generated huge employment for the locals. Tourism Minister RK Roja did not visit the area even at once," the APCC President slammed. Mining mafia is rampant in Araku region while Adani and Ambani are plundering the natural resources in the

Take stringent steps to check distribution of liquor: DC

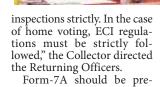
PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Sumit Kumar directed the officials to take stringent steps to prevent the distribution of liquor during the elec-

The Collector held a video conference here on Sunday with the Returning Officers of all constituencies. He reviewed the arrangements being made to conduct elections to be held on May 13.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that illegal storage, transportation and distribution of liquor should not take place in the district under any circumstances.

"Committees should be formed at each constituency level and inspections should be carried out. The FST and SST teams should conduct the



pared in order of names of candidates according to Telugu alphabet, he said, adding that the programme of distribution of voter slips from house to house started on Saturday.

The Collector told the officials that the distribution of voter slips should be carried out very carefully by political parties. The Collector instructed the ROs to ensure that volunteers should not involve themselves in the election process directly under any circumstances.

If the voter slips are left after distribution, they should be handed over in the office of the concerned Returning Officer, he told the officials. Joint Collector CV Praveen Aditya, DRO J Uday Bhaskar and election section Superintendent CH Durga Prasad were among those who attended the meet-

Postal ballot time limit

PNS ELURU

District Collector and District Election Officer V Prasanna Venkatesh said that the Election Commission has extended the deadline of postal ballot till May 1st. In view of the fact that the Election Commission has extended the opportunity of postal ballots to the employees, who are on election duty, the employees should make use of

age of staff in the polling centers, the EC has issued orders permitting the appointment of Anganwadis and contract employees as OPVs for election duties in accordance with the rules, he stated.

"An employee registered as a voter in any district or con-

Unidentified miscreants

the campaign vehicle of

Telugu Desam party at

Annamayya district on

The driver of the campaign

vehicle suffered injuries in

the incident. The driver told



stituency, can exercise his right to vote at the facilitation center in the area, where he is performing his duties. As the staff on election duty will not have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote on the polling day, postal ballot facility has been provided to them and they should make a special request for the same," the Collector explained.

The Government employees, who are on election duty, through postal ballot before

polling, the Collector informed. However, they should apply for the same. The officers, staff, assistant presiding officers, other polling officers, Flying Squad, Static Surveillance Team, Accounting, Sectoral Officers, BLOs, Police and Emergency Services personnel on election duty are eligible to get postal

be duly filled and the election duty certificate, Aadhar card xerox, voter identity card xerox copies should be attached and submitted to the concerned ARO, the Collector stated, adding that that if an employee working in one district has a vote in another district, he can use this postal ballot at the facilitation center in the district

Liquor worth Rs 7 cr hoarded in Pithapuram by YSRCP: Varma

Telugu Desam party former MLA and Pithapuram constituency in-charge SVSN Varma has alleged that the YSRCP leaders have hoarded liquor worth Rs 7 crore to be distributed in Pithapuram constituency to defeat Jana Sena candidate Pawan Kalyan.

The SEB and election officials conducted raids at various places in Pithapuram on the night of Friday and seized huge quantities of liquor which was brought from Goa and hoarded in rural areas. Responding to the seizure of a huge quantity of Goa liquor, TDP ex-MLA SVSN Varma told the media here on Saturday that they had got information that the YSRCP leaders had hoarded liquor worth about Rs 7 crore in Pithapuram con-



stituency at various places. "The liquor the YSRCP lead-

ers want to distribute to defeat Pawan Kalyan is poor in quality. If the liquor is consumed, it will damage the liver and kidneys. We demand the police and the election officials to seize the Goa liquor immediately," SVSN Varma said. The ex-MLA alleged that the YSRCP has deployed red sander smugglers and drug peddlers to Pithapuram constituency in a

bid to defeat Pawan Kalvan.

Varma has also claimed that the outsiders have taken houses on rent at Gollaprolu and YSR garden. The TDP leader lashed out at the YSRCP leaders stating that they were preparing to spend crores of rupees in Pithapuram constituency itself to defeat Pawan Kalyan. Varma also demanded that YSRCP candidate Vanga Geeta should be arrested on the charge of hoarding liquor for distribution.

Welfare of people, progress of state are our priorities: Pawan

PNS KAKINADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan reiterated that the JSP-TDP-BJP alliance is committed to the welfare of people and the progress of the state and appealed to the women voters to extend support stating their support is imperative for election victory.

Addressing a mammoth election meeting in Peddapuram, near here on Saturday, Pawan Kalyan alleged that over 30,000 women had gone missing in the state during the YSRCP regime but the Chief Minister did not respond on the issue.

Pawan Kalyan has claimed that he is not working for a particular caste but he is giving importance to the welfare of people of all castes. "If the women extend support to the alliance, we will sweep in East Godavari and West Godavari in the elections," Pawan Kalyan hoped.

Expressing concern over the plight of the farmers, he said that the farmers have opted crop holidays as they are not getting MSP for their produce besides they are incurring crop farmers are not getting any help from the Rythu Bharosa

Kendras, he lashed out. "Though the farmers suffer



losses due to various reasons and are opting for crop holidays, ganja cultivation is thriving in the state. If the alliance is voted to power, the ganja selling will be oppressed with iron hand," he announced. He lamented that even teenagers are getting addicted to ganja.

Launching a scathing attack on the YSRCP MLAs Dwarampudi Chandrasekhar Reddy, K Kannababu and Dorababu, he flayed that they resorted to huge corruption and stringent actions would be initiated, if the alliance is voted to power. He exhorted the youth to fight against the YSRCP anarchic government till it is

defeated in the election. Stating that he paid Rs 70 crore income tax, he said despite earning crores of rupees itics only to serve people and for the progress of the state. He wooed voters to elect the JSP, TDP and BJP candidates

TDP leaders join YSRCP

VIJAYAWADA: Senior TDP leader from Kakinada district Yanamala Krishnudu has officially joined the YSR Congress Party in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp office. Other TDP leaders P Seshagiri Rao, P Harikrishna, and L Bhaskar also joined YSRCP.

Tuni YSRCP MLA candidate Dadisetti Ramalingeswara Rao and Kakinada YSRCP MP candidate Chalamalashetty Sunil were present on the occasion.

extended to May 1: DC

Similarly, in view of the short-

can exercise their right to vote

Form 12 applications should

TDP campaign vehicle set on fire by miscreants came on a motorcycle, which had no number plate, and set fear of defeat the ruling party acts. He demanded the police to arrest the culprits immedi-CI Puli Sekhar rushed to ately. TDP's campaign vehicle

Vittalam village in the place and registered a Valmikipuram mandal in case. The TDP leaders and in the place and registered a set up fire by miscreants Police said that miscreants activists staged a rasta roko on poured petrol on the vehicle and set it on fire even before the national highway in the driver got down from the protest against the burning of the campaign vehicle. vehicle.

Talking to the media TDP The campaign vehicle was the police that two miscreants candidate N Kishore Kumar completely gutted in the fire.



Woman killed as bus knocks down bike

poured petrol and set on fire of the campaign vehicle was

admitted to a hospital.

PNS NANDYALA

A woman was killed and her husband was critically injured when the bike on which they were travelling was knocked down by a private bus at AV godown on the outskirts of Allagadda town on Saturday.
Police said that Krishna

Reddy and his wife Srivani attended a family function in Allagadda. When they were going to their native village Tippireddypalli in Pendlimarri mandal, a private bus knocked down their motorcycle killing Srivani instantaneously. Krishna Reddy suffered ing.



injuries in the accident and he was admitted to the GGH in Nandyal. CI Ramesh Babu and SI Venkata Reddy rushed to the place and regulated the traffic. The body was shifted to the GGH for postmortem. The bus driver was abscond-

TDP MP candidate Parthasarathi

Telugu Desam party Chenne Kottapalli on the NH 44 on Saturday.

Police said that When TDP Lok Sabha candidate Parthasarathi was going to Madakashira Anantapur, his car rammed a truck from the rear end. The car was badly damaged in the

However, Parthasarathi escaped unhurt in the



escort vehicle. The TDP leaders heaved a sigh of relief as the MP candidate escaped

has miraculous escape

PNS ■ HINDUPUR

Hindupur Lok Sabha candidate Parthasarathi had a miraculous escape when his car rammed a truck at

accident.

mishap. Later he went to unhurt in the accident.



HYD POLICE NAB TWO DRUG PEDDLERS, **MARIJUANA WORTH Rs 2 LAKH SEIZED**

40 to consumers. Apart from the Ganja

chocolates, Majeed's two wheeler was also

PNS HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad police on Saturday arrested two drug peddlers involved in separate cases and seized marijuana worth Rs 2,

In the first case, The Commissioner's Task Force (South East) Zone in coordination with the Kanchanbagh Police arrested a person involved in selling marijuan chocolates. The accused was identified as Mohammed Majeed (33) a Pan shop owner and a resident of Hafeez Babanagar. 20 packets containing 800 marijuana

chocolates were seized from Majeed. On April 25, the Commissioner's Task



Kanchanbagh police apprehended the accused in front of his house. During the interroga-

tion, Majeed revealed that he purchased 4 kg marijuana at Rs 8,000 from a person identified as Rajan Singh, a native of Uttar Pradesh. Majeed planned to sell each chocolate at Rs

In the second case, the Hyderabad Narcotics Enforce ment Wing (HNEW) along with the Madhuranagar police arrested a drug peddler and seized 2 kg of Ganja from him. The accused was identified as B. Satya Sai (27) a resident of Kukatpally . Sai was staying at PG in Madhuranagar.

The accused once visited Bhadradri

Kothagudem and saw a person selling the drug at a high price. In 2022, Sai was addicted to marijuana, which he procured the drug from his acquaintances and sold it at a high price to consumers.

Apart from Ganja, the police also seized Sai's mobile, total seizure was worth Rs

PNS VIJAYAWADA blood requirements in the State and the volume of blood units being supplied by Red Cross Blood Centres across the PS Pradyumna, Principal Secretary, Transport, was a State annually. He appealed to the youth to surprise blood donor at the Red Cross Blood Centre, Vijayawada on Saturday. come forward and donate

Principal Secretary Pradyumna

donates blood at Red X Centre

Understanding the problems of shortage of blood units during summer and the troubles being faced by the parents of children suffering with Thalassemia, who needs blood transfusion once in every three weeks, Pradyumna, who is a regular blood donor suddenly stepped into the Red Cross Blood Centre in Vijayawada and

donated blood. He also enquired about the

blood in Red Cross Blood Centres during this summer to mitigate the shortage and to save valuable lives in emergen-Kumar,

Coordinator of Red Cross Blood Banks in Andhra Pradesh, thanked the senior IAS officer Pradyumna for his noble act. AP Red Cross also presented a certificate and a memento to Pradyumna.

