



# sunday pioneer

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**BJP will win over 370 LS seats, NDA over 400: Nadda**



**Air India apologises, offers US\$ 350 travel voucher to passengers**



**Bomma Mahesh Kumar Goud BONDING factor in TPCC**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
*The pioneer*

**Did KCR's grandfather construct the Charminar and the Kakatiya Kalathoranam? Both are symbols of monarchic rule. Why did the KCR family object when we included the Martyrs' Memorial in the TG emblem? We see Kakatiya kings as the killers of Sammakka, Sarakka and Jampanna. We will not allow any trace of monarchic rule. I have to respect the Cabinet's decision. We will convene an all-party meeting**

- Revanth Reddy, CM, Telangana P4

### DON'T MISS...

### Diarrhoea continues to dog...

Even six days after the diarrhoea outbreak in Vijayawada city, contaminated and discoloured water is still being supplied to the Mogalrajapuram and Rajiv Nagar areas. Residents in these areas have no alternative drinking water sources and continue to consume the contaminated water as they cannot afford to buy mineral water. Consequently, diarrhoea and vomiting cases remain uncontrolled, and the death toll has risen to nine. On Saturday, Galla Koteswara Rao, 65, died in Mogalrajapuram...

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### 'Authentic dying declaration can...

An authentic dying declaration that inspires the confidence of the court can be relied upon and be the sole basis for the conviction of an accused without any corroboration, the Supreme Court has said. The top court made this observation on May 15 while upholding the conviction of an ex-army personnel for murdering his wife, a police constable, in Maharashtra's Beed district 22 years ago. It said that the court has to scrutinise the dying declaration carefully and ensure it is consistent, credible and devoid of tutoring...

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### Top 100 cos to verify market...

The top 100 listed companies by market capitalization will have to confirm or deny any market rumour reported in the mainstream media from this Saturday. The rule will be applicable for top 250 companies from December 1. Under the Sebi's rule, these companies will have to 'confirm, deny, or clarify any reported event or information in the mainstream media that is not general in nature and that indicates that rumours of an impending specific material event' are circulating amongst...

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### Braving icy heights: Election...

Prem Lal arrived early at the sub-divisional magistrate's office on Thursday. The icy cold and crisp morning air hinted at the challenges ahead. As one of the 29 booth-level officers deployed from Kaza to polling stations in Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, Lal knew that the next few days would be demanding. Wearing sunglasses to shield his eyes from the glaring sun, the trained graduate teacher joined others in a semi-circle. The SDM, carrying a bunch of papers clipped together, called out the names of the poll-booth officers and their assignments. It is Tashigang for Lal and his team of five others. Tashigang is a tiny village perched high in the icy Himalayas at a staggering altitude of 15,256 feet. The village holds...

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### OBTUSE ANGLE



## 'Modi set for hat-trick' Mixed predictions for AP

### Exit polls predict massive win for NDA in LS polls

With the completion of the seventh and last phase of the Lok Sabha elections, there have been exit poll predictions galore, mostly indicating a hat-trick for the Modi-led NDA. The only surprising element among these diverse predictions is the state-wise picture drawn by some organizations that have come out with their own predictions and varying numbers. At the end of the day, the fact

remains that all predictions are estimations of random surveys and not conclusive about who is going to form the next government at the Centre. Still, they generate interest, whet curiosity, and boost confidence among parties hoping to get positive results. As the proverb goes, 'There is many a slip between the cup and the lip'. The final outcome on June 4th will decide the winner.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

The ABP-C Voter has forecast 353-383 seats for the BJP-led alliance and 152-182 seats for the opposition INDIA bloc.

Today's Chanakya predicted a much higher tally for the BJP and its alliance than the 2019 polls. It gave 335 seats to the BJP and 400 to the NDA, with a margin of 15 seats either way. It gave 107 seats to the opposition alliance with a possibility of its tally going up or down by 11 seats.

The BJP had given the slogan of '400 paar' for its alliance in this Lok Sabha polls.

If the exit polls hold true, Modi will equal the record of the country's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in leading his party to victory at the polls for a third straight term. The Times Now-ETG Research's exit poll gave 358 and 152 seats to the NDA and the INDIA bloc respectively.

Many pollsters said the NDA may surpass its 2019 tally of 353 seats. The BJP had won 303 seats in the election. The Congress had bagged 53 seats and its allies 38.

The 'INDIA' bloc was formed by opposition parties to take on the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha elections.

The NDA in all likelihood will open its account in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and sweep Karnataka but may see a fall in its tally in states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana, according to most pollsters.

News 18 predicted that the BJP on



### Lok Sabha 2024

TOTAL SEATS: 543

	NDA	I.N.D.I.A	OTH
Dainik Bhaskar	281-350	145-201	33-49
India News-D-Dynamics	371	125	47
Jan Ki Baat	362-392	141-161	10-20
News Nation	342-378	153-169	21-23
Republic Bharat- Matrize	353-368	118-133	43-48
Republic TV - P MARQ	359	154	30
NDTV Poll of Polls	365	146	32

its own will get 306-315 seats while its alliance will bag 355-370 seats. It gave 125-140 seats to the opposition alliance.

The Republic TV-P Marq poll claimed that the ruling alliance will win up to 359 seats and the opposition INDIA bloc will bag 154 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The Republic TV-Matrize poll gave 353-368 seats to the NDA and 118-133 seats to the opposition.

The Jan Ki Baat poll gave 362-392 seats to the ruling NDA and 141-161 to the opposition alliance. The India TV-CNX gave them 371-401 and 109-139 seats respectively, while the corresponding tally predicted by

News Nation was 342-378 and 153-169.

After the seventh and last phase of voting ended on Saturday, Modi on Saturday said that people have voted in record numbers to re-elect the NDA government and said the "opportunistic INDI Alliance" failed to strike a chord with the voters who rejected their "regressive politics".

The Congress, however, claimed that the exit polls had been "orchestrated" by PM Modi and said these are all psychological games he is masterminding, but the actual results will be very different.

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### Surveys project a keen contest between YSRCP & TDP alliance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The much-awaited exit poll survey results have been widely disseminated across media platforms since Saturday evening. These surveys present a mixed picture, with some indicating a close contest between the ruling YSRCP and the Opposition bloc, which comprises the NDA alliance (Telugu Desam Party - Jana Sena - Bharatiya Janata Party).

Some exit polls suggest the YSRCP will secure a second term, while others predict a victory for the NDA alliance. Notably, national media houses report contrasting results compared to regional survey agencies regarding the Lok Sabha polls.

Andhra Pradesh went to polls on May 13 to elect a 175-member State Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats. A total of 503 candidates contested for the Lok Sabha, while 2,705 vied for Assembly seats.

The differing predictions have left political analysts and media houses puzzled about the exact voter sentiment in Andhra Pradesh. The final results, set to be announced on June 4, will determine the actual winners.

Key exit poll results include: Jan Ki Baat: NDA alliance 12-17 seats, YSRCP 8-13 seats; PMARQ: NDA alliance 19-22 seats, YSRCP 5-8 seats

News18 Mega Exit Poll: NDA alliance 19-22 seats, YSRCP 5-8 seats

ABP-CVoter: NDA alliance 21-25 seats, YSRCP 0-4 seats

Several regional surveys provide varied outcomes: Atmasakshi: YSRCP 98-116 assembly seats, NDA alliance 59-77 seats; YSRCP 16 MPs, NDA alliance 8 MPs, with 1 MP seat being closely contested.



### Andhra Pradesh - Assembly

SEATS: 175

	YSRCP	TDP+	OTH
ATMASAKSHI	98-116	59-77	0
AARA MASTAN	104	71-81	0
CHANAKYA	110-120	55-65	0
PULSE TODAY	46-54	121-129	0
CHANAKYA STRATEGIES	47	109	keen contest 19
SMART POLL	82	93	0

### LOK SABHA - TOTAL SEATS: 25

	YSRCP	TDP+	KEEN CONTEST
ATMASAKSHI	16	8	1
AARA MASTAN	13-15	10-12	0
CHANAKYA	13	11	0
PULSE TODAY	5-6	19-20	0
SMART POLL	9-12	13-16	0
CHANAKYA STRATEGIES	7	18	0
JAN KI BAAT	8-13	12-17	0
PMARQ	5-8	19-22	0
NEWS18 MEGA	5-8	19-22	0
ABP-CVOTER	0-4	21-25	0

assembly seats, NDA alliance 4 seats, with 13 seats closely contested; YSRCP 23 MPs, NDA alliance 2 MPs. Pulse Today: YSRCP 46-54 assembly seats, NDA alliance 121-129 seats; YSRCP 5-6 MPs, NDA alliance 19-20 MPs. Chanakya Strategies: YSRCP 47 assembly seats, NDA alliance 109 seats, with 19 seats closely contested; YSRCP 7 MPs, NDA alliance 18 MPs. Smart Poll: YSRCP 82 assembly seats, NDA alliance 93 seats; YSRCP 9-12 MPs, NDA alliance 13-16 MPs.

The varying predictions highlight the uncertain political climate in Andhra Pradesh. The actual outcomes will be revealed on June 4, providing a definitive answer to the state's political future.

■ National and regional media report contrasting predictions, leaving political analysts and media houses uncertain about the exact voter sentiment in Andhra Pradesh.

■ AP elections were held on May 13 for a 175-member State Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats, with 503 candidates for Lok Sabha and 2,705 for Assembly seats.

■ The final election results will be announced on June 4, which will provide a clear picture of the political future of Andhra Pradesh.

Aaraa Mastan: YSRCP 94-104 assembly seats, NDA alliance 71-81 seats; YSRCP 13-15 MPs, NDA alliance 10-12 MPs. Chanakya Partha Das: YSRCP 110-120 assembly seats, NDA alliance 55-65 seats; YSRCP 13 MPs, NDA alliance 11 MPs. Wrap Strategies: YSRCP 158

## CM returns from foreign tour

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy arrived in Vijayawada on Saturday, accompanied by his family members, returning from a trip to London.

A grand welcome greeted CM Jagan at Gannavaram Airport. Several ministers, MLAs, MLCs, party leaders, and supporters turned out in large numbers to welcome their beloved CM.

The party cadre cheered and waved enthusiastically. From the airport, the CM proceeded to his Tadepalli residence.

Expressing confidence in the YSRCP government's continued success, CM Jagan stated that they would remain in power for another five years with the people's



support.

In a statement before his arrival, he recalled that the party came to power five years ago with divine blessings and a historic mandate from the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Marking the YSRCP government's five-year completion, Reddy took to X (formerly Twitter) on Thursday, May 30th.

He wrote that the government had accomplished many welfare and development programs over the last five years with God's blessings and unwavering public support.

Following the recent State polls, which concluded on May 13, CM Jagan spent a few days at his Tadepalli residence before flying to London on May 17.

His wife Bharati and daughters Harsha and Varsha accompanied him on the trip.

The Chief Minister is expected to chair a cabinet meeting soon to discuss the government's agenda for the next term based on its renewed mandate.

### AP Guv Nazeer greets TG people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor S Abdul Nazeer extended his warm greetings and heartfelt felicitations to the people of Telangana on the occasion of Telangana Formation Day, celebrated on June 2 every year. Telangana became India's 29th state on June 2, 2014.

"Telangana State is a blessed land, thriving with vibrant arts and crafts with a unique synthesis of various cultures," said Governor Nazeer. "This rich cultural blend is visible in the development of its arts and crafts traditions. The composite, pluralistic, and inclusive culture and traditions of Telangana are evident to all."

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## AP's connections with Hyderabad city end today

SNGN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The youngest state in the country, Telangana, is completing 10 years on June 2. Thus the 'capital' links of Andhra Pradesh with Hyderabad have come to an end. The Andhra Pradesh State Reorganisation Act says that Hyderabad would be the joint capital of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for only 10 years. But even after 10 years, issues regarding finance and the division of various government corporations between the two Telugu states are still pending.

The Centre recently settled the bifurcation of AP Bhavan in New Delhi between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. However, the dispute between the two Telugu states is continuing regarding the partition of the assets of corpora-



The dispute between the two Telugu states over RTC assets has not been resolved. While Andhra Pradesh is demanding a share in the RTC's assets located in Hyderabad city, Telangana has refused to accept that.

tions based in Hyderabad and in other parts of Telangana. Both the Telugu states are not ready to compromise on this.

The dispute between the two Telugu states over RTC assets has not been resolved. While Andhra Pradesh is demanding a share in the RTC's assets located in Hyderabad city, Telangana has

refused to accept that. After 10 years both the Telugu states are unable to reach consensus over the division of institutions listed in the 9th and 10th Schedules of the State Reorganisation Act. The 9th Schedule lists around 89 institutions and the 10th Schedule lists 107 training institutions and other

### POSTAL BALLOTS CASE

## Setback to YSRCP in HC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP High Court dismissed a petition filed by YSRCP challenging the Central Election Commission's order regarding postal ballots. The Division Bench made it clear that it cannot interfere with the orders of the CEC. The CEC recently issued an order clarifying that during the counting of postal ballot votes in AP, it does not matter if there is no name, designation or seal of the attesting officer on the 'Form-13A' related to the voter's declaration, as long as the officer's signature is sufficient.

YSRCP filed a petition in the High Court challenging the memos issued by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) on May 25



and 27. The petition says "The orders issued by the state CEO are different from the guidelines given by the ECI. If there is no attestation on the postal ballot then there is no option but to reject it. There are orders from the CEO to take into account the invalid votes. The implementation of the memos should be stopped." The High Court rejected the contentions of the petitioner. Referring to the previous court rulings, the bench said that it cannot interfere with the orders of the CEC.

### AP's connections with Hyderabad city end today

establishments. During the last 10 years, the BRS was in power in Telangana and the Congress came to power four months ago. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP was in power for the first five years after bifurcation and the YSR Congress came to power after that.

Assembly elections were held recently in Andhra Pradesh and results are awaited. In the last 10 years, governments changed in both the Telugu states but bifurcation issues between the two states remained unresolved.

The Centre has appointed several committees including the Sheela Bhide committee but their efforts were in vain. The distribution of employees between the two states and the payment of electricity dues too have not been resolved.

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# Andhra CEO of We-Hub on a spree of sacking Telanganites

When hire and fire rules are governed by political or regional considerations, there is no 'permanent' job even in a government or quasi-government set-up. The ground can be shaky for those hired and for those who hire! Newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of We-hub Sita Pallacholla is visibly distancing herself from the Bharat Rashtra Samithi for obvious reasons. It is a different matter that in 2015 the very same CEO had invited BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha for India's first Angel Summit. Let alone BRS, the buzz is that the CEO seems disinclined to be associated with even Telangana, going by the current deviations in hiring and firing procedures at We-Hub. Generally, We-Hub announces openings and sets the last date for receiving applications. The hiring is ostensibly done purely on the basis of merit. However, the CEO is reportedly on a firing spree targeting mainly Telanganites. What is worse, she is recruiting on her own without issuing any public notifications. One among those so recruited has declared openly that "they" would leave for Andhra Pradesh should TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu form the government.

would entail sharp backlash from the public. So, confident that the upcoming new logo cannot go against log, irrespective of the party in power, the other day BRS working president KT Rama Rao led a walk at Charminar opposing the move. His walk found resonance in public perception that the Congress government cannot afford to tinker with TG logo.