Revanth & Harish have entered into a dark deal: Alleti Maheshwar Reddy

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and BRS leader T. Harish Rao have entered into a 'dark deal,' Bharatiya Janata Party Legislature Party (BJPLP) leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy

Casting doubts about the CM throwing a challenge mentioning the name of Harish Rao, Maheshwar asked the CM and Harish to reveal the 'secret pact' between them.

'These dramas of Revanth Reddy and Harish Rao are intended to create Telangana's Eknath Shinde. I am getting the doubt that Harish may become Shinde. Revanth brought Harish's name on to the screen and they are playing a game. What is going on behind the scenes? Is Harish going to become a Shinde? The CM and Harish have entered into a match-fixing deal," Maheshwar



Addressing the media on Saturday at the State BJP office, Maheshwar asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to reveal whether only the farm loan waiver scheme will be implemented or whether all the other assurances will also be implemented.

I am ready to resign if Revanth implements the six guarantees fully. I am sending my letter on my letterhead to Balakrishna's dialogues," he said.

Gandhi Bhavan by speed post on Saturday itself. The Congress has to type my resignation letter in the Speaker's format. I am ready to sign on the letterhead if the CM accepts my challenge," he

Maheshwar said that Revanth has been speaking like film hero Balakrishna. "I know that Revanth Reddy was in the TDP

Revanth is not speaking about his party's five declarations and other assurances in its six guarantees. Revanth's rule is nothing but deceiving the public. The Congress is the party that amended the Constitution several times, he said. Maheshwar said that Revanth

is playing mind games to divert public attention from the six guarantees and that he will take political sanyas if the Congress wins 14 LS seats in TG.

Revanth is speaking only about loan waivers. Why is he not speaking about Rythu Bharosa? Why is the CM not speaking about the five declarations? The secret deals between the Congress and the BRS are coming out one after the other. The SCs, STs and BCs are affected by Congress policies, he said, and added that he is ready for an

open debate. Maheshwar said that he would come with some explosive news on Sunday

Make Modi PM again to rid nation of terrorism and Naxalism: Shah

PNS PORBANDAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday urged people to make Narendra Modi the prime minister for the third term to rid the country of terrorism, Naxalism, and poverty, and to make India the third

largest economy in the world.
In the last 10 years, PM Modi took several tough decisions without caring for the vote bank, he said as he cited the scrapping of Article 370 and the construction of a Ram

temple in Ayodhya.
Addressing a public rally to drum up support for Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Porbandar constituency in Gujarat, Shah also said that after two phases of polls, it is now clear that people of the country have decided to bring Modi to power



There are 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat, of which the Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate from Surat has been elect-

ed unopposed. "I would appeal to you to vote for lotus (BJP's poll symbol) on the remaining 25 seats and make Modi prime minister for a third term. Making him PM for the third term means freedom from terrorism and Naxalism, freedom from poverty, making arrangements

to give a platform to the youth so they could go hand in hand with the world and create a great India," the senior BJP

leader said. PM Modi worked to brighten the name of Gujarat on the world map, and gave a new identity to the state that is known for Mahatma Gandhi

and Sardar Patel, he said.
Attacking Congress, Shah led UPA government's rule (between 2004 and 2014), the country's economy was at 11th said, "When Article 370 was scrapped, Rahul Gandhi position, Shah said.

Unemployment rate highest under Modi govt: Priyanka

PNS LATUR

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday hit out at the Narendra Modi government over jobs and inflation, saying the unemployment rate is the highest

ployment rate is the highest in the country.

Addressing a campaign rally at Udgir in Latur district for the Congress candidate, she said 30 lakh posts are lying vacant in the Central government which have not been filled in the last ten years. "Hardships (of the peoyears. "Hardships (of the people) and unemployment have risen in the last ten years. 70 crore people, youth are unemployed," Gandhi said.

The AICC general secretary also said GST (Goods and Services Tax) has been imposed on every (piece of) agricultural equipment and promised to abolish it after Congress comes to power.

EXCISE POLICY CASE

Kejriwal to SC: ED acted in most highhanded manner

PNS NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday told the Supreme Court that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has acted in a "most highhanded manner" in a money-laundering case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam.
In a rejoinder to the ED's

reply affidavit filed on his petition challenging his arrest in the case, Kejriwal said he has always cooperated with the investigation.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said the ED, in its reply affidavit filed in the apex court has said to the action of the actio court, has said that one of the reasons which necessitated his arrest was that he did not remain present before the investigating officer (IO) despite being summoned nine

Kejriwal said the ED has said in its reply that in such a

case, the IO was justified in forming an opinion that custodial interrogation would lead to "a qualitatively more elicitation orientated" questioning of

the accused. "The aforementioned tenor, text and contents of the reply leave no manner of doubt that the ED has acted in a most highhanded manner in a gross affront to the due process of law," he said.

Kejriwal further claimed

that a cumulative reading of the ED's stand in its reply would expose the "bogey and blatant falsehood" in the conduct of its proceedings.

He said the record would

reveal that each and every summons issued to him was duly responded to while seeking vital details and information, which under no circumstances can be claimed to be privileged or confidential by he ED.

Kejriwal claimed that the ED has never spelt out the alleged non-cooperation by

him.
"What was the requirement in not calling the petitioner (Kejriwal) either through an authorised agent or seeking information or documents from him in writing or through a virtual mode and insisting on his presence physically in person, is not forth-

Modi hell-bent on 'revenge' since K'taka 'rejected' him: Conq

PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been hellbent on taking "revenge" on the people of Karnataka since they "decisively rejected" him

in the 2023 assembly elections. The opposition party's attack came after the Centre approved about Rs 3,499 crore

as drought relief to Karnataka following the state government taking the matter to the Supreme Court.

C o n g r e s s General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X, "Ever since Mr Modi was

rejected decisively by the people of Karnataka in the 2023 assembly elections, he has been hell-bent on taking his revenge."
First, Modi tried to "sabo-

tage" the Anna Bhagya food security scheme but the Congress government was and launched a direct cash transfer scheme for the 4.49 crore beneficiaries,

Ramesh said. "Second, he cut off funds to Karnataka. Between April 2023 -- when he lost -- and January 2024, total central transfers to Karnataka have declined by 23 per cent. Central grants have fallen by

56 per cent," he alleged. Third, the Centre delayed the legitimate drought relief funds due to the farmers of the state, Ramesh further claimed.

"223 out of 236 talukas in Karnataka are facing drought conditions, with 196 taluks being categorised as severely hit. As early as September 2023, the Karnataka government approached Modi sarkar

to release funds of Rs 18,172 crore for drought relief. It was delayed for months," Congress leader

Today, after the Karnataka government dragged the Modi government to the Supreme Court for fail-

ing to provide drought relief, the Union finance ministry finally agreed to release more than Rs 3,498 crore to Karnataka's farmers, he said.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said the Centre has approved relief and released only Rs 3,454 crore

He urged the prime minister to release the balance amount as soon as possible.

The chief minister also thanked the Supreme Court for warning the central government and providing some drought relief to the state.

Modi's 'factory of lies' won't work forever, says Kharge PNS BARPETA (ASSAM)

Rejecting the BJP's claims that the Congress' election manifesto resembled that of the Muslim League, party president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday asserted that "Modi's factory of lies" won't work forever.

Addressing an election rally at Kayakuchi in Barpeta district of Assam, he said unemployment is a big problem in the country and that 65

per cent of educated youths have no

"The INDIA bloc will surely come to power and stop the BJP. Modi's BJP will be decimated. Once our government comes to power, we will control price rise and our focus will be on poor people. We will fill up 30 lakh vacancies in government departments," he added.

Terming Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'sardar (leader) of liars',



Kharge charged him with lying about providing two crore jobs annually, bringing back black money to the country and giving Rs 15 lakh to each citizen, and doubling farmers' income.

"Modi's 'factory of lies' won't last

forever. He even called the Congress manifesto Muslim League's manifesto and spoke lies about it," he added. Kharge also alleged that the BJP was "looting" the country's wealth and handing it over to the rich.

"PM Modi waived Rs 16 lakh crore loans of his few rich friends," Kharge claimed. He said that while party leader Rahul Gandhi led the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' crisscrossing the country, Modi was working for 'Bharat todo' or dividing the nation.

"Prime Minister Modi is continuously attacking the Congress and the Gandhi family as he is scared and trembling in fear of losing power," he

No evidence of arms seizure in Sandeshkhali: Mamata

river of blood will flow in

Kashmir after that. But in the

last five years, let alone the river

of blood, nobody dared to

Modi worked to finish ter-

rorism and Naxalism from the

country." When Manmohan

Singh was the country's prime minister, anyone could enter

the country from Pakistan and blow up bombs, he said.

"When Pakistan carried out terrorist attacks in Pulwama and Uri, it forgot that Modi was

Within 10 days, Modi car-

ried out surgical and air strikes to finish off terrorists on

Pakistan soil. Modi worked to

secure the country and make

In 10 years of the Congress-

it prosperous," he said.

the prime minister.

throw even a stone there.

Says recovered items might be brought by CBI

PNS KULTI (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday said there was "no evidence" of arms seizure in Sandeshkhali, asserting that CBI teams conducted searches without informing the state police. She expressed skepticism

regarding the operations, stating that the recovered items might have been brought by officials of the central agency". "Even if a firecracker goes off Bengal, the NIA, CBI, NSG

are coming to investigate. It seems that a war is going on.

The state police were not informed. It is not known what was found. There was no evidence. The seized items might have been brought by them (CBI) in a car," Banerjee said here.

She was addressing an election rally for TMC's Asansol



Sabha Lok candidate Shatrughan Sinha.

The CBI on Friday seized ing a police service revolver and foreign-made firearms, during searches at two premises of an associate of now-suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh in Sandeshkhali, officials said.

The searches were conducted in connection with the January attack on an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team by a

mob that was allegedly instigated by Sheikh, who was arrested by the West Bengal Police on

Teams of the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI), the bomb detection squad, the National Security Guard (NSG), the central paramilitary forces and the West Bengal Police were part of the searches at the village -- a riverine delta -- on the fringes of the Sunderbans in North 24 Parganas district.

Indian heart saves Pak teen girl in Chennai

PNS CHENNAI

A Pakistani teenage girl who has been ailing since 2019 got a new lease of life after she received a heart from a 69year-old Indian donor from New Delhi. The 19-year-old girl from

Karachi successfully underwent a heart transplant surgery and was discharged recently, doctors who performed the surgery at a city hospital here said. "I am feel-ing fine (now). I thank the Indian government for giving me a visa. I got a heart transplant here," she said and also ing her. She was very sick upon her arrival in Chennai, her mother Sanobar said. "We got an emergency visa... the doctors saved her," she added.

Getting the visa was very difficult; more than that the patient's family could not afford the treatment cost, Dr K R Balakrishnan said.

INDIA CORNER

School van driver arrested for molesting class 1 girl



he police have arrested a school van driver on Saturday for allegedly molesting a girl student, officials said. Superintendent of Police (SP) Ashok Kumar Meena told PTI that the victim, studying in class 1, had complained to her school teacher about the incident.

However, she allegedly told her not to inform her parents about it. When the victim reached home, she informed her family who approached the police, SP Meena said. According to the complaint registered by the victim's family, the driver, Kamran made the girl sit on the front seat of the van and touched her inappropriately, he said Based on the complaint, an FIR has been registered against the van driver under sections 354 (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code and sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, he said. Further investigation is underway, he added.

Indian man jailed in UK for 16 years for attempted murder



charged with attempted murder of a female student, also an Indian, in east London two years ago has been sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment by a court here. Sriram Ambarla, who was arrested at the scene of stabbing the female inside a Hyderabadi restaurant in east London,

pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey court on Thursday. According to a court report in 'MyLondon', they both came to study at the University of East London in 2022 where Ambarla pursued her and resorted to physical threats before the attack in March that year. The unnamed victim, a student from Kerala in her 20s, who was working part-time as a waitress at the restaurant in east London has since completed her Master's course. Judge Philip Katz described Ambarla as "jealous, possessive and determined" when he attacked his former girlfriend, whom he had met in Hyderabad and split up with in 2019. "That she did not die is no thanks to you. She was within a hair's breadth of dying at your hands in a public and terrifying way," Judge Katz told him while handing down the sentence, which will run concurrently with a 12-month sentence for knife possession. Ambarla is also banned from making contact with his victim again through an indefinite restraining order

Drug labs unearthed in Raj, Gujarat; 7 arrested: NCB



he NCB and Gujarat Police ATS Saturday busted three "clandestine" drug manufacturing labs in Rajasthan and Gujarat leading to the seizure of 300 kgs of narcotics and arrest of seven persons. Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Deputy Director General (Operations) Gyaneshwar Singh in a statement said that the labs

were unearthed after about three months of "intensive" technical and ground surveillance that was mounted by the two agencies to identify the people involved in the network as well as locations of labs. A total of 149 kgs of mephedrone or 'meow meow' (both in powder and liquid form), 50 kg ephedrine, and 200 litres of acetone was recovered from the three labs located in Bhinmal of Jalore district and Osian in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan and Gandhinagai in Gujarat, the officer said.

'Nobody can break Delhi CM'

Kejriwal's wife Sunita holds maiden poll roadshow

PNS NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is a "sher" (lion) and nobody can break him, said his wife Sunita Keiriwal as she held her maiden Lok Sabha poll roadshow in support of the AAP's East Delhi candidate on Saturday evening.

Standing through the sunroof of a vehicle, Sunita Kejriwal greeted voters in the Kondli area of East Delhi constituency with folded hands.

She said the Delhi chief minister was jailed because he built schools, provided free electricity and opened Mohalla



dictatorship and save democracy," Sunita Kejriwal said. With Arvind Kejriwal

behind bars in a money laundering case, his wife will spearhead the AAP's poll campaign and hold roadshows, including "We will vote to remove one in West Delhi Lok Sabha constituency on Sunday, according to party leaders.

Sunita Kejriwal will also campaign for AAP candidates in South Delhi and New Delhi constituencies as well as in Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab, the party leaders said.

Kerala Governor gives assent to five pending bills

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Saturday said he has given his assent to five Bills passed by the state assembly which had been pending for long.

The bills include the Land

Assignment Amendment Bill, Kerala Co-operative Societies (Amendment), the Paddy Wetland Amendment Bill, the Dairy Cooperation Bill and the Abkari Law Amendment Bill.

Governor Khan who met the media said the assent was given a few days ago and the details were revealed today as the General elections in the state had concluded yesterday.

We're alive because Modi ensured **COVID** vaccine for us: Fadnavis

PNS ■ PUNE

Chief

Indians are alive today because Prime Minister Narendra Modi facilitated the manufacture and administration of COVID vaccine during the pandemic, said Maharashtra Deputy

Minister

Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday The BJP leader said nearly 100 countries today credit Modi for providing vaccine doses to them and protecting their citizens from the onslaught of the coronavirus,

Vaccine Maitri' initiative. Recalling the COVID-19 outbreak, Fadnavis said many people lost their loved ones to

referring to the Centre's

the virus and the future appeared bleak amid prediction that 40 to 50 crore people in the country would perish as no one would come to India's

"Only a few countries

had invented the vaccine. They believed that India would come seeking assistance (from them) in the form of COVID vaccines," Fadnavis said, addressing a rally in Sangli in western

Sanjay Kaka Patil. Fadnavis said the world did not know then that a stalwart was at the helm of India's leadership who knew how to pro-

Maharashtra in support of

BJP's Lok Sabha candidate

IAF helicopter roped in to douse forest fires in Uttarakhand

PNS DEHRADUN

An IAF helicopter was pressed into service to extinguish the raging forest fires in Uttarakhand's Nainital district on Saturday, a day after the flames reached the High Court

Colony in the Pines area. The blaze came dangerously close to the houses in the colony and an Army cantonment around five kilometres away from the Pines, prompting the response by authorities.

The Indian Air Force said a Mi-17 V5 helicopter was deployed to assist in the fire-

fighting operations.
"With a forest fire building up in vicinity of an Air Force Station near Nainital, #IAF activated its aerial fire fighting capability, employing a Mi-17 V5 helicopter for undertaking Bambi Bucket Ops," it posted

Forest officials said the helicopter collected water from the Naini and Bhimtal lakes in a Bambi bucket and poured it over the burning forests of the Pines, Bhumiadhar, Jyolikot, Narayan Nagar, Bhawali, Ramgarh and Mukteshwar



The bucket can hold up to 5,000 litres of water at a time. Boating activities were briefly suspended in Naini

Lake due to its low water level, but in Bhimtal Lake, it has been stopped for now, an official said.

SDM Pramod Kumar said the fire has engulfed the forests from Pines to Ladiyakanta.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said all efforts are being made to bring the fires under control. Dhami undertook an aerial survey of the affected areas and reviewed the efforts made so far to extinguish the fires with officials of the Kumaon division at the Forest Training Academy in

He issued strict instructions that forest officers should not be allowed to go on leave until the forest fires are completely

Haldwani.

controlled and exemptions should be given only in cases of serious illness. The Army's cooperation is

also being taken, Dhami said and issued instructions to take action against those found guilty of setting fire to the forests. State forest minister Subodh

Unival said all DFOs are in the field to ensure the fires are effectively controlled. He hoped they would be controlled soon as they were surface fires and not ground fires which continue to rage for days

cent decline in net profit at

Rs 724 crore for the fourth

quarter ended March 2024

due to substantial jump in

provisions. The lender had

earned a net profit of Rs 803

crore in the year-ago period.

Total income rose to Rs

9,861 crore from Rs 7,822

MONEY MATTERS

IDFC FIRST Bank Q4 profit

crore a vear ago, IDFC FIRST Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest

income grew to Rs 8,219 crore during the period under review, from

Rs 6,424 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. Net Interest

Income (NII) grew 24 per cent from Rs 3,597 crore in Q4 FY23 to Rs

4,469 crore in Q4 FY24, it said. On the asset quality side, the bank's

gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) reduced to 1.88 per cent of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, from 2.51 per cent by the end

and contingencies increased by 50 per cent to Rs 722 crore in Q4FY24

of March 2023. Net NPAs also came down to 0.60 per cent of the advances from 0.86 per cent at the end of 2024. However, provisions

falls to Rs 724 cr

Centre allows 99.5k tons of onion exports

The Centre on Saturday said it has allowed exports of 99,500 tonnes of onions, mainly sourced from Maharashtra, to six neighbouring countries despite the ban on shipments.

The Centre has also allowed exports of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated, especially, for export markets in the Middle East and some European countries.

On December 8, 2023, the government banned export of

In an official statement, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said the government has "allowed export of 99,150 tonnes of onion to six neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, UAE, Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius and

The export prohibition has been imposed to ensure adequate domestic availability against the backdrop of estimated lower Kharif and Rabi crops in 2023-24 compared to the previous year.

The National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL), the agency for the export of onion to these countries, sourced the domestic onions to be exported through e-platform at L1 prices.

The ban was imposed amid an increase in demand in the international market, it added.

The National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL), the agency for the export of onion to these countries, sourced the domestic onions to be exported through e-platform at L1

NCEL has supplied to the agency or agencies nominated by the government of the destination country at the negotiated rate on a 100 per cent advance payment basis.

The offer rate of NCEL to the buyers takes into account the prevailing prices in the des-tination market and also international and domestic markets.

The quota allocated for export to the six countries is being supplied as per requisition made by the destination country. "As the largest producer of onion in the country, Maharashtra is the major sup-plier of onions sourced by NCEL for export," the statement said.

The government had also allowed the export of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated, especially for export markets in the Middle East and some European countries.

Being purely export-oriented, the production cost of the white onion is higher than other onions due to higher seed cost, adoption of good agricultural practice (GAP) and compliance to strict maximum residue limits (MRL) requirements," the statement said.

The procurement target for onion buffer out of Rabi crop

2024 under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) of the Department of Consumer Affairs has been fixed at 5 lakh

The Central agencies, like NCCF and NAFED are tying up local agencies like FPOs/FPCs/PACs to support the procurement, storage and farmers registration to begin the procurement of any storeworthy onion.

tonnes this year.

A high-level team of the Department of Consumer Affairs, NCCF and NAFED visited Nashik and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra from April 11-13, 2024, to create awareness among the farmers, FPOs/FPCs and PACs about the procurement of 5 lakh tonnes of onion for buffer

INDIA, CHINESE TAIPEI TO WTO

Delay ruling on ICT import duties dispute

India and Chinese Taipei have asked the WTO's dispute settlement body not to adopt any ruling against New Delhi's import duties on certain information and technology prod-ucts till July 26 as both sides are engaged in resolving the matter, an official said.

The issue came up during a meeting of the dispute settle-ment body (DSB) in Geneva on April 26.

In the meeting, the two countries asked DSB to delay consideration of a dispute panel's reports until July 26, 2024 in order to help facilitate resolution of the disputes, the Genevabased official said, adding that the body agreed to that. Earlier also, DSB had agreed to three previous requests from India and Chinese Taipei to delay consideration of the reports.

As per rules of the WTO, the panel's ruling will have to be adopted by DSB for implementation within 60 days of the release of the order. However, countries can mutually request DSB for delay in

time that you (elec-

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In the meeting, the two countries asked DSB to delay consideration of a dispute panel's reports until July 26, 2024 in order to help facilitate resolution of the disputes, the Geneva-based official said, adding that the body agreed to that.

adoption of the ruling.