## Attack government, but don't pinpoint CM

In the rough and tumble of present-day politics, it may be fine to criticize the chief minister for everything that seems wrong in the state. However, detractors need to be wary of the clout of the communities backing the CM; otherwise, their diatribe could backfire. In Telangana, on the face of it, Chief

Minister Revanth Reddy has been instrumental in deciding the state anthem and modifying the state emblem, with only the near-final versions being shared with others. It appears like a one-man show; yet the Opposition is very careful while attacking him on the move to drop Kakatiya Thoranam and Charminar. Explaining the conundrum, a senior leader in Telangana politics said, "We cannot distance ourselves from the 'Reddy community', who are in huge numbers, by targeting one leader. Besides, he is no less than the 'Dora KCR' we had in the past; the latter used to sit in his farmhouse, while the former is ensconced in his Jubilee Hills residence. But Velamas are small in number. If you see a leader attacking only Revanth Reddy; then it means the population is not significant in their constituency."

## REPORTERS' DIARY

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## The closer the contest, the higher the tension

With the D-Day fast approaching, both people and netas in Andhra Pradesh are facing extremely tense moments over conflicting claims made the ruling party and the opposition combine with supreme confidence! The fate of political parties and their leaders will be known on June 4th, but the nagging question is: Who is going to be the next Chief Minister?

While YRRCP chief and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is confident of retaining power with additional seats in his kitty, former chief minister and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu is equally sure of becoming the chief minister again. Both the leaders are preparing to be sworn in as chief minister, with their prominent chelas aspiring cabinet berths. The talk of the town is "never in the past has an election been so closely fought".

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

## Aam-aadmi scribe

A journalist, deemed to be 'the eyes and ears of the public', may have the privilege of interacting with the chief minister of a state and raising queries on mat-

# Jogi Ramesh raps Naidu's secretive foreign tour

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Jogi Ramesh has strongly criticized TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu for keeping details of his recent foreign trip a secret. The minister questioned Naidu's lack of transparency regarding his whereabouts despite repeated inquiries.



Speaking to the media on Saturday, Minister Ramesh highlighted that Naidu's foreign tour remains a mystery to the people of the state. He pointed out that while there were reports of Naidu travelling from Hyderabad to Dubai, subsequent details of his journey are unknown. Media supporting TDP suggested Naidu went to America for medical treatment, but TDP leaders in the US denied his presence there.

The minister questioned the reason behind Naidu's secretive trip, asking, "Where

did you go?" Minister Ramesh speculated whether the purpose of Naidu's visit was to park stolen money or invest abroad, emphasizing the need for transparency. He criticised Naidu for not sharing any

photographs from the trip, which is uncharacteristic given Naidu's usual penchant for publicity. Ramesh demanded that Naidu disclose the details of his ten-day absence to the public, stressing that as the leader of the

opposition, people have a right to know about his activities.

He contrasted this with Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's planned trip to London, for which the itinerary was publicly shared. Ramesh called for an explanation of Naidu's secretive tour.

Additionally, Minister Ramesh condemned the TDP leaders for grandly welcoming the allegedly corrupt IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao, including Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao. He predicted that the exit polls to be announced on Saturday would be a significant setback for TDP, leading to the party's collapse after the results on June 4. Ramesh urged all ranks of YSRCP to prepare for celebrations and invited the people of the state to attend CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's swearing-in ceremony on June 9 in Visakhapatnam.

# Slow progress of fishing harbour modernisation worries fishermen

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The modernisation of Visakhapatnam's fishing harbor, a project initiated in November 2022, is progressing at a sluggish pace, causing significant concern among the local fishing community. Funded by the Central Government under the Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana, the project has a budget of Rs 151.81 crores aimed at enhancing the harbor's facilities.



The modernization plan includes the elevation of jetty platforms, desilting of jetties, reconstruction of fish auction buildings, construction of restrooms for fishermen, provision of a canteen, vehicle parking, new ice plants, cold storage facilities for fish and prawns, various structures to facilitate fish import and export, and construction of sewers.

The project, undertaken by a contracted firm, was scheduled to be completed by November 30, 2023.

However, the progress has been far from satisfactory. By June last year, during the fishing season, all roads in the harbour had been dug up, leading to conflicts between fishermen and port officials.

The fishermen questioned the feasibility of transporting fish and prawns if the roads were inaccessible and demanded expedited completion of the works considering their operational needs. Speaking to The Pioneer, Visakhapatnam Fishermen's Youth Welfare Association leader Arjili Dasu expressed rising concerns as the new

fishing season, commencing on June 15, draws near. The reconstruction of the demolished fish auction halls remains unfinished, leaving fishermen worried about where they will auction their catch with just 15 days remaining until the season starts.

On Wednesday, leaders of fishermen's associations held a meeting with port and fisheries department officials to discuss the progress and timely completion of the harbour works. Port officials attributed the delays to various reasons and stated that more time was needed to complete the project. This explanation did not sit well with the community leaders, who stressed that 15,000 families depend on the harbour for their livelihood and criticized the neglect of their issues.

In the heated discussions, some com-

munity leaders harshly suggested that officials should resign if they could not complete the work.

However, port and fisheries department officials defended their efforts, emphasizing that the Rs 152 crore expenditure was intended to benefit the fishermen and requested their cooperation for the project's progress. They assured that despite the simultaneous construction of multiple facilities, they aimed to complete the work soon.

Meanwhile, a faction of the fishermen argued that instead of escalating the conflict with authorities, efforts should be made to ensure the completion of the project quickly to avoid further losses.

They believed that confrontational approaches might hinder the overall progress and negatively impact their livelihood.

# VPA sets new maritime records, redefine cargo handling standards

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a remarkable feat of maritime achievement, the Visakhapatnam Port Authority shattered numerous long-standing records in May 2024, marking a historic milestone in its 90-year legacy. The port's exceptional performance, driven by collaborative efforts with business partners, has propelled it to unprecedented heights, rewriting the narrative of cargo handling prowess.



"As we celebrate these remarkable achievements, we must continue to strive for excellence and innovation in the field of seafaring."

A staggering 85,81,927 metric tonnes of cargo were transported through the port in May 2024, facilitated by the arrival of 221 ships, setting an unparalleled benchmark in the port's history. This remarkable figure eclipses the previous record set just months earlier in March 2024, when 76,22,732 metric tonnes of cargo were handled by 201 vessels.

Among the standout achievements is the import of 22,35,891 metric tonnes of Coking Coal and Steam Coal via 48 vessels, surpassing the

previous record set in July 2002. Additionally, the handling of 14,27,223 metric tonnes of crude oil, facilitated by 13 crude tankers, further underscores the port's capacity for managing diverse cargo types. In container freight, the port recorded a significant milestone with the export of 70,539 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of containers, a notable increase from the previous record set in August 2023. Importantly, the import of 5,04,815 metric tonnes of bauxite and 4,37,270 metric tonnes of manganese ore signifies the port's expanding

role in facilitating critical raw material shipments. Moreover, the port's efficiency in freight transportation was evident with the utilization of 1405 rakes, surpassing the previous record set in January 2024.

Dr M Angamuthu, Chairman of the Visakhapatnam Port Authority, expressed his happiness over the record-breaking performance achieved in May. He attributed the success to the port's robust management capacity and emphasized the importance of sustained efforts to further elevate its standing in the maritime

sector. "As we celebrate these remarkable achievements, we must continue to strive for excellence and innovation in the field of seafaring," remarked Dr. Angamuthu, highlighting the port's commitment to pushing boundaries and setting new standards in maritime operations.

The unprecedented success of the Visakhapatnam Port Authority in May 2024 not only showcases its operational prowess but also highlights its pivotal role in facilitating trade and commerce, further solidifying its position as a key maritime hub in the region.

## 'Modi on hat-trick...

Continued from Page 1

Reacting to the exit polls, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The man whose exit is certain on June 4th has had these exit polls orchestrated. The INDIA Janbandhan will definitely get a minimum of 295 seats, which is a clear and decisive majority."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge told reporters after a meeting of the opposition INDIA bloc that the alliance will win more than 295 seats.

"We have arrived at this figure after speaking with all our leaders. This is a survey of people. People have given this information to our leaders. The government surveys are there and their media friends also inflate figures and put it out. Therefore, we want to tell you about the reality," he said.

BJP president J P Nadda, however, asserted that people have voted in favour of a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, exuding confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA over 400. The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

## AP's connections...

Continued from Page 1

Telangana was formed on June 2, 2014. At that time Hyderabad was made the joint capital of AP and TG for 10 years. The 10-year period comes to an end on June 2, 2024. Now Hyderabad is the capital of Telangana alone. Even though Hyderabad was the joint capital for 10 years, in 2016, the TDP government headed by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu shifted the AP secretariat and administrative offices to Amaravati from Hyderabad.

The capital of AP became a controversy between the TDP and the YSR Congress government. While the TDP government proposed Amaravati as the capital, the YSR Congress government proposed three capitals instead of a single capital.

However, the TDP and YSRCP governments failed to construct a capital when they were in power.

As a result, even after 10 years, Andhra Pradesh remains a state without a capital.

## TTD EO presents silk robes to deity

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

TTD EO presented silk robes to Japali Anjaneya on Saturday.

Under the instructions of the AP Endowments Department, the Hathiramji mutt administering the affairs of the Japalithirtha Hanuman will henceforth sell the unique and tasty Malpuri prasadam to the devotees priced at Rs 20. The administrative officers of Hathiramji Mutt Ramesh Naidu, and Mahant Omprakash Dassji were also present. Tirumala temple DyEO Lokanatham, Parupatteder Tulasiprasad, archakas and accompanied the TTD EO.

## AP Guv Nazeer...

Continued from Page 1

Bathukamma, a colourful and vibrant floral festival celebrated by women, stands as a proud symbol of Telangana's cultural identity and celebrates the inherent relationship between earth, water, and humanity."

Governor Nazeer said that occasions like State Formation Day for different states and union territories forge strong relationships and bonds among the people of the country. He highlighted how these celebrations promote mutual understanding, the spirit of fraternity, and universal

## No faith in exit polls Says Karnataka Deputy CM D K

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday said he has no faith in exit polls and predicted that the Congress will cross double digits in the state in the Lok Sabha elections, but refrained from giving any figures.

The party leaders, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress President had been claiming that the party will win 15-20 out of 28 seats in the state.

"I have said that I have no faith in the exit polls. Today also, I'm saying the same thing. Someone called me just now saying that they (channels) are showing that we will get only two or three or four seats in Karnataka. We will get more than double digit, wait and see," Shivakumar told reporters here. He said, "I have no faith in exit polls and their assessment, as they don't go interior. They would have done it based on some sample size, I don't believe in it. The



INDIA bloc is ready to take over the mantles."

Early exit polls predicted a comfortable majority for the BJP-led NDA, with the ruling alliance projected to open its account in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and sweep Karnataka.

The then ruling Congress-JD(S) alliance had come a cropper, winning just one seat each in 2019 Lok Sabha poll, while the BJP had swept, by winning 25 out of 28 seats in Karnataka, and had ensured the win of a party supported independent candidate in Mandya.

The JD(S) this time is in alliance with BJP, which has given the regional party three seats -- Hassan, Mandya and Kolar. The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

## INDIA will form govt, Rahul will become PM: Revanth Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that INDIA will come to power at the Centre, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that Rahul Gandhi will become the next Prime Minister.

The Chief Minister said the Congress will win more than 10 LS constituencies in the state and four MPs will become Union Ministers this time. The CM also said that the Congress will win two MLC seats and one MLA post.

The CM said the BJP itself had said that it would win only four to five LS seats in Telangana and that INDIA would come to power although exit polls differ. The Chief Minister said the BJP will not win more than 240 LS seats.

"My predictions never fail. INDIA will form the next government and Rahul Gandhi will be the Prime Minister. AICC President Kharge himself said that Rahul is the Prime Minister candidate. The BJP did 'nothing' for the people but it wants to come to power again. How can they come to power," the CM said.

# Diarrhoea continues to dog V'wada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Even six days after the diarrhoea outbreak in Vijayawada city, contaminated and discoloured water is still being supplied to the Mogalrajapuram and Rajiv Nagar areas.

On Saturday, Galla Koteswara Rao, 65, died in Mogalrajapuram due to diarrhoea and vomiting.

Despite the ongoing crisis, only a six-bed health camp has been set up at the CPM office in Mogalrajapuram.

Many people are falling ill and are receiving treatment at various hospitals in the city.

Department officials have collected around 250 blood samples, but the results have not

been disclosed. CPM stages protest. Meanwhile, the CPM, along with the victims' families, staged a protest against the negligence of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation officials in Mogalrajapuram on Saturday.

to diarrhoea in Mogalrajapuram and Rajiv Nagar. He stated that Health department officials have confirmed the illnesses were due to water contamination.

## Oppn politicising drinking water supply issue: Velampalli

Former minister and sitting MLA of Vijayawada West constituency, Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, criticised opposition parties for politicising the issue of drinking water supply in Vijayawada city.



with the Commissioner and emphasized the need for an expedited resolution.

supply of purified potable drinking water to city residents. He also urged the Commissioner to undertake necessary repairs to pipelines interlinked with drainage systems.

Additionally, he noted that there had been no significant issues during the past five years of the YSRCP rule, accusing opposition parties of exaggerating minor issues to create public unrest.

# AP Chambers holds affiliate council meeting

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers) organised its Affiliate Council Meeting in Vijayawada on Saturday.

AP Chambers organised the meeting to discuss and deliberate on the current business scenario, challenges faced by each sector, policy changes required and issues to be brought to the notice of Central and State governments.

Presidents and secretaries of many important associations such as CREDAI, AP MSME Industries Association, All India Chillies Exporters Association, AP Textile Mills Association, AP Lorry Owners Association, AP Federation of Petroleum Traders, Builders Association of India, Atchutapuram Industries Association, AP Hotels Association, Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India (COWE), Anantapur District Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, NAREDCO, Tirupati Chamber of Commerce, VTPS Fly Ash Brick Manufacturers, AP Food Processing Industries Federation, Tours & Travellers Association and other associations participated in the meeting.

# Tight security for counting in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Election Officer and Collector Dr A Mallikarjuna has confirmed that all essential preparations have been made for the upcoming general elections vote counting scheduled to take place on June 4 at Andhra University.



Police Commissioner A Ravishankar assured the implementation of stringent security measures, including a three-tier security arrangement at the strong rooms. He emphasised the importance of maintaining peace and order during the counting process.

The Collector emphasised the importance of vigilance during the counting process. From the moment the ballot boxes are received from the strong room until the conclusion of the counting process, returning officers and police officers are instructed to maintain a high level of alertness.

ing the counting process, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) has been assigned to each legislative and parliamentary constituency.

counting centre will be equipped with supervisors, assistants, and micro-observers. Strict regulations will be enforced regarding access to counting centres. Only individuals possessing identity cards issued by the Central Election Commission, District Election Officer, or Returning Officer will be permitted entry.

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# Fervour marks 'Hanuman Jayanti' celebrations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Hanuman Jayanti was celebrated with religious fervour in the NTR and Krishna districts on Saturday.

Prominent Anjaneya Swamy temples at Machavaram in Vijayawada and Hanuman Junction in Krishna district witnessed heavy crowds.

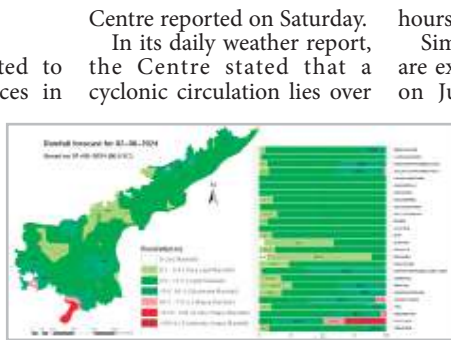
Devotees, dressed in traditional attire, flocked to these temples to perform special poojas. Temple committees made elaborate arrangements for the convenience of the devotees.