In its report, a dispute panel of WTO on April 17, 2023 said import duties imposed by India on certain information and technology products violate global trading norms. The ruling followed a case filed by the EU, Japan and Taiwan against these duties in WTO.

In May 2019, Chinese Taipei had filed a case against India in the WTO over the import duties imposed on certain electronic goods, including telephones for cellular networks; machines for reception, conversion and transmission or regeneration of voice, images or other data; and parts of telephone sets.

if you look at the supply chain industry internationally semi-

conductor chips are dominat-

"If something happens there (in Taiwan) what will happen to

the supply chain of the chips?

We need to ensure that there are supply chains which are resilient

and we have to ensure that

geopolitical issues do not

append the economy," he said.

it is another issue that India

needs to address along with

waste management and natur-

al disasters are others that are

The Ministry of Electronics

is working with a number of

other departments to see how

the impact of climate change

of constant challenges.

On climate change, he said

ed by Taiwan.

Shakti Pumps order book touches Rs 2,400 cr



as compared with Rs 482 crore a year ago.

hakti Pumps on Saturday posted a multifold jump in Oits consolidated profit after tax to Rs 89.70 crore during the quarter ended March 2024 on the back of higher revenues. It had clocked a net profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 2.2 crore during the fourth quarter of the preceding

fiscal, the company said in a statement. During FY24, the company's PAT grew manifold to Rs 141.7 crore from Rs 24.1 crore in FY23. Its revenues surged over three-fold to Rs 609.3 crore from Rs 182.7 crore in the year-ago quarter. In FY24, Shakti Pumps' revenue jumped 41.7 per cent to Rs 1,370.7 crore from Rs 967.7 crore in FY23. Shakti Pumps (India) Limited Chairman Dinesh Patidar said, "FY24 has been a remarkable year for SPIL, as the company delivered its strongest performance ever in terms of revenue and profitability. This is well supported by our outstanding performance in both our government and export businesses, which reported a revenue growth of 52 per cent and 23 per cent YoY, respectively, in FY24".

Mufin Green board approves Rs 25 cr fundraising plan



ufin Green on Saturday said it plans to raise up to Rs 24.84 crore by issuing nonconvertible debentures. A proposal in this regard has been approved by the board at a meeting on Friday, the company said in a statement. The committee of the Board of Directors of the Company has approved "raising of funds through issue of rated, unlisted, secured, senior, redeemable, taxable,

transferable, non-convertible debentures denominated in Indian Rupees through private placement basis for amount up to Rs. 24.84,00,000". The proposal remains subject to the approval of the applicable regulatory authorities, Mufin Green said. As per the ls will be utilised for working o expansions in the portfolio. Kolkata-based Mufin Green Finance is a non-banking finance company (NBFC), with a focus on financing clean energy and related projects.

RBI invites applications from eligible SFBs to become regular banks

PNS MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India invited applications from small finance banks meeting specified criteria, including a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore, for becoming regular or universal banks.

2014, issued the guidelines for licensing of MALL small finance banks (SFBs) in the private

sector. There

are about a dozen SFBs, including Au Small Finance Bank, Equitas Small Finance Bank and Ujjivan Small

Finance Bank. An SFB aiming to become a universal bank should have a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore as at the end of the the shares of the bank should have been listed on a recog-

It should also have a net profit in the last two financial years and GNPA and NNPA of less than or equal to 3 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, in the last two financial years.

Other conditions include a prescribed CRAR (capital-to-The RBI, in November risk weighted assets ratio) requirement and

satisfactory track record of performance for a minimum period of five years. On sharehold-

ing pattern, the RBI said: "There is no mandatory requirement for an eligible SFB to have an identified promoter. However, the existing promoters of the eligible SFB, if any, shall continue as the promoters on the

transition to universal bank" Further, the addition of new moters would not be permitted for an eligible SFB during nised stock exchange, the centhe transition period.

'Centre wants electronic component makers to ensure security interests'

PNS CHENNAI

Electronic component manufacturers should ensure the country's security interests while starting new projects, said Union IT Secretary S Krishnan on Saturday. Ministry of Electronics and

Information Technology Secretary Krishnan said the government was opening up on this topic and has been instructing companies to ensure that while designing a project, the country's security interests should be taken care

of.
"We spoke about this briefly (in the past) and how cyber security is becoming more and more important. This is something I would especially want the senior citizens, here something we need to be extremely careful about on a day-by-day basis," Krishnan said.

He made those comments while delivering the 10th G Ramachandran Endowment Resilience Through Technology organized by the Madras School of Economics and The Southern

India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) here on Saturday. Elaborating,

'With this space (cyber security) getting critical, national risks

You design it in a way country's security interests are taken "We spoke about this briefly (in the past) and how cyber security is becoming more and more important. This is something I would especially want the senior

citizens, here something we need to be extremely careful about on a day-by-day basis," Krishnan said. are also huge. It is not at the

individual level but even at the national level, the cyber security risks are huge.

What we advocate is that and what we try to do both design is something that we

care of." he said.

Krishnan also pointed out that the supply chain industry needs to be resilient and not impacted by any external factors including geopolitical risks.

that supply Maintair secure by design. Secure by chain constraints was witnessed in India during the

can be reduced, he said. "Ministry of Electronics actually works with a number

of other ministries, including Renewable energy to see what are the ways in which we can reduce the impact of climate change and optimize producusage of resources comes down and we become more

have to ensure even from the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, sustainable", he said. 'India becoming attractive for clinical trials'

Office space leasing in Delhi-NCR drops 25 pc annually: Vestian

PNS NEW DELHI

The office space leasing in Delhi-NCR fell 25 per cent annually to 18.1 lakh square feet in January-March this year on lower demand from corporates, according to real estate consultant Vestian.

The office space absorption stood at 24 lakh square feet in the year-ago period.

The leasing of office space in Delhi-NCR dropped 40 per cent from 30 lakh square feet in the October-December quarter.

The real estate consultant on Saturday released the data for office leasing across the top

seven major cities.

Office absorption increased 13 per cent to 134 lakh sq ft in January-March 2024 from 118.5 lakh square feet in the year-ago period.



However, the absorption declined by 31 per cent during the first quarter of this year after peaking in the fourth

Vestian CEO Shrinivas Rao said, "2024 started on a positive note, as major office markets of India witnessed sustained absorption activities". "Return to office mandates

office spaces across the country and may drive the next wave of growth amid global headwinds," Rao added. Southern cities (Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad) accounted for 61 per cent of

are likely to renew demand for

2024. Their combined share increased from 54 per cent a year earlier.

the Pan-India absorption in Q1

PNS BOSTON

Over the past 10 years, clinical trials in India have become easier, more accessible and accelerated, experts from the pharma sector have said as top multinationals are increasingly looking at the country as their base for clinical trials.

Data from 2017 to 2023 shows that phase two and phase three clinical trials are growing at about 15 per cent to 18 per cent in India. This is primarily because of the 10 modifications done to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940, according to Badhri Srinivasan, head of Global Clinical Operations, Novartis.

Novartis is one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in



the world and was the fourth largest by revenue in 2022.

Given where we are, given what the landscape in the international community has happened, the regulators in India are starting to move and make changes to it. Since 2013, there have been 10 modifications to that act to try to make clinical trials easier, more accel-

erated, more accessible, et cetera," Srinivasan said at the 18th Annual BioPharma & Healthcare Summit in Boston on April 25 organised by the USA India Chamber of

A new act of 2023 is in the works which addresses very significant changes. Medical devices, for example, are now

We will have much more transparency, a lot more acceleration in clinical trials, a lot more standardisation, a lot more clarity on what ethics committees can do, their compensation, et cetera," he said, adding that modernisation is

now happening.
"Hospital chains and hospital networks are actually also clearly modernising. Seventy per cent of the patients are in private hospital networks. Private hospital networks are now diversifying into tier two, and tier three cities, into tertiary networks as well. That gives you

So this is all the things that are going on that makes India pretty attractive for clinical trials," Śrinivasan said.

At the same time, Srinivasan and other experts felt that India has a lot of other improvements to make. "It is still harder to do clinical trials in India," he said at the summit, which was attended by top leaders from the American

and Indian pharma sector.

Dr Sarah Sheikh, head of Global Development, Takeda, India can help companies like hers to bring medicines to patients faster.

Some of the major changes are making clinical trials in India much more feasible, scalable, and predictable.

TIKTOK BAN

Instagram, YouTube biggest likely winners

PNS SUN FRANCISCO

Adult US TikTok users spend an average of 54 minutes on the app on any given day, more than Instagram, Snapchat or YouTube, according to research firm eMarketer. If TikTok were to disappear, those platforms — along with younger, smaller emerging rivals — would be scrambling for those valuable

minutes of people's attention. But with an actual ban still likely years away, it's not clear what app will be its biggest beneficiary. Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, may see more advertisers amid uncertainty for its biggest rival, according to analysts who follow the company.



uncertainty themselves are also expanding to other platforms if they weren't already. But users, especially the younger ones who are TikTok's bread and butter, are less predictable. Will they embrace Instagram, a possibly uncool mom favorite? Or could a newer app like Triller rise to viral fame?

Here's a look at some notable

TikTok alternatives and how they measure up.

INSTAGRAM Meta has a long

tradition of cloning competitive services, with varying degrees of success. The Instagram "Story" feature, which lets people share photos and videos that expire in 24 hours, is similar to Snapchat. The company also launched a TikTok knockoff called Lasso in 2018 but closed that down in 2020.

Then Instagram launched Reels 2020, a TikTok-like feed of short videos users can create or scroll through. It's proven to be massively popular. Could it replace TikTok? That depends. While many creators post on both platforms, some experts say the youngest users are unlikely to migrate to a service made popular by their millennial parents. And while Meta's algorithm is addictive, it's still not TikTok.

"Replicating TikTok's algorithm is a nearly impossible task, as rival Meta would attest to," said eMarketer analyst Jasmine Enberg. "TikTok's ability to serve up relevant and entertaining content to its users is unparalleled in the social media world."

YOUTUBE While YOU LLDE TikTok gets more headlines, YouTube still dominates US teens' attention. Roughly nine in ten teens said they use YouTube, in a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, making it the most widely used platform among the 13-17 crowd. TikTok clocked in at 63 per cent, Snapchat at 60% and Instagram at 59%. Its parent company Google launched YouTube Shorts in 2020, shortly after India banned TikTok

YouTube users can scroll through Shorts just as they can on TikTok or Reels on Instagram and Facebook, watching hours of bite-sized videos. As with Reels, many of the videos featured are from TikTok or creators who post to several different platforms.

ICICI Bank reports 18.5% growth in net profit

PNS MUMBAI

Private sector lender ICICI Bank on Saturday said its March 2024 quarter consolidated net grew 18.5 per cent to Rs 11,672 crore.

It had reported a net profit of Rs 9,853 crore in the yearago period.

On a standalone basis, the second largest private sector lender showed a 17.4 per cent growth in its profit after tax at Rs 10,708 crore for the reporting quarter against Rs 9,122 crore in the year-ago period.

The core net interest income increased 8.1 per cent to Rs 19,093 crore on a 16.8 per cent



growth in loans and a marginal compression in net interest margin to 4.40 per cent.

The non-interest income, excluding the performance of the treasury, came at Rs 5,930

the year-ago period. The provisions more than

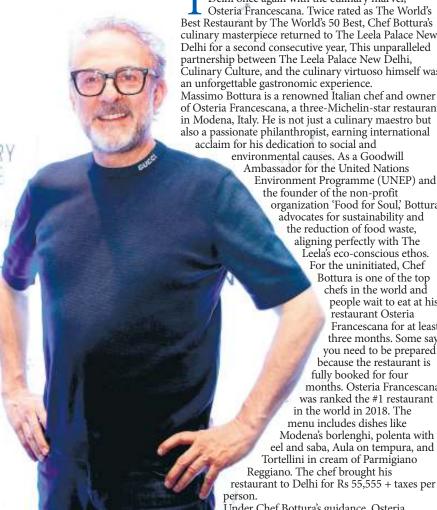
halved to Rs 718 crore for the reporting quarter, as per the exchange filing by the lender.

crore, 15.7 per cent higher than

'Don't be afraid to commit mistakes' is Chef Massimo Bottura's mantra, that is how his iconic dish came to life, writes Gyaneshwar Dayal

I DROPPED THE

LEMON TRAT'



≺he renowned Chef Massimo Bottura was in New Delhi once again with the culinary marvel, Osteria Francescana. Twice rated as The World's Best Restaurant by The World's 50 Best, Chef Bottura's culinary masterpiece returned to The Leela Palace New Delhi for a second consecutive year, This unparalleled partnership between The Leela Palace New Delhi, Culinary Culture, and the culinary virtuoso himself was Massimo Bottura is a renowned Italian chef and owner of Osteria Francescana, a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Modena, Italy. He is not just a culinary maestro but also a passionate philanthropist, earning international acclaim for his dedication to social and environmental causes. As a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations

> organization 'Food Food,' Bottura advocates for sustainability and the reduction of food waste, aligning perfectly with The Leela's eco-conscious ethos.
>
> For the uninitiated, Chef Bottura is one of the top chefs in the world and people wait to eat at his restaurant Osteria Francescana for at least three months. Some say you need to be prepared because the restaurant is fully booked for four months. Osteria Francescana was ranked the #1 restaurant in the world in 2018. The menu includes dishes like Modena's borlenghi, polenta with eel and saba, Aula on tempura, and

person.
Under Chef Bottura's guidance, Osteria
Francescana has captivated global palates with
its innovative approach to Italian cuisine. He is
known for reinventing the Italian dishes. The restaurant has consistently secured its position among the world's best, offering a sensory journey unlike any other. Iconic dishes such as 'Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart,' 'The Crunchy Part of the Lasagne, and 'Psychedelic

ashmir is known for

Cod Not Flame Grilled' will for poetry in daily life,

grace the special menus offered during the event. Bottura is a philosopher in his own right. He is passionate about making mistakes. That's right that is how his worldthing," he quips famous iconic dish 'Oops! I This ethos of embracing dropped the lemon tarts and imperfection and came to life. Chef Bottura's transforming it into culinary philosophy, is deeply something extraordinary rooted in embracing mistakes resonates throughout his and turning them into culinary creations. Chef culinary masterpieces Bottura shared a story in his session, engaging in a interactive session in Leela, about the creation of a dish that symbolises embracing offering insights into his culinary journey and philosophy. During the imperfections. It originated when Francescana's sous chef conversation, they had a Taka Kondo accidentally dropped a lemon tart. Feeling distraught, Kondo's perfectionist tendencies clashed with his mistake. Bottura intervened, reframing the mishap as a metaphor for the fusion of sweet and savoury, breaking boundaries. Bottura emphasised the influence to bring about positive changes worldwide. importance of leaving room

allowing for imagination and creativity to flourish. "If you don't make mistakes, don't dream big, you end up no where, won't learn a damn Bottura hosted an interactive conversation with Vir Sanghvi, India's foremost food expert, difference of opinions but agreed on two things. Italians like Indians are mama's boys and two both love their food. Sanghvi remarked, "Massimo Bottura transcends the role of a chef; he serves as a global inspiration, leveraging his

Mr. Anupam Dasgupta, General Manager of The Leela Palace New Delhi, expressed his enthusiasm for this unique culinary collaboration. He stated, "It is our privilege to host Chef Massimo once more at The Leela Palace New Delhi. We eagerly anticipate the epicurean delight that Chef Massimo will curate for the pop-up dinners." Speaking with anticipation about his return to India, Chef Massimo Bottura expressed his excitement, saying, "Namaste, India! Í am delighted to return to your beautiful country. In New Delhi, we are working with Culinary Culture and The Leela Palace. I love India - the food and the people - and can't wait to be back and give you all a big Italian hug!" İndeed, chef Massimo Bottura is just not a chef he is a philosopher and a package you could talk to and take lessons for your kitchen and life. Chef is all for dreaming big and how creativity and dreaming big means a lot in life. His mantra: Dream big, it costs nothing and don't be afraid to make mistakes if you don't mistakes you will never learn anything new. Just a trivia here, any guesses what Massimo Bottura was most excited about in the evening, It was his breakfast with the underprivileged children he had invited for breakfast the next morning. So the world waits for Masimo Bottura's dinner and he for a simple breakfast with children of lesser God who give him all the inspiration he needs for his next masterpiece

Standing Alone, and How

among Delhi's standalone,

Lmulti-cuisine restaurants with

its delightful offerings. This spacious 144-seater, adorned with well-lit

interiors, caters perfectly to both small

and large groups, boasting several live

kitchens that serve a variety of popular

While this was not my first visit to MKT, it was my first experience with

their new menu. The shift towards

cuisines from around the globe.



MKT impressed with its high-quality ingredients, wellinformed and wellattired servers. excellent preparations, and comfortable interiors. It not only stands out among standalone restaurants but also outshines many star hotels with its overall offerings, says **PAWAN SONI**



salmon belly was incredibly tender and flavorful, justifying its price for the exceptional preparation. Once you have experienced this, you will never look back at the dry salmon tikka server-recommended starter, the Kimball mushroom, was a delightful mix of enoki, shimeji, king oyster, and shiitake mushrooms tossed in Kimball sauce. This carb-free dish not only excelled in healthfulness but also While our appetizers were satisfying, we also sampled two dishes from their Indian menu — Quinoa mutton

seekh and Champaran

mutton for the mains.

as this rustic Bihari preparation with onions, mustard oil, and whole garlic showcased one of the best qualities of mutton. The chef revealed that they prepare a small batch every day in a traditional handi, ensuring authenticityand quality. Our meal concluded with homemade ice cream, which was delightful and could have been enhanced further with of mango addition Overall, MKT impressed with its high-quality ingredients, well-informed and well-attired servers, excellent preparations, and comfortable interiors. It not only stands out among standalone restaurants but also outshines many star hotels with its overall offerings.

The mutton seekh was tender and

ubiquitous

Champaran

chutney.

lehsun

flavourful, served with smoked

chutney

khameeri roti, a refreshing

departure from the

was a pleasant surprise,

mint

mutton

MKT, Lower Ground Floor, The Chanakya Mall, Yashwant Place Community Centre, New Delhi Phone: 83769 86799 | Cuisine: Global **Rating: Food:** 4.5/5 | **Drinks:** 4.25/5 | **Service:** 4.5/5 |

Ambience: 4.25/5 | Overall: 4.5/5

Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

A culinary journey through Kashmir

CHEF RAHUL WALI, through his expertise and dedication brings forth a unique culinary experience that celebrates the distinct identity of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine. **DIVYA BHATIA** had the chance to taste his lip-smacking delicacies

its scenic beauty but what people often mis on a trip to Kashmir is it Kashmiri Pandit cuisine which is a rich in flavors influenced by the cultural heritage and geographical diversity of the Kashmir Valley. Renowned for its exquisite blend of aromatic spices and traditional cooking techniques, Kashmiri Pandit cuisine is a true reflection of the region's history and culinary prowess. Staple ingredients understand traditional such as rice, yogurt, and vegetables form the foundation of many dishes, which are often infused with an array of spices like fennel, this culinary landscape cardamom, and saffron, lending a unique and diluted by modern complex flavor profile. Signature dishes such as Rogan Josh, Yakhni, and introduced us to age-old Dum Aloo are cherished for their rich textures and vibrant taste. culinary Moreover, the practices. offering a cuisine also features a variety of delectable vegetarian options, including Nadru Yakhni (lotus of Kashmiri Pandits' stem in yogurt gravy) gastronomy. Chef Rahul and Haaq Saag (collard Wali talked about his greens cooked with spices). With its emphasis on fresh journey and passion. Excerpts: Could you share your ingredients and intricate preparation methods, Kashmiri Pandit cuisine journey as a Chef? continues to captivate was born in Srinagar, palates worldwide, Jammu & Kashmir, and showcasing the rich culinary spent my formative years in heritage of the Kashmiri Mumbai and Pune. My Pandit community. culinary journey began after Recently, I had the completing my Bachelor's in opportunity to indulge in Hotel Management from Koshur Wuribal, a culinary Pune. I garnered extensive extravaganza celebrating the experience across exquisite flavors of Kashmiri various Pandit cuisine, at The renowned Roseate House. Often brands in overshadowed by the India and renowned Wazwan, abroad, Kashmiri Pandit cuisine eventually pursuing an boasts a distinct identity, tracing its origins back to advanced 326 BCE, long before the Graduate Degree



Kashmiri Pandit cooking, but Chef Rahul Wali stands as a beacon of tradition in where authenticity is often interpretations. With a deep understanding of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine, Chef Rahul

recipes and forgotten opportunity to savor the true essence diversity and depth.

in Gastronomy from

I've been dedicated to

reviving and promoting

Kashmiri Pandit cuisine

through pop-ups, festivals,

Le Cordon Bleu, Adelaide

Australia. In recent years,

arrival of Wazwan in the

16th century. Contrary to

Kashmiri Pandit cuisine

are very few chefs who

stands apart with its unique

flavors and traditions. There

common perception,

regional cuisines? Kashmiri Pandit cuisine is distinctive in several aspects. Firstly, it more known Kashmiri

its roots back to ancient times. Secondly, unlike many other Indian cuisines, it refrains from using onion, garlic, or tomatoes in its preparation. The focus is on a handful of traditional spices, meticulously blended



and collaborations with hotels and restaurants.