A large number of devotees visited Machavaram Sri Dasanjaney Swamy Temple, Benz Circle Anjaneya Swamy Temple, Sri Bhrarmamba Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, Uttaradi Mutt on Canal Road, and Anjaneya Swamy Temple atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada.

# Heavy rain forecast for north coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy rain is expected to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours and on June 4, according to the Meteorological Centre.



Conditions are favourable for the further advance of the Southwest Monsoon into additional parts of the central Arabian Sea, the remaining parts of the south Arabian Sea, the Lakshadweep area, and Kerala, as well as parts of Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Tamil Nadu, and the Southwest Bay of Bengal over the next 2-3 days, the

Centre reported on Saturday. In its daily weather report, the Centre stated that a cyclonic circulation lies over

hours and on June 4. Similar weather conditions are expected in Rayalaseema on June 2, with thunder-

storms, lightning, and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30-40 kmph likely at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next five days.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are predicted to occur at several places, including North Coastal Andhra Pradesh & Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema, over the next seven days.

# Tight security for counting in Krishna dist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji and Superintendent of Police (SP) Adnan Nayeem Asmi have announced that the vote counting will be conducted under tight security at Krishna University in Machilipatnam on June 4.



Collector Balaji and SP Asmi disclosed these details during a media briefing at the collectorate's media centre in Machilipatnam on Saturday. They said that 14 tables would be set up for each assembly constituency and parliamentary segment.

Counting officials for both assembly and Lok Sabha segments have been appointed, and the first phase of their training has been completed. The officials emphasized that mobile phones will not be permitted inside the counting halls. All contesting candidates and

counting agents must deposit their mobiles at the designated mobile deposit counter. To ensure law and order, the police have enforced Section 144 and Section 30 at the counting halls. After the briefing, both Collector Balaji and SP Asmi inspected the arrangements at the counting hall. Deputy Revenue Officer (DRO) K Chandrasekhar Rao, Collector Election Cell Officer Durga Kishore, and other officials participated in the inspection.

# Exit poll results trigger high betting activity

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the recently concluded general elections for both the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly, the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP, along with its allied parties, have been expressing confidence in their respective victories. Following the release of exit poll results, leaders and supporters of these parties have placed bets on various outcomes, including the formation of the state government, individual candidates' victories, and the margins of their wins.

The betting activity has been particularly high in the erstwhile Krishna district, which now includes NTR, Krishna, and parts of Eluru districts. The most intense betting has centred on the prestigious Gannavaram, Gudivada, Vijayawada West, and Vijayawada East Assembly segments, as well as the Vijayawada Lok Sabha Constituency. While there is little interest in betting on individual candidate wins, there is significant interest in betting on the vote margins of the winning candidates.

Gannavaram, Gudivada, Vijayawada West, and Vijayawada East Assembly segments, as well as the Vijayawada Lok Sabha Constituency. While there is little interest in betting on individual candidate wins, there is significant interest in betting on the vote margins of the winning candidates.

Following the release of exit poll surveys, betting activity has surged, especially in rural constituencies of the combined Krishna district. Bets in these areas range from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 1.50 crore. Gannavaram and Gudivada assembly seats have attracted the highest bet-

ting interest. Many punters from Vijayawada are travelling to rural areas to place their bets, which are predominantly conducted online. After the exit poll results were announced, supporters of both YSRCP and TDP celebrated in various areas, with some exit polls predicting their respective parties would form the state government. This has led to high-stakes betting between supporters of the opposing parties. For example, YSRCP supporters, confident in their party's chances, are placing high-value bets against TDP supporters, with rates ranging from 1.50% to 1.75%. Betting has also intensified on the total number of MLA seats each party will win, particularly in the combined

Krishna district. YSRCP supporters are betting that their party will secure around 150 seats, demanding a premium of 1.75%. According to sources, YSRCP leaders and cadres are not willing to bet at higher rates offered by TDP supporters. TDP-supported punters have demanded a 1.75% premium from YSRCP-favored punters, but no one has accepted the challenge, according to a punter from Nunta. With three days remaining until the counting of votes, punters are eager to place more bets on the election outcomes. Popular betting topics include the formation of the government, the number of assembly seats won, individual MLA victories, and the winning candidates' vote margins.

# Only SCS can help AP recover from bifurcation blues: CPI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), K Ramakrishna, has emphasised the importance of Special Category Status (SCS) for the recovery of Andhra Pradesh. He asserted that this status can only be achieved with the support of the INDIA bloc, highlighting the necessity of its implementation across the country. In a media address at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada, Ramakrishna criticized the BJP-led NDA government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for facing significant opposition from the public. He predicted



that Modi would not be able to secure a third term in office. Ramakrishna accused the BJP-led NDA government of neglecting Andhra Pradesh by not granting it the Special Category Status over the past decade, attributing the state's lack of development to this oversight.

He expressed optimism about the INDIA bloc's potential for positive outcomes and urged Chief Minister Y Jagan Mohan Reddy and opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu to put aside their political differences and take constructive actions for the benefit of the state.

# Chorus of Humein Samvidhaanbachanahai, while waving a copy



In the current electoral times, when the continued process of democracy is concluding, almost every political party is talking about the 'Constitution' of India, changing it or retaining it, etc. Next, a serious 'current' issue has been "400 seats in Lok Sabha". Some campaigners like All India Congress Committee leader Rahul Gandhi have symbolically waved a copy of the Constitution at rallies. They declared this election to be a battle for "saving the Constitution" and it is having resonance on the ground. But it is the duty of the voter, not of the Government or the Election Commission.

It is a fashion to name Ambedkar and flash a copy of the Constitution. Some leaders explained: "It is not just a book; Constitution reflects the thinking of great people". While making their point, they hold a copy of it, as if everybody is ready to use and implement it. Some others say, "When the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh people attack it, they attack the country's history and its heart. The most important thing in this election is the mission to protect Ambedkar's Constitution". One should remember what former Chief Justice of India Y.V. Chandrachud powerfully noted, in the *Minerva Mills* case, the Constitution provides us "the obligation of securing to the people *liberty of thought*,

**"When the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh people attack it, they attack the country's history and its heart. The most important thing in this election is the mission to protect Ambedkar's Constitution"**

**expression, belief, faith, and worship; equality of status and opportunity, and the assurance that the dignity of the individual will at all costs be preserved".** What happens to the constitutional values, if remembered, or forgotten in 'politics' especially during elections? "The voters should understand the important distinction between constitutional principles and ordinary laws. Constitutional principles frame fundamental rights and are of a 'higher order' that every citizen must obey. Ordinary laws, on the other hand, are rules, often guided by constitutional principles that govern society. Ordinary laws, in India, regu-

larly police our spaces. They discriminate and are used coercively by the state in ways that undermine freedoms and disempower citizens. Laws that police who you can marry, whether you can use the Internet, and what you can eat are some illustrations of this. However, these laws can also be challenged and changed. Constitutional values provide the basis for challenging discriminatory law," scholars Yamini Aiyar and Neelanjana Sircar stated in an article in a popular newspaper. The authors say that the fact that the ordinary Indian is worried about the Constitution is of far greater



**PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU**  
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

political significance than the question of who wins the election. Against the backdrop of total dominance that the BJP projected at the start of the electoral campaign, the concerns over the Constitution, expressed by ordinary voters, are constitutive of growing anxieties over democratic erosion. And it constrains the democratic legitimacy of the government

even if the BJP comes to power again, as projected.

**Ruling party's campaign**  
The Prime Minister recently said the Congress had been ranting that the Constitution was in danger, though the party had strangled it during the Emergency and ignored it when the Congress was killed in the 1984 riots. The PM quoted from Maharshi Valmiki, Guru Ravidas, BJP's campaign about the concept of '*virasatbhi and vikasbhi*' (heritage and development hand-in-hand). He attacked the INDIA bloc, accusing it of making the Army a "weapon of politics". The PM also said that the intentions of the Congress and INDIA bloc over the issue of reservation were "dangerous", while adding: "In the last 10 years, I have always protected reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs". Observing the trend in Uttar Pradesh, Yamini Aiyar said: "Dr. Ambedkar means everything to us. We don't think it is too easy to change the Constitution, but we believe

the BJP wants to change the Constitution."

Quoting from historian Rohit De's book, *A People's Constitution*, he wrote: "... it offers a powerful account of how ordinary citizens have mobilized around constitutional principles throughout independent India's history to secure rights. Challenging social and economic deprivation and preserving equality of status is at the heart of India's constitutional project. The Constitution matters because it protects us... it gave us reservations. *Humein Samvidhaanbachanahai* (the Constitution must be protected)." The re-emergence of the grammar of the Constitution, rights, and reservations in the 2024 election must not be misread as harking back to the Mandal politics of yore. There is something far more significant at play here. The rhetoric of "changing the Constitution" challenges the very principles upon which this country was founded. And it is this that is causing dissonance among voters with the BJP's logic of cross-caste polit-

ical mobilization. Every voter, including Dalit voters, speaks of the Constitution and rights, the constitutional principle of "secularism" and religious equality was a concern expressed primarily by Muslim voters, who spoke repeatedly against "Hindu-Muslim" politics. Secularism, via the Constitution, found voice during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2020, but only among Muslims.

**The 'silence' is unexplained**  
After all the phases of polling, no one knows what happened to the mind of the voter. It is silence, inexplicable until the results. If the 2024 election is indeed a battle for the Constitution, then the silence reflects the critical fault lines that our polity has to confront as well as the possibilities of a more substantive politics of rights and equality. But the voters understood, hopefully, that there is a great need for protecting the Constitution of India.

## Arrangements completed for counting of votes: Collector

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector K Madhavi Latha has made it clear massive arrangements have been made for the counting of votes to be held on June 4.



Talking to the media, flanked by SP P Jagadish, here on Saturday she said that elaborate arrangements for the counting of votes have been completed on the campus of Nannaya University.

The Collector said that only counting staff, those who have been issued identity cards by the Election Commission, election staff participating in election duties, candidates, election agents and counting agents will be allowed into the counting centre.

The Collector said that no other person would be allowed into the counting hall of the respective constituencies except those who are given colour codes for identification by constituencies. Tables

would be allotted to the staff through randomisation, she informed, adding that the counting agents would not be allowed to go out of their allotted constituency from the counting hall until the counting was completed. She stated that as part of taking steps to count EVM votes, postal ballots and ETPBS votes, 98 tables have been arranged.

Madhavi Latha said that 7 Assistant Returning Officers, 119 Counting Supervisors, 126 Assistants, 140 Micro Observers and 119 other staff

have been appointed separately for the counting of votes belonging to Assembly and Parliament constituencies, adding that about 2,500 personnel at various levels have been appointed take part in the counting process. A total of 17 counting centres have been set up at which the counting of votes for 7 Assembly constituencies and the Parliamentary constituency would be taken up including the postal ballots, she said. The Collector clarified that the counting process of postal

ballots would be started at 8 am, adding that the process of counting of votes in the district has been prepared in such a way that the results of Kovvur Constituency 13 rounds will be announced at 12.40 PM and Rajahmundry Rural at 2.30 PM.

SP P Jagadish said that Section 144 has been clamped in one KM radius of Nannaya University and Police Act 30 is being enforced. The Election Code of Conduct would continue to be enforced till June 6, he added.

"So far cases have been registered against 130 people in various cases. As many as 1500 security personnel have been deployed to ensure no untoward incident takes place anywhere in the district. So far 162 problematic villages have been identified and a strict vigil has been laid through drone cameras," the SP added, stating that victory rallies and bursting firecrackers were banned on June 4.



**20 passengers injured as bus overturns**

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

As many as 20 passengers were injured when a private travel bus in which they were travelling overturned at Lingamgunta village in Chilakaluripet mandal on Saturday.

Police said that Kamakshi's bus was going to Ongole from Hyderabad. Over 35 passengers were travelling in the bus when the accident occurred, of which 20 suffered injuries. They were admitted to the GGH in Chilakaluripet where the condition of two of the injured is said to be critical.

## Steps taken to avoid untoward incidents: DC

PNS/TIRUPATI

District Collector Praveen Kumar has said that elaborate security arrangements have been made in the district at all vulnerable places to avoid violence and untoward incidents during the counting of votes.

The Collector flanked by SP Harshvardhan Raju held a review meeting here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that in the backdrop of violent incidents which took place during the polling day on May 13, massive security arrangements have been made to maintain the law and order situation efficiently on Counting day June 4.

Police pickets were set up at all vulnerable villages and QRT mobile teams have also been deployed, he stated. Bursting of crackers on the roads and other public places has been banned. Taking out victory rallies after results were announced would not be allowed, the Collector said.

He said that Section 144 has



been clamped in the district. He directed the officials to act under the guidelines of ECI. He ordered the police officials to take stringent action against those who try to create law and order problems during the counting of votes.

He also instructed the police officials to take precautions in the wake of the announcement of exit poll results on Saturday evening. Flag marches should be taken out while cordon and search operations should be carried at all vulnerable areas, he told the officials. The security was further bolstered near the EVM strong-

rooms; he made it clear, adding the EVM are safe in the strong rooms.

"The decision of the Returning Officer will be the final of the seven assembly constituencies and Parliamentary Constituency. Arrangements were made to count the postal ballot separately. Everything that happens in the counting hall will be recorded on the CCTV camera and the candidates or their agents should follow the guidelines of the Election Commission of India," he added.

## PD Act will be invoked against trouble-makers: SP



PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Palnadu district Superintendent of Police Malika Garg has warned of invoking the Preventive Detention (PD) Act against those who try to create violence on the counting day June 4.

The SP accompanied by other officials took part in flag marches in Dachepalli and Piduguralla on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, she said that in the wake of violent incidents which took place on

the polling day May 13, many steps were taken to curb such incidents during the counting of votes.

"The PD Act will be invoked against those who create trouble. The central security forces have been deployed to the vulnerable areas. Stringent action will be taken against those who create trouble on the counting day," she warned. The SP made it clear that Section 144 would remain enforced in the district till June 5.

## SP inspects security steps

PNS ■ NELLORE

Superintendent of Police K Arif Hafeez inspected the security arrangements around the Priyadarshini Engineering College here on Saturday.

The SP, accompanied by other officials, inspected the security at Priyadarshini Engineering College and Kanuparthipadu ZP high school. He saw the three tier security to the EVM strong room.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP said that surrounding areas of the counting centre were declared as Red Zone. No one should enter the area without permission and drones should not fly on the counter centre. He said that Police Act 30 is being enforced around the counter centre and Section 144 was clamped. People



should not assemble in groups within 100 meters of the counting centre. The candidates and their agents should park their vehicles at the allotted parking slots, he added.

The SP warned the candidates and agents not to pick up arguments with the counting

officer and that they should get their doubts clarified with the RO. He said the counting agents must carry Aadhar cards to enter the counting centres. Taking out victory rallies and bursting firecrackers were banned on counting day, the SP state.

## Commissioner's Task force nabs five; foils murder plot

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's TaskForce South East and South West Zones on Saturday arrested five persons and foiled a murder plot. The police seized five live rounds, a country made pistol, four knives and a two-wheeler from the suspects.

The task force also foiled a robbery under Narsingi police limits and executed four Non Bailable Warrants. The accused were identified

as Shaik Irfan Ahmed (27) a resident of Kismatpura, Rajendranagar; Mohammed Arif (27) a resident of Kali Mandir; Mohammed Akbar Pasha (28) an automobile mechanic and resident of Balapur; Syed Abdul Raheem Quizar Yaqoobi (23) a waiter and resident of Dabeerpura and Shaik Ismail (27) a resident of Langer Houz

Irfan is a rowdy-sheeter from Rajendranagar, involved in several bodily offences He planned to kill Ismail due to

an enemy. Irfan purchased a country made pistol and five live rounds worth Rs 20,000 from Nanded for executing the murder. He contacted his friends Arif, Akbar and Yaqoobi and sought their help to execute a murder. They were apprehended by South East Task Force team from Shah Inayat Gunj area along with arms. Arif and Irfan recently committed a robbery under Narsingi police limits and were absconding.

## Sonia will attend TG Formation Day fete if her health is okay: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said they expect Sonia Gandhi to attend Telangana Formation Day celebrations.

"We took permission from the ECI to allow Sonia Gandhi's participation. She will come if her health permits it. We will remember Sonia Gandhi in case she cannot come to Hyderabad due to medical reasons. She will send her message and we will register her presence through her message," the CM said.

During a chat with journalists on Saturday at his residence, the CM said his government will install a statue of the Telangana Thalli inside the Secretariat.

Stating that KCR made Telangana a business item and gained a lot from that, the CM asked why the Congress government should allow the Charminar and the Kakatiya Kalathoranam in the state emblem. The CM said the Congress government had declared in the Assembly that it will change everything.

"Did KCR's grandfather con-

struct the Charminar and the Kakatiya Kalathoranam? Both are symbols of monarchical rule. Why did the KCR family object when we included the Martyrs' Memorial in the emblem? We see the Kakatiya kings as the killers of Sannakka, Sarakka and Jampanna. We will not allow any trace of monarchy. I have to respect the Cabinet's decision. We will convene an all-party meeting including the AIMIM," the CM said.

The CM said that KCR and KTR have been saying that they will burn the city if the Telangana Martyrs memorial is seen in the state emblem. He said that he is ready for a debate on it in the Assembly. "Our policy is that there must not be any trace of monarchical rule," he said.

The CM said that his tenure as TPCC president will end on June 9 and the high command will decide the new TPCC president.

He said the government will take action as per the NDSA report on the Kaleshwaram Project. The CM said the government will conduct a caste cen-

sus soon as orders have already been issued.

He said that BRS MLA Harish Rao has been raking up the common capital issue although Andhraites are not speaking about it. Harish wants to engage in politicking through it as he has nothing else to do, the CM said.

The CM said his government will implement the farm loan waiver scheme by August 15 and that the government has sent letters to banks which gave loans to farmers. He said the government will move forward after assessing all factors. The Chief Minister said the Congress government is neither supporting nor opposing the operations of Som Distilleries in Telangana and that he would explain about it after the election code is lifted.

The CM said the government wants 25 lakh tons of fine rice for ration shops and hostels. The government had announced Rs 500 as a bonus for fine variety paddy as a sop. "I am ready to give the rice business to the KCR family if they will pay Rs 7,000 crore to the government," he said.

## Edu materials to be given away on June 12

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Principal Secretary of the School Education Department, Praveen Prakash, announced that educational materials will be distributed to students of government and aided schools on June 12. Students from Classes 1 to 10 will receive a comprehensive set of materials, including all subject textbooks, TOEFL workbooks, Future Skills subject textbooks, three pairs of uniforms, school bags, belts, and Oxford dictionaries.



Additionally, workbooks will be provided to students in classes 1 to 5, notebooks to students in classes 6 to 10, and shoes to all students.

# 'Deeply humbled' by voters who turned up at polling stations: EC

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Election Commission on Saturday said it was "deeply humbled" by the voters who made it to polling stations overcoming many challenges and dilemmas they might have.

The Commission's remarks came after the votes were cast for the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha elections which were announced on March 16. The first phase was held on April 19.

"Indian voters have given their most cherished right to vote for the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha. Indian democracy and Indian elections have again done the magic. The great Indian voters, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, socio-economic and educational background have done it once



again," the poll watchdog said in a statement.

The real winner, EC said, is the Indian voter.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar along with Election Commissioners Gyanesh

Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and the EC family are "deeply humbled by the voters, who made it to the polling station overcoming many challenges and dilemmas they might have," it said.

The Commission said it

wishes to place on record its thanks and appreciation to all voters.

"Through their emphatic participation, the voters have risen to the trust reposed by the founders of the Indian constitution, when they handed over the power of suffrage to the ordinary Indian," it said.

The EC also expressed its gratitude to the entire election machinery, including security forces for their dedication and commitment in providing a smooth, peaceful and festive environment to voters across the country, braving tough weather, and logistical challenges like tough terrains and managing law and order in a diverse demography.

The Commission also thanked all political parties and candidates which it described as a critical pivot

of the Indian elections.

The Commission also thanked the media for their contribution.

"The importance of voters cast by centenaries, elderly, persons with disabilities, and transgenders are an inspiration to many, especially the youngsters who will take forward the democracy further," it noted.

"The collective efforts of voters, political parties, candidates, election personnel and security forces during polling have strengthened Indian democracy, deserving great respect and appreciation," it said, adding, "We, the people have kept the wheels of democracy spinning, thanks to collective efforts".

CEC Kumar had been personally preparing for the parliamentary polls for the past two years.

## DEFAMATION CASE

### Court asks Rahul to appear on June 7 Grants bail to Siddaramaiah, DCM

**PNS ■ BENGALURU**

A court here on Saturday directed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to appear before it in a defamation case filed by the BJP, and granted bail to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar in connection with the matter.

Rahul Gandhi was asked to appear before the court on June 7 in connection with the case.

The defamation case on alleged false advertisements was filed by BJP general secretary Keshav Prasad.

While Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar appeared in person before the Special Court for People's Representatives in Bengaluru, Gandhi, who was supposed to appear, did not turn up. BJP advocates raised objections and said Gandhi should not be given an exemption under CrPC 205 since he had skipped an appearance for



the second time.

Congress advocates argued that Gandhi was attending the INDIA bloc meeting in New Delhi, and he is also a contestant in the Lok Sabha polls.

They requested the court for exemption from Saturday's hearing and promised that the Congress leader would be present on the next date. The court granted an exemption to Gandhi and directed him to be present before it on June 7.

In the run-up to the 2023 Assembly election, the Congress ran a campaign of 40 per cent Sarkara, accusing the then BJP government in Karnataka of collecting 40 per cent commission on public works and exorbitant bribe in posting and recruitments.

The party also put out posters of 'PayCM' with a QR code showing the then Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai in the middle of it.



### INDIA leaders meet as countdown to results begin; Kharge says grouping to get 295+ seats

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Leaders of several INDIA bloc parties met on Saturday to take stock of the opposition's preparations leading up to the June 4 counting of votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections, and claimed they will get more than 295 seats, enough for them to form the next government.

Addressing the media after a two-and-a-half-hour confabulations here, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asserted the INDIA bloc has arrived at the figure after feedback from people.

Kharge said the leaders of the alliance met at his residence and dwelled upon a host of issues, including the precautions to be taken on the counting day on June 4. He said they have instructed their party workers to not leave the counting halls till all formalities are completed.

He said the opposition parties have sought time from the Election Commission on Sunday to raise their concerns and urge the poll body

to address them.

The meeting began at Kharge's residence this afternoon as voting in the last phase of the seven-phase general elections were underway for 57 seats. The counting for all the phases will be held on June 4.

"The INDIA bloc will get more than 295 seats. We have arrived at this figure after speaking with all our leaders," Kharge told reporters. "This is a survey of people. People have given this information to our leaders.

The government surveys are there and their media friends also inflate figures and put it out. Therefore, we want to tell you about the reality," the Congress president said.

Targeting the BJP, he said, "They are trying to give a narrative through government exit polls and we want to tell the people the truth."

Senior leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, CPI(M), CPI, DMK, JMM, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (Sharad Pawar) were present at the meeting.

### BJP will win over 370 LS seats, NDA over 400: Nadda

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

People have voted for a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, BJP chief JP Nadda said on Saturday, exuding confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA more than 400.

His remarks came on a day when polling was held for the seventh and

last phase of the general elections. Counting of votes will be conducted on June 4.

In a statement, Nadda thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making this "festival of democracy" a success for the BJP. "His efforts are definitely yielding results," the BJP chief said.

Nadda also thanked BJP leaders, including Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nitin



Gakari, and the "crores of party workers" for their contributions during the elections.

He also thanked constituents of the NDA for enthusiastically participating in the election and said with their hardwork, they succeeded in conveying their thoughts to the people.

"In this election, the voters of the country have voted for a capable India, a powerful India, a developed

India, a self-reliant India and to move ahead in the economy, and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption," Nadda said.

"I have full faith that the voters of India will make the BJP win more than 370 seats and the NDA win more than 400 seats under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Nadda thanked the people for their participating in the election.

### 'GENOCIDE' IN GAZA, NOT WAR Yechury at solidarity protest

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Israel's ongoing offensive in Gaza is "not a war, but a genocide", CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said on Saturday during a protest in solidarity with Palestine held at Delhi's Jantar Mantar.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) and other Left organisations demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and also accused the BJP-led government of supporting Israel.

"What is happening is not a war, but a genocide. War is between two armies, both sides have weapons. Here, the attack is on unarmed people. This is unacceptable," Yechury said.

"When we were students, it used to be written on passports that it is not valid for Israel and South Africa..." he said, adding "the Modi government has come on its knees to support Netanyahu... The whole world should create pressure on Israel to stop the offensive," he said.



spoke at the protest.

The protesters displayed placards demanding a ceasefire, stopping the supply of arms to Israel, an end to the violence, and also raised slogans in support of Palestine.

Palestinians in the border city of Rafah have reported heavy fighting in recent days as Israel's military widened its offensive in the south, seizing control of the entire length of Gaza's border with Egypt. Fighting in Rafah has spurred more than 10 lakh Palestinians to flee, most of whom had already been displaced earlier in the war. They now seek refuge in makeshift tent camps and other war-ravaged areas, where they lack shelter, food, water and other essentials for survival, the United Nations said.

Israel launched its war in Gaza after Hamas' October 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed about 1,200 people and abducted about 250.

### 'Modi govt to be re-elected with full majority'

**PNS ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday expressed confidence that the Modi government will be re-elected with an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha elections 2024.

He claimed that the people are strongly supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a Viksit (developed) and Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) Bharat.

Speaking to reporters after casting his vote in the last phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Saturday morning, Adityanath said, "The final phase of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, is taking place today across 57 seats in 8 states."

## INDIA CORNER

### Bihar: 4 security personnel on election duty die of heatstroke



Four security personnel deployed for the Lok Sabha elections have died due to heatstroke over the last one week in Bihar's Rohtas district, an official said on Saturday. Five security personnel, including two from Nagaland, have died in the last one week in Bihar.

Among the deceased were Indian Reserve Battalion personnel A Nikiye Sumi, a resident of Nagaland's Zunheboto district, and Pitlohi Loshu, a resident of the state's Phek district. The other deceased were Bihar Police personnel Subhash Prasad Singh of Munger, Devnath Ram of Bhojpur and Samiullah of Motihari, a statement said. Apart from them, 10 polling personnel died due to heatstroke in the state since Thursday, besides four common people. The state has been reeling under severe heatwave conditions with the mercury crossing 43 degrees Celsius in several places.

### Chhattisgarh hikes power tariff by 8.35 per cent



The Chhattisgarh State Electricity Regulatory Commission (CSERC) on Saturday announced an average hike in power tariff by 8.35 per cent for all categories of consumers. The new tariffs will be effective from June 1, an official said. The CSERC had not revised the power tariff rates last year. Talking to PTI, CSERC secretary Sp Shukla said an average hike of 8.35 per cent in power tariff was applicable across all consumer categories. Power services are managed by three state-run companies for generation, transmission and distribution in the state. Shukla said the estimated revenue deficit of Rs 2,819 crore at the current tariff for the financial year 2024-25 was approved against Rs 4,420 crore claimed by the Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Company Limited (GSPDCL). The state government has decided to reimburse Rs 1,000 crore for 2024-25 to reduce the gross revenue deficit of the distribution company. As a result, the distribution company is estimated to have a revenue deficit of Rs 1,819 crore at the current rate for 2024-25, he said. The CSERC, in a statement, said the tariff has been increased by 20 paise per unit in all categories of power consumption for domestic and non-domestic consumers. For example, for the consumption slab below 100 units per month, constituting 64 per cent of total consumers, the tariff has been increased from existing Rs 3.70 to Rs 3.90 per unit.

### AFTER ALMOST FOUR DECADES OF SERVICE India's Permanent Rep to UN Ruchira Kamboj signs off

**PNS ■ UNITED NATIONS**

After an illustrious career spanning over 35 years, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ruchira Kamboj, has retired, the senior diplomat said on Saturday.

The first woman diplomat to occupy the prestigious position as the Ambassador of India at the UN, Kamboj - who had joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1987 - took to social media to bid goodbye. "Thank you, Bharat, for the extraordinary years and unforgettable experiences," the 60-



year-old senior diplomat signed off with this message on her X handle.

Kamboj, who was the All India women's topper of the 1987 Civil Services batch and the topper of the 1987 Foreign Service batch, formally

assumed the position of Permanent Representative/Ambassador of India to New York, on August 2, 2022.

A regular on social media X highlighting India's achievements at the UN, Kamboj's post announcing her retirement was met with overwhelming response by people from all walks of life - former ambassadors to common citizens.

A typical example was from a social media user Rohit Bansal, who said, "37 years of service, Sheer grace & steel - Your impact shall endure."

### Floods hit Kerala and Assam due to two cyclonic systems

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Severe flooding has hit Kerala and Assam due to two cyclonic systems, according to the Central Water Commission which advised continuous monitoring and preparedness for further potential flooding.

CWC has released its flood situation report, detailing significant rainfall and resulting severe flood conditions in various regions of India, with Kerala and Assam being the most affected. One cyclone over Arunachal Pradesh, combined with strong winds from the Bay of Bengal, has brought heavy rains to northeastern states like Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim.

### Bengal gov directs CM to submit comprehensive report on scams

**PNS ■ KOLKATA**

West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose on Saturday wrote to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asking her to immediately submit a comprehensive report on the various scams that are under various stages of investigation, an official of the Raj Bhavan said.

Referring to a provision of the Constitution, Bose said the chief minister of every state has to communicate with their respective governors all decisions of the council of ministers relating to the administration of the affairs of the state and proposals for legislation.

"Governor of West Bengal CV Ananda Bose has directed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to submit with immediate effect, a comprehensive report on the various scams and corruption cases that are under different stages of investigation," the Raj Bhavan posted on X.

The cases include the school service recruitment jobs and ration distribution scams and cattle smuggling and coal pilferage cases, it said.

"These cases are, in fact, glaring instances of rampant corruption and maladministration at multiple layers," the Raj Bhavan added in the post.

### 'Authentic dying declaration can be sole basis for conviction'

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

An authentic dying declaration that inspires the confidence of the court can be relied upon and be the sole basis for the conviction of an accused without any corroboration, the Supreme Court has said.

The top court made this observation on May 15 while upholding the conviction of an ex-army personnel for murdering his wife, a police constable, in Maharashtra's Beed district 22 years ago.

It said that the court has to scrutinise the dying declaration

carefully and ensure it is consistent, credible and devoid of tutoring.

"Once a dying declaration is found to be authentic and inspiring the court's confidence, then the same can be relied upon and can be the sole basis for conviction without any corroboration."

"However, before accepting such a dying declaration, the court must be satisfied that it was rendered voluntarily, is consistent and credible, and is devoid of any tutoring. Once such a conclusion is reached, a great deal of sanctity is attached to a dying declaration and as said



earlier, it can form the sole basis for conviction," a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said.

In this case, the prosecution claimed that the victim was subjected to cruelty by her husband,

brother-in-law and other in-laws.

On the fateful day, the woman was beaten up by her husband and brother-in-law who tied her hands with a 'gamcha' (thin and coarse cotton towel) and her feet with a towel and gagged her face.