What inspired you to focus

on promoting Kashmiri Pandit cuisine? The inspiration stems from a dual purpose - preserving our culinary heritage and introducing the richness of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine to a broader audience. This

cuisine, dating back to centuries, holds a distinct place in culinary history, characterized by unique flavors and techniques. Unfortunately, it has remained relatively obscure compared to the more widely known Kashmiri cuisine. I aim to change that by bringing it to the forefront and showcasing its

How would you differentiate Kashmiri Pandit cuisine from other

> predates the commonly cuisine, tracing

to create nuanced flavors. Additionally, the cooking method involves patience and slow cooking, preserving the authenticity of the dishes.

What challenges do you face in promoting Kashmiri Pandit cuisine outside its native region?

While the reception has been overwhelmingly positive, there are challenges, particularly in sourcing

authentic ingredients. Additionally, there's a misconception that Kashmiri cuisine is solely suited for colder climates, which isn't entirely accurate. Educating people about the versatility and richness of our cuisine is an ongoing effort, requiring collaboration and support from various stakeholders.

How do you ensure an authentic culinary experience for guests during food festivals and pop-ups?

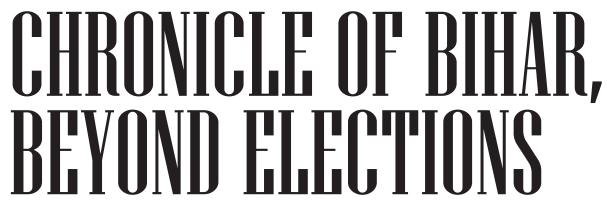
Authenticity is paramount, although it's essential to acknowledge that complete replication may not always be feasible, especially in diverse culinary landscapes. However, I strive to maintain the essence and integrity of Kashmiri Pandit cuisine while adapting to local ingredients and preferences. Each dish is crafted with care and respect for tradition, ensuring that guests experience the true flavors of Kashmir.

the pioneer

"I've spent days in cinemas answering questions from the travelling abroad, and all they do is thank me nicely







In his travels across cities and hamlets of Bihar, DEEPAK KUMAR JHA discovers that the local populace loves to have extensive discourses on politics and engage in conversations where the rhetoric of caste is quite pronounced and audible

till considered as some of the most backward districts of Bihar — Madhepura, Purnea, Saharsa, Supaul -- the *Dehati* (rural) thatched structures w vears ago have all metamorphosed into brick and mortar dwellings amidst lush green mango orchards, banana plants, and corns in the backyard. However, the basic problems of health and education are galore. In every election for the past five decades, people of this region have been promised 'upliftment' by various political parties and leaders in the fray but ultimately the cast die is casteridden, preventing their holistic

development. Migration, which started in large numbers almost three decades ago when Bihar was in the stranglehold of 'Jungle Raj,' continues unabated even under the much hyped 'Susahsan Raj'. "Sitting chief minister Nitish Kumar rode over former CM Lalu Yadav's Raj and people overwhelmingly voted for him going beyond caste and religion, but things are different now. The JDU leader seems to have run out of ideas after a good two terms. His last alliance with Tejaswi Yadav's RJD kindled some hope on the employment front. But such people-oriented development seems to have taken a backseat while caste and religion-ridden politics is back if you look at the nattern of ticket distribution," says Pushpendra Kumar, former professor and chairperson of the Patna Centre of the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) who is now working full time as a researcher of Bihar's society and polity. Partly, Bijli, Sadak and Paani (BSP) are visibly translating into votes but what remains invisible, not only in the Dehati areas but even in towns and

education facilities topped by the lack of healthcare facilities. Amidst these deficiencies the irony is that a plethora of coaching institutes of engineering, medical, and Government jobs across prominent towns and cities like Patna, Muzzaffarpur and Bhagalpur have come up and there is a mushrooming of private medical clinics and diagnostics centres in the principle districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Purnea, Katihar, Gaya and

cities, are negligible secondary, higher

Ara-Chapra. Come election time, there is 'Chah (not Chai) Par Charcha' across cities or hamlets where people love to have extensive discourses over Modi, Nitish, Rahul, Teiashwi or even Obama and Biden. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of caste is loud and audible in the

conversation of the locals, sitting on machans (bamboo cane cots), a fact that still dominates the entry and exit of these villages.

The women folk have to volunteer to supply the motley crowd with tea doses. "Din bhar mein kum se kum 50 cup chai banta hai. Inko koyi kaam nahi, din bhar sirf rajneeti ki baat kartey hain. Unka bhi time katatahai," (More than 50 cups of tea are made for them every day. They have no other work so they spend their idle time talking about politics) observes Neelam Devi, a villager of Satarwar in the Saharsa district of Bihar. The elderly male folks gather as early as 5 am and hang around till 8 am and then come back by 3 pm, remain until dusk at their machans, finding some time to revive the agriculturists in them. Evening chats are conducted within the precincts of temples every 100 yards with the smoke of incense sticks — one for spiritual rites and the other from mosquito repellants — emanating, providing a mixed essence in the clean atmosphere, resplendent with the aroma of cattle and cow dung heaps. And during the wedding season and Janeu rituals (thread ceremony), almost every household performs functions and celebrations in its neighbourhood as everybody looks forward to welcoming either an election contestant or any of his/her representatives preferably the dominant caste of that village or town. This reporter, who was covering the

Lok Sabha 2024 elections in the Supaul area, got the divine opportunity to feast on chaste dehati flavours sitting on a gamcha (cotton scarf) rolled over the raw mud field. The serve was obviously puri, salads, papad, aloo-parwal, tomato chutney, dal-bhaat (cooked rice) which has now been replaced by Pulao alongside new *Shaheri* add-ons like paneer based subji and mixed-veg. Sweet delicacies, what they call Sukha Mitha (gulab jamun) and Gila Meetha (rasgulla), Boondiya (besan cooked sweet), and lot of curd, is a must to earn the tag of best Bhoj.

However, elderly people regret the fact that in recent times the city culture is dominating as huge decibels DJs loaded on tractors is a must during celebrations.

Further down to a visit to another village Bara in Saharsa, the author halted and then became part of the discussion over a patient, identified as Nepali Jha, being transported from Sadar Hospital to Patna in a serious condition. The patient was transported to Patna in an ambulance accompanied

route, were simultaneously making attempts to establish `contacts' so that the patient could be admitted at Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) in the State's Capital Despite their efforts the IGIMS turned down the patient and he was somehow 'accommodated' at Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH). All this while, the villagers accompanying the patient kept insisting with the hospital attendants that the patient be taken to IGIMS, but in vain.

When this journalist witnessed their attempts turning futile and one of them claimed to even approach a sitting MP in Bihar, this reporter of *The Pioneer* volunteered to help using bureaucratic contacts in the administration for admission of the patient at IGIMS. The 'mission' was successful and the IGIMS agreed but by that time the patient had to be put on a ventilator back at PMCH and moving him in that critical condition was not feasible. In this grim milieu tea was offered and unfortunately the news about the patient's demise simply vanished from media attention. Although the villagers profusely thanked this reporter, they were equally troubled about their local leaders and MPs who were not of any help in their moment of crisis and used

is a must. While several elderly people have moved out of the villages to bigger cities to stay with their children, those who are fond of villages are left in the lurch. Several people have died due to lack of even basic medical facilities in backward areas like in Madhepura, Purnea, Madhepura, and here," said Gyan Mishra, a local villager. While the people in the districts of eastern Bihar struggled for a decade to get a sanction for an AIIMS at Saharsa, considered to be most backward, they are now annoyed with both the Central and State Governments as the project has been moved to neighbouring Darbhanga, considered to be

foul language to curse their apathy.
"The need for better medical facilities

The Darbhanga AIIMS was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year but soon the project got mired in controversy over the tug of war between the neighbouring districts. The matter is now before the Supreme Court. Last year a group of 20 parliamentarians led by Madhepura MP Dinesh Yadav, cutting across party lines launched an intensive campaign for the construction of an AIIMS in

Saharsa, and even met Union Health

prosperous.





IN EVERY ELECTION FOR THE PAST FIVE DECADES, PEOPLE OF **BACKWARD REGIONS** HAVE BEEN PROMISED **UPLIFTMENT BY** VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERS BUT ULTIMATELY THE DIE IS CAST IN FAVOUR OF CASTE, PREVENTING THE STATE'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT.









handed over a letter of their demand. The letter mentioned that the number of patients suffering from cancer, kidney, heart, liver and other such lifethreatening ailments has been quite high in the north-eastern region, comprising Saharsa, Madhepura, Supaul, Khagaria, Purnia, Katihar, Araria and Kishanganj districts. The letter stated that the Saharsa district magistrate (DM) had communicated to the State Government about the availability of 217.74 acres of land

for the construction of an AIIMS, but the State Government announced the allocation of land for the AIIMS in Darbhanga. MPs from Siwan, Nalanda, Karakat, Gaya, Valmikinagar, Gopalganj and

Jehanabad had also signed the letter despite knowing that the people from their regions will not be visiting Saharsa for their treatment. But, when we talk about Bihar, it would be incomplete without the world famed and internationally acclaimed Madhubani paintings which have received several Padma awards. Another delight for the people of Bihar is the folklores of various languages including charting numbers of Bhojpuri. Most of the popular artists who dominate all rituals including the mega festival of Chhath, is Sharda Sinha, who too has been bestowed with a Padma award.

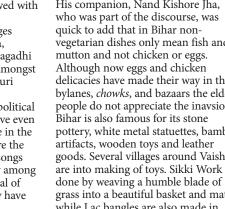
Most common regional languages spoken in Bihar include Angika, Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Maithili, Magadhi Prakrit, Hindi as well as Urdu amongst other dialects. Currently, Bhojpuri singers have carved a niche for themselves on both social and political platforms and some of them have even become Parliamentarians or are in the current fray to be one. Therefore the raw, rustic lyrics of traditional songs have now been tuned discreetly among the youth on occasions as several of them are tagged as 'fuhar'. They have been duly banned by the State Government.