The brother-in-law then got a matchbox and a bottle of kerosene, which the husband poured on her, and then lit the matchstick. The woman got completely burnt in the incident.

Her neighbours took her to the hospital, where her dying declaration was recorded based on which the Ambajogai police

station in Beed district registered a case under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 498A (subjecting women to cruelty), 342 (wrongful confinement), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 504 (intentional insult) read with section 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The trial court in 2008 had convicted the husband for committing an offence punishable under section 302 (murder) read with section 34 of the IPC 1860 and sentenced him to life imprisonment and to pay a fine of Rs 25,000. This verdict was

upheld by the Bombay High Court.

The husband then moved the Supreme Court, which suspended his sentence and granted him bail in 2016 noting that he had already undergone about nine years of sentence.

Accepting the dying declaration of the deceased woman as a valid piece of evidence, the top court said that having sieved through the evidence carefully, it has no hesitation that the appellant is guilty of committing the offence and that the guilt has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt.



Boat with 11 persons on board capsized in the Seep river in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district on Saturday and rescuers pulled out six people from the water who were 'unresponsive', an official said. Four others have been rescued while a search is on for a missing person, he said. The incident occurred in Manpur area, about 40 km from the Sheopur district headquarters, at around 4:45 pm. Some local people said that strong wind was blowing at the time of the incident. "At least 11 people were on the board in the boat when it sank. Four persons were rescued, while six others are unresponsive and have been rushed to a hospital. A search is on for another person," Sheopur Superintendent of Police Abhishek Anand said over the phone.

GST collection rises 10% to Rs 1.73 L cr in May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

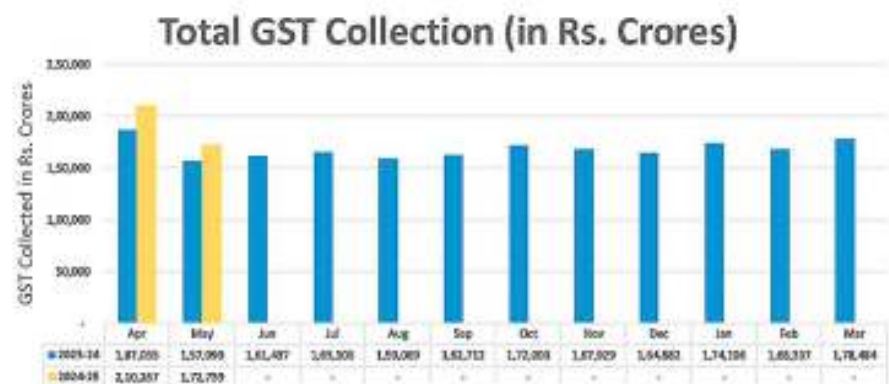
The country's gross GST collections rose to Rs 1.73 lakh crore in May, growing 10 per cent year on year...

GST collections had touched a record high of Rs 2.10 lakh crore last month.

"The gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue for the month of May 2024 stood at Rs 1.73 lakh crore," the ministry said in a statement.

The 10 per cent year-on-year growth in May collection is driven by a strong increase in revenues from domestic transactions (up 15.3 per cent) amid slowing of imports (down 4.3 per cent).

After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue for May 2024 stood at Rs 1.44 lakh crore, reflecting a growth



The 10 per cent year-on-year growth in May collection is driven by a strong increase in revenues from domestic transactions (up 15.3 per cent) amid slowing of imports (down 4.3 per cent).

of 6.9 per cent compared to the same period last year.

The gross GST collections in FY25 till May 2024 stood at Rs 3.83 lakh crore, which is a 11.3 per cent year-on-year growth,

driven by a strong increase in domestic transactions (up 14.2 per cent) and marginal increase in imports (up 1.4 per cent).

After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue in the FY 2024-25 till May 2024 stood at Rs 3.36 lakh crore, reflecting a growth of 11.6 per cent compared to the same period last year.

DELHI-SFO FLIGHT DELAY

Air India apologises, offers US\$ 350 travel voucher to passengers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India has apologised and offered a travel voucher of US\$ 350 each to the passengers of the San Francisco flight that took off from the national capital after a delay of more than 30 hours.

There were 199 passengers in the flight, according to a source. After a delay of over 30 hours, the flight took off from the national capital at 2155 hours on Friday and landed at San Francisco at 1245 hours (IST) on Saturday.

"Please allow me to sincerely apologise, on behalf of Air India, for the extended delay in bringing you to San Francisco, which was caused by several technical delays and other operational constraints," Air India Executive

Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Klaus Goersch said in a letter to the flight's passengers. As a gesture of apology, Air India has offered a "travel voucher worth US\$ 350" for future travel with the airline...

The Delhi-San Francisco flight that was originally scheduled to take off at around 1530 hours on Thursday faced an inordinate delay due to various factors, including technical glitch, non-functional air-conditioning system and payload issues.

MONEY MATTERS

Maruti Suzuki sales drop 2% to 1,74,551 units in May



Maruti Suzuki India on Saturday reported a 2 per cent year-on-year dip in total wholesales at 1,74,551 units in May 2024.

The company had dispatched a total of 1,78,083 units to its dealers in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a statement.

Total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period, it added.

Sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units from 12,236 units in May 2023.

WhatsApp, trading fraud: Businessman duped of Rs 9 cr



A businessman has been allegedly duped of over Rs 9 crore by cyber thugs here, police said on Saturday.

According to the police, the fraud took place over a period of one month after Rajat Bothra, resident of sector 40, got added to a WhatsApp group about stock market trading on May 1.

An FIR was lodged at the Cyber Crime police station in sector 36 on Friday and Rs 1.62 crore transacted funds have been frozen in the businessman's account, they said, adding further investigations are underway.

IIFL Samasta Finance to raise up to Rs 1,000 cr via bonds



IIFL Samasta Finance, a non-banking microfinance company (NBFC-MFI), plans to raise up to Rs 1,000 crore through public issue of secured bonds for

the purpose of capital augmentation and business growth. The bond issue opens on June 3 and closes on June 14, IIFL Samasta Finance said in a statement. IIFL Samasta Finance plans to issue bonds, aggregating to Rs 200 crore, with a green-shoe option to retain over-subscription of up to Rs 800 crore, it said.

'ARC route being misused by "tainted" promoters'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao has expressed concerns over "tainted" promoters misusing the asset reconstruction companies (ARC) route to enter the bankruptcy proceedings and stressed for improving governance practices such firms.

The credit life cycle involves four distinct stages - sourcing of credit proposals; appraisal and underwriting; disbursement and monitoring; and, repayment,

which then starts off the next iteration of the credit cycle.

"If, however, for some reason, the borrower does not pay the dues on time and a loan does not enter the fourth stage, there could be a problem. ARCs have been institutionalised to play a crucial role at this juncture," Rao said. Speaking at a conference on 'Governance in ARCs -- Towards Effective Resolutions' earlier this month, he said ARCs are the institutions to enable loan originators to focus on their core function of lending by taking over stressed financial assets.

RBI imposes monetary penalty on SBM Bank (India)

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 88.70 lakh on SBM Bank (India) for non-compliance with certain regulatory norms.

In a statement, the central banks said the penalty has been imposed for non-compliance with licensing conditions imposed by the RBI, and specific directions to stop undertaking Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) transactions with immediate effect.

Two separate notices were issued to the bank advising it to show cause as to why

penalty should not be imposed on it for its failure to comply with the said directions/conditions.

After considering the bank's reply to the notices, additional submissions made by it, and oral submissions made during the personal hearing, the RBI said it found, inter alia, that the charges against the SBM Bank (India) were sustained warranting imposition of monetary penalty.

The RBI said the bank was engaged business correspondents for establishing account-based relationship with customers from certain regions, despite its request being not acceded to by RBI.

Mumbai city sees 12,000 property registrations in May, up 22% annually

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Registration of properties in Mumbai municipal region increased 22 per cent during May to 12,000 units driven by strong housing demand, according to real estate consultant Knight Frank.

Citing Maharashtra government data, Knight Frank India said Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) recorded around 12,000 property registrations last month as against 9,823 units in May last year.

State exchequer garnered Rs 1,034 crore in May 2024, up 24 per cent from the same month last year.

Of the overall registered properties in May 2024, residential units constituted 80 per cent.

"The continuous year-on-year growth in property sales and registrations provides a continuum to the growth story that propelled on the back of



state government incentive and since then, despite a rise in average prices across the city, sales and registrations of properties have maintained the momentum," Shishir Bajjal, Chairman & Managing Director, Knight Frank India, said.

This reflects the appetite of the market as well as the confidence buyers have in the economic fundamentals of the country, he added.

"This positive trend is expected to persist, bolstered by strong economic growth and a favourable interest rate environment, creating an encouraging atmosphere for potential buyers," Bajjal said.

In the first five months of this year, the total number of properties registered was 60,820, up 17 per cent from 52,173 units in January-May 2023.

Passenger vehicle wholesales in slow lane due to high base effect

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Passenger vehicle wholesales in India witnessed a marginal growth in May on account of high base effect and muted demand due to general elections.

The overall passenger vehicle dispatches from companies to dealers stood at 3,50,257 lakh units last month as compared to 3,35,436 in the same month a year ago, registering a growth of 4 per cent.

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said its total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period.

The company saw year-on-

year dip in sales of entry level and compact cars last month as against May 2023.

Utility vehicle sales, including that of Brezza, Grand Vitara, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, however, rose to 54,204 units last month as against 46,243 units a year earlier.

"It has been discussed that growth this year will not be very high. It will be in single digit because of the high base effect. Secondly, there were elections and the scorching temperatures also had an impact on the overall sales in May," MSI Senior Executive Officer (Marketing & Sales) Partho Banerjee told reporters.

He further said: "We are



"It has been discussed that growth this year will not be very high. It will be in single digit because of the high base effect. Secondly, there were elections and the scorching temperatures also had an impact on the overall sales in May."

very hopeful that we will start seeing the green shoots coming with the election results coming in. I think things will turn around."

Banerjee noted that the company is going to introduce a limited edition trims of its entry level cars -- Alto K10, S-

Presso and Celerio -- in order to rejuvenate the small car segment.

The Dream Series edition trims of the three models will be launched at a price point of Rs 4.99 lakh (ex-showroom), he said.

"Based on the feedback of

our target customers we have come up with an edition in which we are mostly focusing on the utilities and convenience features," Banerjee said.

Sales of Maruti Suzuki's mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units last

BSE completes acquisition of S&P Dow Jones Indices' entire stake in Asia Index

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading stock exchange BSE Ltd on Friday said it has completed the acquisition of S&P Dow Jones Indices' entire equity stake in Asia Index Private Limited (AIPL), making it a wholly-owned subsidiary of the bourse.

AIPL was a joint venture between S&P DJI and BSE and is best known for calculating and maintaining the popular



index Sensex. In a statement, BSE said AIPL will continue to provide

its services to clients who are subscribed to AIPL's indices or data products.

"AIPL is committed to improving and expanding its product offerings by working closely with the financial market ecosystem and other relevant stakeholders," it added.

In April, index provider S&P Dow Jones Indices announced that it was targeting to sell its entire equity stake in Asia Index by May 31.

Sunder Foods and Dairy launches milk product brand Samooh; eyes state-wide presence in MP

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh-based Sunder Foods and Dairy (SUFODA) on Saturday announced the launch of its new milk product brand 'Samooh' and said it aims to expand its presence across the state.

The 'Samooh' brand was launched on the World Milk Day in Bhopal. "Samooh is a high-quality

dairy product that will inspire people across the city," said Kartikey Singh Chouhan, founder and promoter of Sunder Dairy.

Chouhan, son of state's former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said the company has created a number of women-centric village collection centres to procure milk, which are being facilitated through Women Farmer Producer

Organisations (FPOs), and the delivery of products is "entirely handled by women".

The fresh brand includes fresh milk packs named Samooh Gold Milk, Samooh Standard Milk, Samooh Toned Milk, and Samooh Tea Special Milk, as well as other products like curd, buttermilk and lassi.

Besides, it offers products like Ghee, Shrikhand, Sweets, and Paneer.

Top 100 cos to verify market rumours promptly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The top 100 listed companies by market capitalization will have to confirm or deny any market rumour reported in the mainstream media from this Saturday.

The rule will be applicable for top 250 companies from December 1.

Under the Sebi's rule, these companies will have to confirm, deny, or clarify any reported event or information in the mainstream media that is not general in nature and that indicates that rumours of an impending specific material event are circulating amongst the investing public within 24 hours from the reporting of the information.

Sebi through its newly introduced rumour verification framework has excluded the price volatility in arriving at average market price for the purpose of corporate actions in a bid to make it fair for all investors at large.

"The move would dissuade

leaking of information that would affect the valuation in the given corporation action. This initiative of Sebi would help strengthen the rumour verification framework. It would help in achieving a fair market thereby making it a preferred market for investors

Market rumours pertaining to a company's business can create significant volatility in stock prices, often leading to transactions that don't reflect a company's true value. This market rumours could be related to anything, including exiting of top management, cancellation of an order and financial health.

"Sebi's framework addresses this issue by establishing a mechanism to determine the unaffected price -- the price of a stock before the rumour surfaced. This price would be used for transactions unless the rumour itself caused price fluctuations in subsequent trading days," Trivesh, Chief Operating Officer of Tradejini, had said.

mation of reported event or information can be excluded. It means that while calculating price for corporate actions the period during which material price movement was seen in the stock due to confirmed rumours would be excluded.

Market rumours pertaining to a company's business can create significant volatility in stock prices, often leading to transactions that don't reflect a company's true value. This market rumours could be related to anything, including exiting of top management, cancellation of an order and financial health.

"Sebi's framework addresses this issue by establishing a mechanism to determine the unaffected price -- the price of a stock before the rumour surfaced. This price would be used for transactions unless the rumour itself caused price fluctuations in subsequent trading days," Trivesh, Chief Operating Officer of Tradejini, had said.



all over the world," Makarand M Joshi, founder, MMJC and Associates, a corporate compliance firm, said.

While calculating the price for various corporate actions such as buyback through book building, buyback through stock exchange, qualified institutional placement, preferential allotment, takeovers, effect on shares price due to material price movement and confir-

# WHERE FOOD MEETS ART IN PLATING

It is not just about cooking the dish well but also plating them right is the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience, says **SHARMILA CHAND**



**S**culpt, layer, paint, drizzle. Splash, a squiggle, dots, the jus, the sauce... there is an artist at work, bent, eyes fixed at his plate, in front of you at your table in the restaurant. He is undeterred till he finishes his task. Another few minutes, he finally looks up and tells you, your dish is ready. The artist is none other than the chef who has been busy meticulously plating the dish you ordered. The plate is his canvas and he is creating a visual masterpiece.

It's not just about cooking the dish right but the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience. "I find the process of plating to be as crucial as the preparation of the dish itself," says Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. For him, "Plating is an art form cherished by food connoisseurs worldwide, where every element on the plate serves as a canvas for creativity and expression."

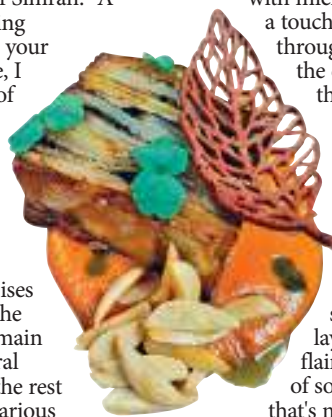
Colour and Shape Chef Amandeep's preference leans towards minimalist, neutral-coloured plates that allow the vibrant hues of the dish to shine. "The shape of the plate is equally significant; I favour plates with clean lines and ample space for artistic arrangement. Each dish has its personality, and the shape of the plate can either accentuate or detract from its essence. For instance, a circular plate complements dishes with symmetrical components, while elongated plates are ideal for showcasing linear arrangements," he says. "The colour of the dish and its ingredients wield immense influence over the plating process. Take, for example, my signature dish, Tandoori Salmon with Mango Salsa. The vibrant hues of the succulent salmon and the vibrant mango salsa pop against a pristine white plate, creating a visually captivating presentation that entices the palate even before the first bite," adds Chef Amandeep.

According to Chef Sandeep Kalra, Director of Culinary, Pullman Novotel, New Delhi, Aerocity, "The colour of the plate totally depends on the colour and textures of the dish. Both have to complement each other. The colour of the plate one chooses can make a big difference in how the dish looks. If you want your food to really stand out, pick a plate colour that is different from the colours of the food. White plates are a good choice for colourful dishes because they make the colours pop. On the other hand, if you want the colours

to blend well together, choose a plate colour that goes well with the food colours. Earthy tones like beige or light brown can make green vegetables look even better. Also, consider the theme of your meal. If you're going for a modern look, white or black plates are often a good choice. Dark plates can also help keep food warm longer. Ultimately, the plate colour should match the style of your meal to create a beautiful and cohesive presentation."

Simran Singh Thapar, Executive Chef, The Leela Palace Bengaluru echoes the sentiment: "Play with complementary hues and remember, a pop of colour can make all the difference. Adding a variety of textures can make your dish visually interesting and enticing. Combine crunchy elements with smooth components, as I like to do in my dish 'Truffled Russet Mille Feuille with Butternut Squash Quasar -e- Pukhtan, Golden Almonds and Charcoal touille'. A crisp potato Mille Feuille is paired with a velvety smooth and rich sauce. Layering ingredients not only adds depth but also adds a sense of complexity to your presentation. I have used green microgreens to pop up the otherwise warm hues of orange and brown. An almond charcoal touille creates a visual and texture impact on my plate."

"Creating a theme or a story with your plating can make your dish more memorable," adds chef Simran. "A theme can tie everything together and captivate your audience. On my plate, I have created a theme of classics from two cuisines pairing together to create magic -- Classic French and Classic Indian." Ingredient is the Key Chef Sandeep emphasises on the 'ingredient' as the key focus. "Using the main ingredient as the central focus and organising the rest of the ingredients in various forms of purees, gels, mousse or whole forms works the best. There is no specific style that I incorporate but looking at the ingredients I adapt to plating techniques and style that complements the textures and enhances the look of the dish. One favourite dish that I love to plate often is the grilled chicken breast with sweet potato mash and sautéed green beans. The dish features a perfectly grilled chicken breast placed slightly off-centre on the



Chef Simran Singh Thapar



Chef Amandeep Singh



Gerwin D'souza



Executive Chef Anshul Dhyani



Chef Subhankar Chitrakar



Sandeep Kalra

plate. Alongside, a generous serving of creamy sweet potato mash, flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg, provides contrast. Crisp green beans are delicately piled next to the mash, adding a fresh touch. A sprinkle of finely chopped parsley garnishes the plate, adding a pop of green. Presented on a square, off-white plate, this dish is not just delicious but also visually appealing, designed to delight both the eye and the palate." Garnishing Lends visual Allure "When it comes to garnishes, I believe in the power of simplicity," tells Chef Amandeep. "Fresh herbs like cilantro and microgreens add a burst of colour and flavour without overwhelming the dish. A delicate sprinkle of sea salt or a drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate even the simplest of presentations," he says. Likewise for Chef Sandeep, it is important to give vitality to the dish with microgreens or herbs and add a touch of elegance and beauty through edible flowers. "Show off the dish and keep room for theatrics," is his mantra. Gerwin D'souza, Pastry Sous Chef, The St Regis Goa Resort feels, "Perhaps a swirl of sauce, a fine scattering of berries to enhance. At our Italian restaurant, Oliveto, we serve tiramisu in a glass to show off the varied layering. To add that extra flair, we place a spoon made of solid chocolate on it. Now that's my style of garnishing. That expression of my diners at the first look of tiramisu says it all."

Chefs Are Artists Too Who says we deck up our plates just because we are going through an era of social media, ask chefs. Plating as an art satisfies the aesthetic sense of creativity within us, they say. "The artist in me likes the Free Form or keeping the plating abstract," opines Chef Anshul Dhyani, Executive Chef ITC Grand Central, adding that "Not giving a

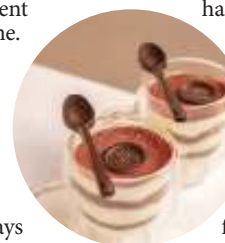
particular structure to it, I like to keep it simple and let the ingredients be as natural. I would like the ingredients and flavour to do the talking. Prefer to treat the plate as a canvas where every ingredient can show its own colours. For example in my dish, Seared Scallops with slow braised pork belly, granny smith puree and macerated golden raisins, Scallops and Pork belly are the main ingredients of the dish

complemented by the raisins and apple puree. The dish has been plated in a free flow manner. All the ingredients are plated in a way that they all stand out and no single ingredient overshadows the other one. All the colours and textures are preserved and no ingredient loses its individuality but together bring about a complete culinary harmony." "Indeed I am an artist," says Chef Aashutosh Shende, Executive Sous Chef of Paper Moon, Taj Fort Aguada Resort Spa. "For instance in my dish Tagliolini with Pesto Sauce and Pine Nuts, I treat the white plate as my blank canvas, the green pesto sauce is my vibrant paint. The green pesto sauce offers a colour palette to create a visually stunning composition on a white plate.

Composition of the dish is the king and arrangement is the key. Swirling the pesto in an artistic flourish and strategically placing the elements for balance and contrast. I build height with rolling the pasta around a large fork and then slide it on the plate. This gives not only clean lines but also height to the dish, techniques used by both chefs and artists. I express my personality and my expressions through my plating. I am not a fan of bold or dramatic swirls and many colours on my plate; I prefer a simple bed for a wild abstract masterpiece for my Tagliolini." He has more to add: "I like to sign every dish that goes out of my kitchen and, as such, a final flourish on food plating has my signature. It could be a sprinkle of fresh herbs, in this case in particular a drizzle of balsamic reduction and a scattering of toasted pine nuts. These finishing touches showcase my creation from a meal to a work of art."

"I work in a bakery which can be at times devoid of human interaction and through my bakery items I express myself," says Chef Subhankar Chitrakar from Bakery of Taj Holiday Village Resort Spa, Goa. Citing an example of his dish, Caramel Porto, he tells, "This rich, decadent dessert - Caramel Porto - presents a fantastic opportunity every time to pique my inner artist. Considering the portion size -- if it is a single serving I prefer a small dessert plate with a rim, for four portions I choose a shallow bowl or couple glass which allows for beautiful layering. Choosing whether to keep the same colour or play a colour contrast game, I prefer a white plate to enhance the various hues of caramel. Sometimes I do use a dark plate to create a dramatic backdrop for a glistering sauce. Considering the overall mood of the diner a classic white plate offers timeless elegance and on the other hand a more colourful bowl would add a touch of casual charm. I am not afraid to add a delicate web like swirl for a touch of whimsy. Or for a bolder statement, a thicker controlled pour creates a dramatic centre piece. Go ahead and experiment with what's at hand, add a spring of fresh mint or a sprinkle of chopped nuts or a dusting cocoa powder to add pops of colour and flavour like a bold brushstroke. I am an artist and this is my soul that I bare through my Caramel Porto."

Author Intro: Sharmila Chand is an Author and Freelance Journalist who writes on Food, Travel, Lifestyle, Art and Wellness. She can be reached at chand.sharmila@gmail.com.

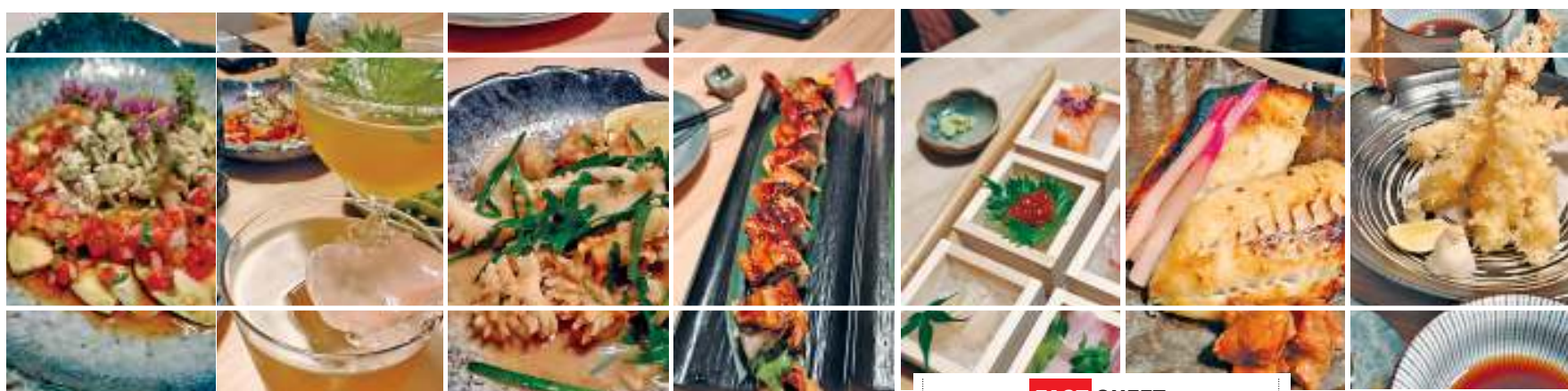


## FOOD TRENDS

# Falling in Love with Japanese cuisine

At Shin'ya, an Izakaya-inspired resto-bar at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, is drawing crowds because of the evident attention to detail and its commitment to source the best and freshest ingredients possible for a hearty Japanese meal, says **PAWAN SONI**

**J**apanese cuisine is winning hearts across the Indian community, and it is no surprise why. The dishes are light, nutritious, and packed with flavoUrs, thanks to ingredients like seaweed, soy, and seafood. The freshness of these ingredients is crucial, leading to high prices for premium seafood and fruits in Japan and sold in auctions. In India, particularly in the North, seafood is not as accessible due to the lack of coastline. However, logistics can ensure a steady, fresh supply. During my recent visit to Shin'ya, the new Japanese restaurant at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, I was impressed by the quality of the ingredients used. At Shin'ya, attention to detail is evident from the freshly grated wasabi to the sashimi made from yellowfin tuna, a step above the commonly used bluefin tuna. Sonale Zagade, Hyatt Regency's dynamic General Manager,



emphasised their commitment to sourcing the best ingredients, recalling her personal involvement in tasting each one before finalising. With seating for around 45 guests, this Izakaya-inspired resto-bar, with its light and minimalistic

decor, is perfect for small gatherings. On the recommendation of Shashwat Prasad, Shin'ya's mixologist, I started with a gari-infused bourbon mixed with yuzu juice and honey water. This mild drink perfectly set the tone for the

evening. The avocado carpaccio, chosen for my wife's vegetarian preference, was appreciated by both of us. The buttery avocado with caramelized onions, ponzu, and tomato salsa made a delightful start, while I enjoyed one of the lightest and crunchiest

**FACT SHEET**  
Food: 4.5/5 | Drinks: 4.5/5 | Service: 4.5/5  
Ambience: 4.0/5 | Overall: 4.5/5  
Address: Shin'ya, Hyatt Regency, NH48, Sector 83, Gurugram  
Phone: 9355816517  
Meal for Two: INR 4000 + Taxes  
Timing: 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM (Monday to Saturday), 12 Noon to 9: 00 PM (Sundays)

prawn tempuras. Coated with a bit of potato starch and accompanied by a miso daikon dip, these were among the best prawn tempuras I've ever tasted. Each dish, from the selection of sashimi to sushi, was special. Apart from the Japanese fare,

Shin'ya also offers a small mix of Korean and Asian dishes. I tried the Korean-style sautéed garlic butter squid and prawn gyoza dumplings, each dish telling a unique story. Another cocktail, the Houji tea-infused tequila with agave nectar topped with fresh shiso leaf, further demonstrated the mixologist's expertise. Both food and drinks at Shin'ya are crafted to ensure guest delight. My meal concluded with the robata-grilled miso black cod. The silky pieces of fish, with slight charred edges, contrasted beautifully with the buttery flavours and pickled plum. Shin'ya stands out for its high-quality ingredients and expertly prepared classic dishes. This restaurant is definitely one to watch in 2024. — Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com



Explore the artistic brilliance and cultural legacy of Sonal Mansingh through the fascinating world of classical dance with GYANESHWAR DAYAL

# THE LIVING LEGEND OF SONAL MANSINGH

In the realm of Indian classical dance, few names carry as much weight and reverence as that of Sonal Mansingh. Her life's journey is not just a tale of individual accomplishment but a testament to the power of art in transcending boundaries and enriching lives.

Sonal Mansingh's relationship with dance began at an early age. Raised in a family that valued both tradition and modernity, she was exposed to various forms of art and culture from childhood. Her initial training in Bharatanatyam began under the tutelage of renowned Guru Shri Chandralekha. However, it was her encounter with the legendary Odissi guru, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, that shaped her destiny. Under his guidance, Sonal delved deep into the intricate nuances of Odissi, a classical dance form from the eastern state of Odisha, India. She mastered the art with such finesse that she became one of its foremost exponents, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally.

Sonal Mansingh's journey has not been without its share of challenges. As a woman navigating the patriarchal landscape of Indian society, she faced skepticism and resistance from traditional quarters. Yet, with unwavering determination and resilience, she shattered stereotypes and carved a niche for herself in a male-dominated field. Her artistic integrity and commitment to her craft have been unwavering, even in the face of adversity. Through her performances, workshops, and lectures, she has tirelessly worked towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage, inspiring generations of artists to follow in her footsteps.

As a cultural icon, Sonal Mansingh's legacy transcends boundaries of time and geography. She has not only enriched the world of dance with her unparalleled talent but has also left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of millions



**SONAL MANSINGH'S JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT ITS SHARE OF CHALLENGES. AS A WOMAN NAVIGATING THE PATRIARCHAL LANDSCAPE OF INDIAN SOCIETY, SHE FACED SKEPTICISM AND RESISTANCE FROM TRADITIONAL QUARTERS. YET, WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION AND RESILIENCE, SHE SHATTERED STEREOTYPES AND CARVED A NICHE FOR HERSELF IN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD. HER ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT TO HER CRAFT HAVE BEEN UNWAVERING, EVEN IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY**



around the world. Her life's journey is a testament to the transformative power of art and its ability to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and celebrate the beauty of human expression.

In an ever-changing world, where the allure of tradition often clashes with the forces of modernity, Sonal Mansingh stands as a beacon of a vibrant tradition, innovation, and timeless grace, reminding us of the enduring relevance of our cultural roots. As she continues to inspire and enchant audiences with her artistry, her legacy remains etched in the annals of Indian classical dance, a shining testament to the enduring power of the human spirit.

Sonal Mansingh's dance themes often encompass a rich tapestry of mythological narratives, cultural traditions, and social issues. Through her performances, she weaves together stories from Indian history and legends, ancient and contemporary texts exploring the tales of gods and goddesses with intricate choreography and expressive movements. Her interpretations of classical dance are imbued with deep spiritual and philosophical elements, reflecting her profound understanding of Indian culture and traditions.

Additionally, she often addresses contemporary social issues through her choreography, using dance as a medium for commentary and reflection. Whether addressing themes of gender equality, environmental consciousness, or the human experience, Mansingh infuses her performances with relevance and meaning, engaging audiences on both artistic and intellectual levels.