In one's travels across Mithilanchal, one is struck by the public emotion when people get talking about Madhubani

maach (fish) and litti-chokha. Seema Roy, Mithila Painting artist said earlier the paintings were done by women with vegetable dyes on the walls. "Now it is done on paper. The paintings normally depict village scenes, human and animal forms, gods and goddesses," Seema said. "Through your platform let me share the most significant tradition of Bihar, particularly Mithila, as you have already been apprised by its arts and crafts. An unnecessary fish-mutton

issue has been derived in the ensuing political campaign by top leaders and we heard the new age media platforms, including social, discuss a lot on this subject. Let me be very clear,

be it any day of the week, any festival like Durga Puja (we do not call it Navratra in Bihar), Saraswati Puja, Mahashivratri, or Sawan or any given Hindu auspicious day, we essentially cook and relish on (maach) fish. Mithilanchal is famous as we say pugpug (every step) is fond of paan, makahana, maach, pokhar (pond)," opines a delighted Birender Thakur, a retired school teacher and villager in Bavangaon in Supaul. He also narrated a poem in the local language which had all the auspicious occasions where it mentioned the serving of nonvegetarian food, particularly fish. His companion, Nand Kishore Iha, vegetarian dishes only mean fish and delicacies have made their way in the bylanes, chowks, and bazaars the elderly people do not appreciate the inavsion. pottery, white metal statuettes, bamboo goods. Several villages around Vaishali are into making of toys. Sikki Work is grass into a beautiful basket and mats while Lac bangles are also made in Muzaffarpur. Bihar's rich traditional



and culture legacy must not be drowned by the political din around. Photos: Deepak Kumar Jha THE SECESSION OF THE SOUTHERN STATES, INDIVIDUALLY OR IN THE AGGREGATE, WAS THE CERTAIN CONSEQUENCE OF MR.
LINCOLN'S ELECTION
— BARACK OBAMA

analysis 09
VIJAYAWADA, April 28, 2024

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

FEDERALISM AT RIŚK OR UNITY FORTIFIED?

PRIYOTOSH SHARMA and **CHANDRIMA DUTTA** address this question posed by sceptics on whether the consolidation of electoral cycles could lead to a domination of the political narrative by parties and candidates vying for power and potentially undermine the essence of democracy by overshadowing the voices and choices of individual citizens

n India's democratic landscape, elections have long stood as pillars supporting our diverse linguistic tapestry and regional pride for over seven decades now. Stating Amartya, individuals can hold singular affiliations while valuing their multifaceted identities. But a pressing question arises: If one Nation, one Election were to happen, would national unity overshadow regional loyalties? Sceptics have raised concerns that the consolidation of electoral cycles as a question of national importance could lead to a domination of the political narrative by parties and candidates vying for power. The emphasis may shift away from citizen engagement and democratic participation towards partisan interests and power struggles. This could potentially undermine the essence of democracy by overshadowing the voices and choices of individual citizens. It's noteworthy that the proposal of

One Nation and One Election is not a recent development. As far back as September 1982, the Election Commission of India recommended simultaneous elections to both the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Additionally, the Law Commission of India's Draft Report on Simultaneous Elections in August 2018 further explored this idea. Given this historical context, one might wonder why the ruling party suddenly embraced this proposal in their manifesto ahead of the 2024 general election.

The sudden appropriation of the One Nation and One Election proposal by the ruling party likely reflects a strategic move to prioritise electoral reform and streamline governance processes. However, such a significant shift in policy approach raises questions underlying motivations and potential implications. India's governance model hinges on representative democracy, where elections serve as the bedrock of our political system. Campaigning, a pivotal aspect of elections, comes with substantial costs. A case in point is the staggering expenditure seen between February and May 2019, where Google and Facebook collectively reported political online advertising spending amounting to ₹58.67 crore. Notably, while Google declared 12,276 advertisements worth ₹29.3 crore, Facebook's India Ad Library disclosed a significantly higher volume of individual advertisements, totaling 132,419 and valued at ₹29.28 crore. Yet,

amidst this financial discourse, we often overlook the ripple effects of reducing the frequency inadvertently disrupt sectors that thrive on heightened electoral activity, notably advertising, hospitality, and transportation. In light of this, it becomes imperative to carefully consider the implications of "One Nation, One Election" on federalism, regional dynamics, and political stability. For instance, the recent issue in Manipur over regional disparities highlights the potential risks and challenges associated with synchronising elections across different levels of government. As such, thorough deliberation and stakeholder engagement are essential in the electoral reform process to ensure that any changes uphold democratic principles and address the diverse needs of the

respective states. The ongoing debates outside of parliament surrounding One by contrasting perspectives. Proponents argue that synchronising elections would bolster national unity by aligning electoral cycles and directing political discourse towards pressing national issues. At least for a brief period of time this narrative of one nation, one election, would appeal to the imagination of the public, as it would come on a platter of "national interest". However, sceptics raise concerns that this unity could merely be a facade concealing broader political Another significant issue that may

Another significant issue that may raise eyebrows among the opposition is the prospect of diminished accountability if elections are held every five years.

THE ONGOING DEBATES OUTSIDE OF PARLIAMENT SURROUNDING ONE NATION AND ONE ELECTION ARE FUELED BY CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES.

PROPONENTS ARGUE THAT SYNCHRONISING ELECTIONS WOULD BOLSTER NATIONAL UNITY BY ALIGNING ELECTORAL CYCLES AND DIRECTING POLITICAL DISCOURSE TOWARDS PRESSING NATIONAL ISSUES. AT LEAST FOR A BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME THIS NARRATIVE OF ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION, WOULD APPEAL TO THE IMAGINATION OF THE PUBLIC, AS IT WOULD COME ON A PLATTER OF "NATIONAL INTEREST"

This could spark doubts regarding the government's responsiveness to pressing concerns, such as notably fluctuations in oil prices, sharp fluctuations in food prices and hikes in gas cylinder costs paralysis citizen's every potential to remove a party from power through electoral process at least in state legislative elections.

In pavigating India's vibrant

In navigating India's vibrant democratic landscape, it's crucial to recognize the unique context and complexities inherent to our nation. While other countries like Belgium or Japan may offer valuable insights, it's imperative not to blindly emulate their electoral models. Instead, decisions regarding electoral reforms must stem from a grassroots consensus, voting behaviour tailored to India's diverse socio-political fabric. The denizens of the streets and the

daily wage earners exhibit scant enthusiasm for engaging with political rhetoric; rather, their electoral participation hinges largely upon aligning themselves with the party that they could benefit financially from, thereby rendering the manipulation of their sentiments a feasible endeavour. Nevertheless, this one election holds the potential to wield considerable influence, particularly in terms of cost saving, especially where the prospect of bifurcating public sentiment during concurrent elections remains plausible.

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Education a must for the Panchayati Raj System to flourish

By **Vikash Kumar**

anchayati systems are Panchayan systems considered to be the fundamental pillar of local administration because it provides rural people with direct participation in the country's democratic process. of local selfprovision government has been in India since ancient times. In Indian democracy, since Independence, Panchayati systems were given their due importance for which different models were adopted. Mahatma Gandhi's ideology regarding the Panchayati Raj system was that the village panchayats should be made solid and self-sufficient so that they conduct all administrative activities at the village level. This is why the makers of the Indian Constitution had added separate provisions for this.

Îndia is the largest democratic country in the world, with about 90 crore voters registered, according to the Election Commission's 2019 list. According to the 'Rural Connection Network,' there are

2,39,000 Gram Panchayats all over the country, which are a State subject mentioned in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. The responsibility for their management, financial system, election, arrangement of the structure rests on the State Government. The governance system of India works at three levels in which the third level is local selfgovernment (the Panchayati system). Article 40 of the Indian Constitution contains provisions related to it, which was not an enforceable procedure. The states were not in favour of giving constitutional status to the panchayat systems, saying it violated the federal system. This is why Rajiv Gandhi's 64th Amendment (1989) and VP Singh's constitutional effort (June 1, 1990) failed.

Constitutional status was accorded to Panchayats in 1992 and 1993 by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao worked tirelessly on. The responsibility of conducting their elections rests with the State Election Commission, provided by



announced their election because of the Constitution; their tenure is for five years, which is provided by Article 243 (E) of the Indian Constitution, but the purpose for which the concept of Panchayati systems was implemented is today helpless in achieving its original objective.

engage in conversations, yet the conversation does not begin since communication throughout an election is frequently devoid of substance.

Additionally, there are no discussions going on between the candidate and the voter. Prominent political party leaders attend these polls in order to tally their victories. The news certainly delighted the voters when Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose too had to raise local issues like loans. Commission, housing commissions, what issues do you have with the water and

roads, he had asked earlier. In

these elections, health and

education are burning issues.

The headman often remains

indifferent, even as voters focus

on the state of primary schools along with other local issues. Because of lack of knowledge or education, the candidates' intentions and professional experiences are also not scrutinised during these elections. While the Panchayati system has helped local bodies, only a portion of the projects are intended to serve the villagers. Under such circumstances, every voter ought to select the candidate who best reflects the desires of the people, not the 'sole' candidate who offers casteism, religion, regionalism, and self-interest. This process

can only proceed if there is evidence of improvement at the local level. Voters ought to cast their ballots voluntarily and with diligence in order to support local institutions' credibility and enabling the competent leader's directives to be carried out over a period of five years, both of which encourage advancement. Today, the Panchayati Raj system exists in almost the whole country, but in reality, selfreliance today is far from what was envisioned at the time of its implementation. A provision for reservations was made in the Panchayati system under Article 243A. However, women have been unable to take full advantage of it, so have the lower classes, because even today, voting in rural areas is inspired by several biased undercurrents. Only when the Panchayati system becomes solid and selfreliant will India's democracy be strengthened.

The process of reforms can start from the village itself. Women have become sarpanches but they do not run the administration; their husbands step in. A person belonging to the SC/ST category becomes a

sarpanch, but only a handful of wealthy people run the administration. Even today, many states need to transfer their subjects to the Panchayati system. In Panchayat elections deceit and force are openly used. The person who has access to the top of the administration is the one who occupies critical positions, a reason why the purpose for which it was created has not been fulfilled.

The Government allots crores of funds to the development of villages but the benefits instead are spent on things remote from a village or its voters. To this date, the Panchayati system is entirely self-sufficient and those whose dreams could not be realised. In the present circumstances, the Government should make Panchayati Raj selfreliant for which education is the most significant step ahead. Awareness is only possible with education because that alone can make citizens and voters politically aware.

(Views expressed are personal. Author is President of the Indian Research Scholars Association and can be contacted at sagarvikash829@gmail.com)

IT'S 30 YEARS SINCE APARTHEID ENDED

South Africa's celebrations are set against growing discontent

PNS PRETORIA

outh Africa marked 30 years since the end of apartheid and the birth of its democracy with a ceremony in the capital Saturday that included a 21-gun salute and the waving of the nation's multicolored flag.

But any sense of celebration on the momentous anniversary was set against a growing discontent with the current government.

President Cyril Ramaphosa presided over the gathering in a huge white tent in the gardens of the government buildings in Pretoria as head of state.

He also spoke as the leader of the African National Congress party, which was widely credited with liberating South Africa's Black majority from the racist system of oppression that made the country a pariah for nearly a half-century.

The ANC has been in power ever since the first democratic, all-race election of April 27, 1994, the vote that officially ended apartheid.

But this Freedom Day holiday marking that day fell amid a poignant backdrop: Analysts and polls predict that the waning popularity of the party



The president, who stood in front of a banner emblazoned with the word "Freedom," also recognised the major problems South Africa still has three decades later with vast poverty and inequality, issues that will be central yet again when millions vote on majority for May 29. Ramaphosa conceded the first time as there had been a new generation "setbacks." of South Africans

might be the most important election since 1994 next month. "Few days in

the life of our nation can compare to that day, when freedom was born," Ramaphosa said in

a speech centered on the nostalgia of 1994, when Black people were allowed to vote for the first time, the oncebanned ANC swept to power, and Mandela became the country's first Black president. "South Africa changed forever. It signalled a new chapter in the history of our nation, a moment that resonated across

Africa and across the world."
"On that day, the dignity of all the people of South Africa was restored," Ramaphosa said.

The president, who stood in front of a banner emblazoned with the word "Freedom," also recognised the major problems South Africa still has three decades later with vast poverty and inequality, issues that will be central yet again when millions vote on May 29. Ramaphosa conceded there had been "setbacks.'

The 1994 election changed South Africa from a country where Black and other nonwhite people were denied most basic freedoms, not just the right to vote. Laws controlled where they lived, where they were allowed to go on any given day, and what jobs they could have. After apartheid fell, a constitution was adopted guaranteeing the rights of all South Africans no matter their race, religion, gender or sexuality. But that hasn't significantly improved

the lives of millions, with South Africa's Black majority that make up more than 80 per cent of the population of 62 million still overwhelmingly affected by severe poverty.

The official unemployment rate is 32 per cent, the highest in the world, and more than 60 per cent for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. More than 16 million Šouth Africans — 25 per cent of the country - rely on monthly welfare grants for survival.

South Africa is still the most unequal country in the world in terms of wealth distribution, according to the World Bank, with race a key factor. While the damage of apartheid remains difficult to undo, the ANC is increasingly being blamed for South Africa's current problems.

In the week leading up to the anniversary, countless South Africans were asked what 30 years of freedom from apartheid meant to them. The dominant response was that while 1994 was a landmark moment, it's now overshadowed by the joblessness, violent crime, corruption and near-collapse of basic services like electricity and water that plagues South Africa in 2024.



Teen loses life trying to save brother from fire

A 14-year-old boy died and his 8-year-old broth-er suffered burn injuries after four huts in a village here caught fire, police

said on Saturday. Laxman Prasad (14) and his brother Bharat Prasad were sleeping in one of the huts when the fire broke out in the Siswa village. While Laxman managed to get Bharat out of the burning hut, he, himself got trapped and died on the spot, Circle Officer (CO) Aditya Kumar

Gautam said. He said that the incident occurred on Friday afternoon when four huts caught fire which led to the explosion of gas cylin-

Bharat was rushed to a hospital and is said to be in stable condition, he

The reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained. The body was sent for post-mortem and further investigation is underway, he added.



A tornado strikes the southern China metropolis of Guangzhou

PNS ■ BEIJING

A tornado sent debris swirling into the air in southern China's Guangzhou city during a severe rain and hail storm on Saturday, Chinese media said. There were no immediate reports on the extent of damage or any injuries The China Meteorological Administration said the tornado hit about 3 p.m. in Baiyun district in Guangzhou, a sprawling metropolis and manufacturing centre near Hong Kong. Videos posted online showed a darkened sky in and the debris

PNS ■ NEW YORK

yopia, or the need for corrected vision ■ to focus or see objects at a distance, has become a lot more common in recent decades. Some even consider myopia, also known as nearsightedness, an epidemic. Optometry researchers esti-

mate that about half of the global population will need corrective lenses to offset myopia by 2050 if current rates continue – up from 23% in 2000 and less than 10% in some countries.

costs are huge. In the United

upward. Tornado warnings were issued for other parts of Guangzhou and there were unconfirmed reports that a second tornado anneared to have hit another district in the city later in the afternoon, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen visited Guangzhou during an official visit to China earlier this month. The city, formerly known as Canton, also recently held the Canton Fair a major export and import exhibition that draws buyers from around the world

by Nelson

Mandela is

likely to

see it lose

its parlia-

mentary

make their voices heard

Climate change may cause biodiversity decline: Study

PNS NFW DFI H

limate change could become the main driver of biodiver-✓ sity decline by the mid-century, research has found.

Studying changes in land-use patterns and their impacts on biodiversity, an international team of researchers found that biodiversity around the world could have declined by 2-11 per cent.

"By including all world regions in our model, we were able to fill many blind spots and address criticism of other approach-

es working with fragmented and potentially biased data," said Henrique Pereira, research group head at the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv), and the

first author of the study published in Studying changes in landjournal use patterns and their 'Science'. impacts on biodiversity, an Examining international team of how biodiversity researchers found that and ecosystems biodiversity around might evolve in

the future, the have declined researchers found that the combined effects of land-use change and climate change lead to biodiversity

loss across all global regions, regard-

less of emissions scenario.

"We found that climate change poses an imminent threat to biodiversity and ecosystem services. While land-use change has histori-

cally been a significant factor, our findings indicate that climate change could overtake it as the primary dri-

ver of biodiversity loss by mid-cen-

tury," explained study co-author, David Leclère, a researcher at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Austria.

The researchers called for a "truly integrated approach" considering varied sustainability aspects to reduce conflicts between policies and safeguard biodiversity in the coming decades.

"For instance, while bio-energy deployment is still a critical element of the majority of climate stabilisation scenarios, it also poses a threat to species habitats," said IIASA Biodiversity and Natural Resources Program Director Petr Havlík, one of the study co-authors. The findings suggested that conservation and restoration efforts should be prioritised globally as necessary natural climate solutions, the authors said.

the chicks' eyes and are adjusted to affect how much they see.

input is distorted, a chick's eyes grow too large, resulting in myopia. And it's progressive. Blur leads to eye growth, which causes more blur, which makes the eye grow even larger, and so

extensive surveys of children and their parents provide strong support for the idea that an important driver of the uptick in myopia is that people are spending more time focusing on objects immediately in front of our eyes, whether a screen, a book or a drawing pad. The The associated health care more time we spend focusing on something within arm's length

Just like in humans, if visual

rupted by sunlight. A 2022 study, for example,

Two recent studies featuring

that this unnatural eye growth can be inter-

found that myopia rates were more than four times greater for children who didn't spend much time outdoors - say, once or twice a week - compared with those who were outside daily. At the same time, kids who spent more than three hours a day while not at school reading or looking at a screen close-up were four times more likely to have myopia than those who spent an hour or less doing so.

In another paper, from 2012, researchers conducted a metaanalysis of seven studies that

What is childhood dementia?

HOW COULD NEW RESEARCH HELP?

PNS ADELAIDE effects

time outdoors and changes in early-age schooling to reduce myopia prevalence.

What's driving the epidemic That still doesn't explain why it's on the rise so rapidly. Globally, a big States alone, spending on corrective lenses, eye tests and work," the greater the odds of spent outdoors with myopia development and industrial-

"Childhood" and "dementia" are two words we wish we didn't have to use together. But sadly, around 1,400 Australian children and young people live with currently untreatable childhood dementia.

Broadly speaking, childhood dementia is caused by any one of more than 100 rare genetic disorders. Although the causes differ from dementia acquired later in life, the progressive nature of the illness is the same. Half of infants and chil-

dren diagnosed with childhood dementia will not reach their tenth birthday, and most will die before turning 18. Yet this devastating

condition has lacked awareness, and importantly, the research attention needed to work towards treatments and a

More about the causes Most types of childhood dementia are caused by mutations (or mistakes) in our

Two-thirds of childhood dementia disorders are caused by "inborn errors of metabolism". This means the metabolic pathways involved in the breakdown of carbohydrates, lipids, fatty acids and proteins in the body fail.

As a result, nerve pathways fail to func- Enzyme replacement therapy is available in tion, neurons (nerve cells that send messages around the body) die, and progressive cognitive decline occurs.

What happens to children with childhood dementia?

Most children initially appear unaffected. But after a period of apparently normal development, children with childhood dementia progressively lose all previously acquired skills and abilities, such as talking, walking, learn-

ing, remembering and reasoning. Childhood dementia also leads to significant changes in behaviour, such as aggression and hyperactivity. Severe sleep disturbance is common and vision and hearing can

also be affected. Many children have seizures. The age when symptoms start can vary, depending partly on the particular genetic disorder causing the dementia, but the average is around two years old. The symptoms are caused by significant, progressive brain damage.

Research attention is lacking

reduce inflammation in the brain.

promising results.

Death rates for Australian children with cancer nearly halved between 1997 and 2017 thanks to research that has enabled the development of multiple treatments. But over recent decades, nothing has changed for children with dementia.

Australia for one form of childhood dementia. These therapies attempt to "fix" the prob-

lems causing the disease, and have shown

Other experimental therapies include ones that target faulty protein production or

In 2017–2023, research for childhood cancer received over four times more funding per patient compared to funding for child-hood dementia. This is despite childhood dementia causing a similar number of deaths each year as childhood cancer.

Myopia is at epidemic levels and the problem begins in childhood

related expenses may be as high as US\$7.2 billion a year.

What explains the rapid growth in myopia?

I'm a vision scientist who has studied visual perception and perceptual defects. To answer that question, first let's examine what causes myopia - and what

How myopia develops

While having two myopic parents does mean you're more likely to be nearsighted, there's no single myopia gene. That means the causes of myopia are more behavioral than genetic.
Optometrists have learned a

great deal about the progression of myopia by studying visual development in infant chickens.

They do so by putting little helmets on baby chickens. Lenses on the face of the helmet

featuring extensive surveys of children and their parents provide strong support for the idea that an important driver of the uptick in myopia is that people are spending more time focusing on objects immediately in front of our eyes, whether a screen, a book or a drawing pad.

Two recent studies

having myopia. So as much as people might blame new technologies like smartphones and too much "screen time" for hurting our eves, the truth is even activities as valuable as reading a good book can affect your eyesight. Outside light keeps myopia at

cover bay
Other research has shown



incidence. They also found that more time spent outdoors was associated with lower myopia incidence and progression. The odds of developing myopia dropped by 2% for each hour spent outside per week.

Other researchers have reported

ization of countries in East Asia over the last 50 years. Around that time, young people began spending more time in classrooms reading and focusing on other objects very close to their eyes and less time This is also what

researchers observed in the North American Arctic after World dementia. War II, when schooling was mandated for Indigenous people.

DNA. These mistakes lead to a range of rare genetic disorders, which in turn cause childhood

approved are for a very limited number of disorders, and are only available in some parts of the world. These include gene replacement, genemodified cell therapy and protein or enzyme replace-ment therapy.

More about the causes
Most types of childhood dementia are
caused by mutations (or mistakes) in
our DNA. These mistakes lead to a range of
rare genetic disorders, which in turn cause
childhood dementia.