Overall, Sonal Mansingh's dance themes transcend mere entertainment, serving as a platform for storytelling, cultural preservation,

and social advocacy. Through her artistry, she continues to captivate and inspire audiences around the world, leaving a lasting impression with each graceful movement.

Sonal Mansingh, a prominent figure in the world of Indian classical dance, also had a notable involvement in politics. While she is primarily celebrated for her contributions to dance, her engagement in political discourse arose when she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, in 2018. Her nomination was a recognition of her achievements and contributions to Indian culture and arts, acknowledging the importance of promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage within the political sphere.

As a member of the Rajya Sabha, Mansingh has used the platform to advocate for the arts, cultural preservation, and the promotion of Indian dance forms. She actively participated in debates and discussions concerning cultural policies, education, sociology of culture and the role of the arts in society.

Mansingh's foray into politics highlighted the intersection of culture, arts, and governance in India. Her journey serves as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and supporting cultural icons within the political landscape, ensuring that the nation's rich artistic heritage continues to thrive and flourish.

Sonal Mansingh, a luminary in the realm of Indian classical dance, has left an indelible mark through her illustrious career. Honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1992, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2003, she has been lauded for her exceptional contributions to the performing arts.

As the founder of the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD) in New Delhi, Mansingh established a bastion for the promotion and preservation of various classical dance forms, nurturing young talent and disseminating awareness of India's rich cultural heritage. Her mesmerizing performances have graced prestigious stages worldwide, serving as a cultural ambassador and fostering appreciation for Indian art and heritage.

Appointed as a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2003, Mansingh's efforts in promoting intercultural dialogue through dance have been globally recognized. Beyond tradition, her artistic vision fearlessly explores new themes, narratives, and choreographic styles, breathing fresh life into age-old traditions and inspiring generations of artists.

Sonal Mansingh's life is a tapestry of devotion to Indian classical dance, and a commitment to preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage. Born in 1944 in Bombay, she began her dance training at a young age, later becoming a trailblazer in the field. With a career spanning over six decades, Mansingh has dazzled audiences worldwide with her performances, lectures & interviews earning numerous accolades and honors along the way.

Beyond her contributions to dance, Mansingh has been a cultural ambassador for India, spreading awareness of its rich artistic traditions.

## “As in life, so in dance, character is essential”

SONAL MANSINGH talks about her art, life and life philosophy that went into making the person she is. She opened up to THE PIONEER. Excerpts

**What are some memorable performances or collaborations that have shaped your artistic journey?**

Well, memorable performances and collaborations are different. From the very beginning in 1961, when I gave my maiden solo performance, to this day, every performance has been memorable for one reason or another. Whether it was in Venezuela or China, Mongolia or Mandi, in a big opera house of a megapolis or on a small-town stage, each one was memorable. Choosing the best among them all is rather difficult. However, the performance in Delhi after my car accident in Germany in 1975 stands out. Many dancers told me they were inspired by it, saying that at times they didn't see me but saw sparks. The performance for the Dalai Lama in McLeod Ganj in 1994 was also significant for its content, which moved him to tears. Performing in front of Mount Kailash was a once-in-a-lifetime divine experience.

**Tell us something about your collaborations.**

Regarding collaborations, I haven't had many. My performances in Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or Chhau are



collaborations with musicians, my guide and Guru Shri Jeevan Pani Ji, researchers, gurus, yoga gurus, and anyone from whom I learned something. Life itself is a great collaboration. Learning is an effort unto itself. Things keep happening, and one must become aware of them. Life is a jigsaw puzzle from which one picks little nuggets of wisdom.

**What values are essential in classical dance?**

As in life, so in dance, character is essential. Character building starts in mother's womb or even from previous births (poorva janma) and karma samskara. It then grows with upbringing, nurturing, travel, and learning. Due diligence is essential. Even slight lethargy or negativity can creep in if you leave the door of consciousness ajar, so one must always be aware. What must be

done should be done in a timely manner, and every detail must be worked out. Humility is important. Remember, reevaluate, reassess, and move on (manan chintan). Reading is essential, especially in times of dependence on social media: read, discuss, understand, and carve your own path.

**How do you approach interpreting classical dance forms to suit contemporary audiences?**

I always did what I wanted to do, and this tendency was further encouraged by my Bharatanatyam guru, U.S. Krishna Rao. We are different from Western classical dancers, where brochures are distributed at the beginning, and ballerinas dance with 50 other dancers. Audience should read the brochure before the performance begins because

later there are no commentaries or announcements. That stuck with me. You cannot give a rundown of every performance you give. Every sanchari (to convey a story or series of events through body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions) must be spontaneous. If it is pre-decided, it doesn't stay spontaneous. But I leave it to each dancer, as it depends on her training, way of thinking, and approach to dance.

**Tell us something about the themes and content of your choreographic works.**

I have always chosen themes of women empowerment, such as Devi, Draupadi, Panchkanya, river pollution (Krishna-Kaliya) atmospheric pollution, and thought pollution. I always say the three Vs-vichar (thought), vaani (speech), and vyavhaar

(behavior)-need to be cleansed from time to time to ward off negativity. Today, people are stressed, tired, and emotionally burdened. Our dances address these issues and uplift emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

**What advice do you have for aspiring classical dancers regarding training and technique?**

Many things have changed over the years, but some things remain the same. Ekagrachitta (एकाग्रचित्त), or focus and commitment, is one such tenet all students must observe. When you go to a Guru to learn, you must be well-prepared for the next class. You must have respect for the teacher, the traditions, the place you perform, the iconography, the messages contained in the Puranas, the temples, their

architecture, and so on.

**What do you have to say about the mythology of the Puranas from where you draw your themes?**

I would say mythology is the wrong word. Mythology comes from 'mythos' (in Greek) which is akin to fairy tales. Our stories are not fairy tales; they are actual events that took place long ago. They have messages and inspirations that transcend time. We must honor, respect, and work according to these stories.

**What are some of the challenges you've faced in your career, and how have you overcome them?**

Life is a journey full of challenges, and these challenges shape who you are and how you deal with them. They help you grow, evolve, and become a

better person. I took two vows with my grandfather: I will never commercialize dance, so I give all the money from my performances to my institute, Shri Kamakhya Kalapeeth (Centre for Indian Classical Dances). I have lived in rented accommodations and will continue to do so, after my term as Member of Parliament is over.

**Could you share a particularly rewarding or transformative experience you've had?**

There are not just one but many. If one allows oneself to be like a lotus and opens up to Sun, every moment is transformative and rewarding. One needs to open up to accept beauty with one's eyes, ears, mind, and heart-Satyam Shivam Sundaram. There is a beautiful prayer, "Asatoma Sadgamaya" (Lead me from ignorance to truth), "Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya" (Lead me from darkness to light), "Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya" (Lead me from time-bound consciousness to the timeless state of Being). May we all have that rewarding journey. Through my dance, learning, and friends, I have lived a fulfilling and rewarding life. The human avatar is very rare; let's make the most of it.



The Niazi brothers have not only preserved the traditional essence of Qawwali but have also managed to infuse it with contemporary relevance, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

# KEEPERS OF QAWWALI'S SOUL IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

Immersed in the mysticism of Sufi music, the Niazi Brothers stand as luminaries in the realm of Qawwali, weaving a tapestry of tradition and innovation Sufi music, with its ethereal melodies and profound lyrics, transcends the boundaries of time and culture, reaching deep into the human soul. Rooted in the mystical traditions of Sufism, this genre resonates with listeners by invoking a sense of spiritual awakening and emotional connection. The timeless appeal of Sufi music lies in its ability to convey universal themes of love, devotion, and the quest for divine union, making it a poignant and enduring form of artistic expression that continues to captivate audiences across generations.

## A JOURNEY THROUGH SUFI MUSIC

The Niazi Brothers, hailing from Pakistan, are renowned for their powerful and evocative performances

that capture the very essence of Qawwali. The group's roots can be traced back to the renowned Patiala Gharana, known for its distinctive style and musical prowess. Growing up in a family where music was as essential as air, the brothers were immersed in the world of Qawwali from a young age, learning the intricacies and subtleties of the genre from their forebears. Their father, Ustad Allah Rakha, was a renowned Qawwali singer who instilled in them a deep respect for the traditional forms and the spiritual messages conveyed through their music. This early education laid a strong foundation, allowing the Niazi Brothers to develop a profound understanding of both the technical and emotional aspects of Qawwali. However, the Niazi Brothers' rise to prominence was not an overnight success but a journey of relentless dedication and passion. Their performances are characterised by a deep emotional connection, powerful vocals, and a mastery of the harmonium and tabla, all of which are central to the Qawwali experience. The brothers have performed on numerous prestigious stages around the world, captivating audiences with their dynamic energy and spiritual depth. Their repertoire includes classical Qawwalis that date back centuries, as well as more contemporary pieces that reflect current social and spiritual themes. This blend of old and new has helped them reach a diverse audience,

from traditionalists who appreciate the purity of their classical renditions to younger listeners who find resonance in their modern interpretations.

## THE FUTURE OF QAWWALI IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

As the world hurtles forward with technological advancements and shifting cultural landscapes, the future of Qawwali faces both challenges and opportunities. The Niazi Brothers are acutely aware of this dynamic and have been proactive in adapting to the changing times while preserving the core essence of their music. One significant avenue they have explored is the digital realm. Through social media platforms, streaming services, and online concerts, the Niazi Brothers have reached a global audience that transcends geographical boundaries. These platforms have allowed them to share their music with fans who might never have had the opportunity to experience a live Qawwali performance, thereby expanding the genre's reach and relevance. Moreover, collaborations with artists from different musical backgrounds have also played a crucial role in keeping Qawwali vibrant and relevant. By blending traditional Qawwali with contemporary music styles, the Niazi Brothers have created a unique fusion that appeals to a broader audience. This fusion not only keeps the tradition alive but also introduces its profound

spiritual and emotional depth to new listeners.

## PRESERVING TRADITION WHILE EMBRACING INNOVATION

The Niazi Brothers' approach to the future of Qawwali is a delicate balance of preservation and innovation. They remain deeply committed to the traditional aspects of Qawwali, understanding that its true power lies in its authenticity and spiritual roots. At the same time, they are not afraid to experiment and incorporate new elements that resonate with today's audiences. Education and mentorship also form a significant part of their vision for the future. By teaching young musicians the art of Qawwali, the Niazi Brothers are ensuring that this ancient tradition is passed down to future generations. They conduct workshops and training sessions, sharing their knowledge and passion with aspiring Qawwalis, thus creating a new generation of musicians who can carry the torch forward. The journey of the Niazi Brothers is a testament to the enduring power of Qawwali. Through their dedication, talent, and willingness to innovate, they have kept this ancient form of spiritual music alive and thriving. As the world continues to change at a rapid pace, the Niazi Brothers stand as guardians of a rich musical heritage, ensuring that the soul-stirring strains of Qawwali continue to resonate across the globe for generations to come.



## NIAZI BROTHERS ENTHRAL AT JASHN-E-QAWWALI CONCERT

Wishes & Blessings, a Delhi-based NGO committed to aiding those in need, organised the third edition of the fundraising concert, Jashn-E-Qawwali at Kamani Auditorium, Delhi. The event showcased mesmerizing performances by the internationally acclaimed Qawwali group, Niazi Brothers. Their soulful melodies captivated the audience, who swayed to power-packed performances ranging from traditional Qawwali tunes to popular Bollywood hits and original compositions by the Niazi Brothers. Standout renditions included timeless classics such as 'Kun Faya Kun,' 'Chaap Tilak,' 'Bhar De Jholi,' and 'Dama Dam Mast Qalandar'. The event attracted a wide audience, including beneficiaries of various Wishes & Blessings programmes like Sahas (an upskilling programme for women), the street-to-school initiative, and the community initiative, and the community overwhelmed by the turnout and the resounding success of Jashn-E-Qawwali," said Dr Geetanjali Chopra, Founder and President of Wishes & Blessings, adding that,

"This marks the third edition of the fundraiser, with the previous two being immensely successful. The funds raised this year will directly contribute to our WB Rasoi programme, addressing the fundamental need for food among those in need. We are grateful to Niazi Brothers for their continued support and to everyone who attended and contributed for the cause."

The funds raised will support the expansion of WB Rasoi, a new initiative aimed at providing nutritious meals to individuals in need. The NGO recently launched its first WB Rasoi in NOIDA, NCR. Shahid Niazi of the Niazi Brothers shared, "It was an honour to perform for such a noble cause. When we needed help, they were there for us. This was our time to give back. We are proud to be associated with Wishes & Blessings NGO for the past three years and look forward to contributing more in the future." The triumphant culmination of Jashn-E-Qawwali underscores Wishes & Blessings' commitment to making a meaningful difference in marginalised communities and lives and exemplifies music's power in fostering social change.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

# Theatre of Enchantment

Gulzar's captivating adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* took centrestage last week with director Salim Arif's masterful vision bringing this timeless comedy to life, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi was recently treated to an evening of theatrical enchantment at the prestigious Shri Ram Centre Auditorium. Amidst the city's vibrant energy, laughter and thunderous applause emerged as the renowned Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts (SRCPA) Repertory unveiled Gulzar's spellbinding adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, titled *2 BY 2*. The auditorium was transformed into a realm of lighthearted gaiety, captivating the audience with the timeless magic of a live performance. Every artist was wholeheartedly appreciated, showcasing the audience's love for exceptional work. In a world where appreciation is often fleeting, this play, masterfully directed by the renowned Mohammed Salim Arif, stood as a testament to the enduring power of art. An acclaimed visionary in the realms of film, television and theatre, Salim's directorial prowess in *2 BY 2* can only be described as a masterpiece of the highest calibre. The play is a comedic masterpiece that tickles the funny bone with its hilarious depiction of mistaken identities and coincidental mix-ups involving identical twins with identical names. Designed and directed by Salim Arif and performed by ace artists, the play is a delightful experience. The audience was particularly impressed with the fact the actors performed and delivered on a script like Gulzar's script and Arif's direction. Resemblance with the adaptation of Shakespeare's classic drama in the film *Angoor* was quite obvious but the theatrical adaptation was indeed a beautiful execution of the masterpiece.

*2 BY 2*, like Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, centres on two pairs of identical twins with identical names. Raj Tilak, a wealthy merchant, has identical twins named Ashok. During a journey, Raj Tilak discovers another pair of identical twins and adopts them, calling them Bahadur. An unfortunate accident separates the family, with each parent ending up with one child from each pair. One set of twins grows up married while the other remains single and mischievous. The comedy unfolds when the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur duo arrive in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside. The ensuing confusion, involving their families, a jeweller, a taxi driver, and an inspector, leads to a series of hilarious misunderstandings that has the audience in stitches. The play masterfully blends humour, acting, and a classic script to create an entertaining experience. Gulzar's script, known for its poetic and situational brilliance, adds depth and flavour to the play, enthraling the audience all along. Director Salim Arif commented, "Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* is a classic that centres on the notion of 'mistaken identity'. In Gulzar Saab's adaptation *2 BY 2*, the arrival of the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside creates a confusion that involves more than their families, to extend to a jeweller, a police inspector, and the town." The performances by the cast was exceptional, their expressions, delivery

and timing impeccable. The sets, lighting, costumes and props were meticulously crafted, adding to the play's charm. The success of *2 BY 2* is an indication to the enduring appeal of high-quality, engaging theatre. The combination of Salim Arif's direction and Gulzar Saab's writing created an unforgettable experience, proving that great work continues to receive the appreciation it deserves. *2 BY 2* is more than just a simple tale of confusion. The script, penned by the legendary Gulzar, is a masterpiece of situational comedy. Each dialogue adds a layer of humour to the chaos, keeping the audience perpetually on the edge of their seats in anticipation of what comes next. Director Salim Arif masterfully brings the script to life, ensuring the comedic timing is tight. The talented cast deserves credit for its captivating performances. From subtle inflections to dramatic gestures, every aspect of the actors' performance is a testament to their dedication to the craft. The play does not just rely on the actors. The set's design, perfect lighting, costumes and props, all contribute in transporting the audience into the world of *2 BY 2*. *2 BY 2* is indeed a celebration of theatre at its finest. As the curtains came down on the play, a thunderous applause filled the auditorium, showcasing the profound impact on the audience. The seamless blend of Gulzar's storytelling, Salim Arif's direction and the exceptional performances created an unforgettable evening of laughter and delight. With this play, the SRCPA further underlined its commitment to bringing exceptional theatre to Delhi, reminding us of power of art to unite, entertain and inspire. As one left the theatre, one was reminded of the fact that amidst life's complexities, the gift of shared joy through a live performance is an eternal treasure.

# TRAILBLAZING JOURNEY THROUGH BHARATANATYAM

Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a pioneer in the field of Bharatanatyam, has ushered in a new dawn for this ancient art form with her passion and innovative spirit, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In the vibrant tapestry of classical Indian dance forms, Bharatanatyam is a captivating expression of grace, rhythm and storytelling. At the forefront of this ancient art's contemporary renaissance is Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a celebrated dancer, choreographer, and teacher from Mumbai. With a journey that began in the culturally rich city of Kolhapur, Apeksha's unwavering passion and dedication have elevated her to the ranks of the most accomplished Bharatanatyam artists of our time. Through her exceptional talent, innovative choreography and profound understanding of the art form's rich heritage, she has captivated audiences across the globe, ushering in a new era of appreciation for this timeless dance tradition. Apeksha's journey in mastering Bharatanatyam has been one of dedication, discipline and learning. She describes how her love for the dance form is rooted in its profound ability to tell stories through rhythm, expression and grace. From a young age, she was captivated by the intricate footwork, eloquent gestures and expressive use of the eyes. Her journey, guided by her gurus, has deepened her appreciation for the rich cultural heritage and intricate techniques of Bharatanatyam. One of Apeksha's notable productions, *Nayanam*, which means eyes in Sanskrit, explores the myriad emotions conveyed through the eyes. This thematic performance highlights the eyes as windows to the soul, capable of portraying joy, love, sorrow and longing. Apeksha recounts a memorable moment during her Poland Spring Tour 2024 when a girl in the audience was moved to tears by *Nayanam*, underscoring the power of dance to push barriers.

Apeksha's training in the *Nritya-Ganga* dance style, introduced by her Guru Dr Sucheta Chapekar, has significantly influenced her interpretation and performance of Bharatanatyam. This style blends tradition with innovation, enhancing her performances while staying true to the essence of the art form. She emphasises that dance is a form of visual poetry, where the essence lies in dancing to the music rather than treating it as a mathematical exercise. Reflecting on her performance at a festival in Italy in 2022, Apeksha shared how she traversed a kilometre on the road while performing Bharatanatyam, ending at the 'Gate of Peace'. She portrayed the story of *Yamuna Gatha*, addressing the pollution and pain of the Yamuna River. This contemporary theme demonstrated the relevance and power of Bharatanatyam in addressing contemporary issues

and left a lasting impact on the international audience. Apeksha also highlighted the unique aspects of the Tanjavur school of Bharatanatyam, which prioritises fluidity and musicality. She incorporates these elements into her performances, creating a harmonious and synchronised expression. Her choreography balances traditional elements with her unique artistic expression, ensuring that the soul of Bharatanatyam remains intact while infusing it with innovation. Addressing the challenges faced by classical dancers today, Apeksha emphasises the importance of finding platforms to present her art and balance multiple roles while managing family life. She credits her supportive family and dedicated team for helping her navigate these challenges. She sees Bharatanatyam evolving in the modern era by making it more accessible and relatable. She aims to showcase stories that resonate with the audiences and connect through local music and folk stories. By incorporating elements such as the poetry of saints from Maharashtra and performing Bharatanatyam based on local folk stories and Gregorian chants, she hopes to bridge cultural divides and ensure that the art form remains relevant. For young dancers aspiring to pursue Bharatanatyam professionally, Apeksha advises prioritising dedicated practice, seeking guidance from knowledgeable gurus and embracing innovation within the framework of tradition. She encourages dancers to focus on expressing emotions authentically and maintaining physical and mental fitness.

Apeksha prepares for her performances through a holistic process that begins months in advance. This involves choreography, music creation, refining movements and mental rehearsal. She emphasises the importance of being adaptable and maintaining a calm demeanour, acknowledging that uncertainties may arise on a given day. She recalls her moment of connection with her audience during a performance in Poland, where she danced to Polish folk music. The fusion of Bharatanatyam with traditional Polish music created a unique and captivating experience, highlighting the universal language of dance. She aspires to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, ensuring it remains accessible and appreciated by diverse audiences. Through innovative choreography and engaging performances, she continues to contribute to the global recognition of Bharatanatyam as a profound and timeless art form. Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi's journey through Bharatanatyam is a testament to the transformative power of dance. Her dedication, innovative spirit and profound connection to the art form have not only elevated her performances but also enriched the cultural landscape. As she continues to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, Apeksha inspires us to embrace tradition while welcoming innovation to deepen our appreciation for this timeless art form. In this, Apeksha Niranjana is truly a beacon of light, illuminating the path for future generations, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Bharatanatyam continues to captivate and inspire audiences for times to come.



# The party that freed South Africa from apartheid loses its 30-year majority



**The MK Party said one of their conditions for any agreement was that Ramaphosa is removed as ANC leader and president. "We are willing to negotiate with the ANC, but not the ANC of Cyril Ramaphosa," MK Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndlela said.**

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

The African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority in a historic election result Saturday that puts South Africa on a new political path for the first time since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule 30 years ago.

With nearly 99% of votes counted, the once-dominant ANC had received just over 40% in the election on

Wednesday, well short of the majority it had held since the famed all-race vote of 1994 that ended apartheid and brought it to power under Nelson Mandela. The final results are still to be formally declared by the independent electoral commission that ran the election.

While opposition parties hailed it as a momentous breakthrough for a country struggling with deep poverty and inequality, the ANC remained the biggest party in some way but will now need to look for a coalition partner or partners to stay in the government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. Parliament elects the South African president after national elections.

The result ended the ANC's dominance three-decade dominance of South Africa's young democracy. Still, the way forward promises to be complicated for Africa's most advanced economy, and there's no coalition yet.

The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, was on around 21%. The new MK Party of former President Jacob Zuma, who has turned against the ANC he once led, came third with just over 14% of the vote in the first election it has contested.

Which parties the ANC might approach to co-govern with is the urgent focus now, given Parliament needs to sit and elect a president within 14 days of the final election results being officially declared. A flurry of negotiations was set to take place and they will likely be complicated.

The MK Party said one of their conditions for any agreement was that Ramaphosa is removed as ANC leader and president.

"We are willing to negotiate with the ANC, but not the ANC of Cyril Ramaphosa," MK Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndlela said.

More than 50 parties contested the national election, but given how far off a majority the ANC appears to be, it is likely that it will have to approach one of the three main opposition parties.

MK and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters have called for parts of the economy to be nationalised. The centrist Democratic Alliance is viewed as a business-friendly party and analysts say an ANC-DA coalition would be more welcomed by foreign investors.

Despite the uncertainty, South African opposition parties were hailing the new political picture as a much-needed change for the country of 62 million, which is Africa's most developed but also one of the most unequal in the world.

South Africa has widespread poverty and extremely high levels of unemployment and the ANC has struggled to raise the standard of living for millions. The official unemployment rate is 32%, one of the highest in the world, and the poverty disproportionately affects Black people, who make up 80% of the population and have been the core of the ANC's support for years.

The ANC has also been blamed - and apparently punished by voters - for a failure in basic government services that impacts millions and leaves many without water, electricity or proper housing.

"We have said for the last 30 years that the way to rescue South Africa is to break the ANC's majority and we have done that," Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen said. Nearly 28 million South Africans were registered to vote and turnout is expected to be around 60%, according to figures from the independent electoral commission that runs the election.



## North Korea is sending more trash-carrying balloons to South Korea

PNS ■ SEOUL

North Korea launched more trash-carrying balloons toward the South after a similar campaign earlier in the week, according to South Korea's military, in what Pyongyang calls retaliation for activists flying anti-North Korean leaflets across the border.

South Korea's Defence Ministry did not immediately comment on the number of balloons it had detected or how many have landed in South Korea. The military advised people to beware of falling objects and not to touch objects suspected to be from North Korea, but report them to military or police offices instead.

In Seoul, the capital, the city government sent text alerts saying that unidentified

objects suspected to be flown from North Korea were being detected in skies near the city and that the military was responding to them.

The North's balloon launches added to a recent series of provocative steps, which include its failed spy satellite launch and test-firings of about 10 suspected short-range missiles this week.

South Korea's military dispatched chemical rapid response and explosive clearance teams to recover the debris from some 260 North Korean balloons that were found in various parts of the country from Tuesday night to Wednesday. The military said the balloons carried various types of trash and manure but no dangerous substances like chemical, biological or radioactive materials.

## Engineering cells can help scientists study their inner workings

PNS ■ MADISON

Waves are ubiquitous in nature and technology. Whether it's the rise and fall of ocean tides or the swinging of a clock's pendulum, the predictable rhythms of waves create a signal that is easy to track and distinguish from other types of signals.

Electronic devices use radio waves to send and receive data, like your laptop and Wi-Fi router or cellphone and cell tower. Similarly, scientists can use a different type of wave to transmit a different type of data: signals from the invisible processes and dynamics underlying how cells make decisions. Waves are a powerful engineering tool.

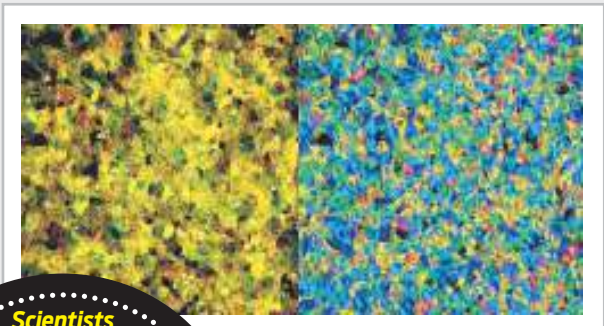
The oscillating behaviour of waves is one reason they're powerful patterns in engineering.

For example, controlled and predictable changes to wave oscillations can be used to encode data, such as voice or video information. In the case of radio, each station is assigned a unique electromagnetic wave that oscillates at its own frequency.

Scientists can extend this strategy to living cells. My team used waves of proteins to turn a cell into a microscopic radio station, broadcasting data about its activity in real time to study its behaviour.

Turning cells into radio stations. Studying the inside of cells requires a kind of wave that can specifically connect to and interact with the machinery and components of a cell.

While electronic devices are built from wires and transistors, cells are built from and controlled by



**Scientists can extend this strategy to living cells. My team used waves of proteins to turn a cell into a microscopic radio station, broadcasting data about its activity in real time to study its behaviour**

a diverse collection of chemical building blocks called proteins. Proteins perform an array of functions within the cell, from extracting energy from sugar to deciding whether the cell should grow.

Protein waves are generally rare in nature, but some bacteria naturally generate waves of two proteins called MinD and MinE - typically referred to together as MinDE - to help them divide. My team discovered that putting MinDE into human cells causes the proteins to reorganize themselves into a stunning array of waves and patterns.

On their own, MinDE protein waves do not interact with other proteins in human cells. However, we found that MinDE could be readily engineered to react to the activity of specific human proteins responsible for making decisions about whether to grow, send signals to neighboring cells, move around and divide.

The protein dynamics driving these cellular functions are typically difficult to detect and study in living cells because the activity of proteins is generally invisible to even high-power microscopes. The disruption of these protein patterns is at the core of many cancers and developmental disorders.

We engineered connections between MinDE protein waves and the activity of proteins responsible for key cellular processes. Now, the activity of these proteins trigger changes in the frequency or amplitude of the protein wave, just like an AM/FM radio. Using microscopes, we can detect and record the unique signals individual cells are broadcasting and then decode them to recover the dynamics of these cellular processes.

UNCERTAINTY OVER SPACEX ROCKET

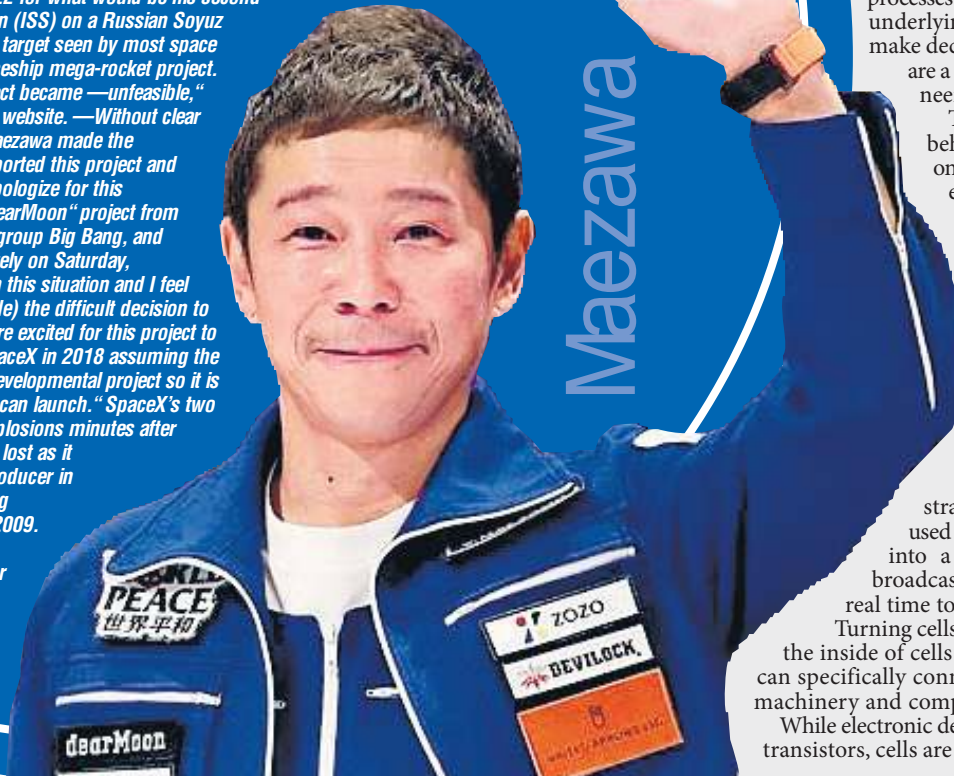
## Japan billionaire cancels moon trip due to development

PNS ■ TOKYO

Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa on Saturday canceled his planned flight around the moon on a SpaceX vehicle because of uncertainty about when it may be possible. The tycoon in 2018 launched plans for the lunar flyby voyage. He bought seats for eight traveling companions in 2022 for what would be his second space journey after his 12-day trip to the International Space Station (ISS) on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in 2021. Maezawa was aiming the moon trip for 2023, a target seen by most space observers as overly optimistic given the progress of SpaceX's Spaceship mega-rocket project. Maezawa said in his message on Saturday in a statement posted on his website. "Without clear schedule certainty in the near-term, it is with a heavy heart that Maezawa made the unavoidable decision to cancel the project." "To all who have supported this project and looked forward to this endeavor, we sincerely appreciate it and apologize for this outcome," he said. Maezawa had selected eight people for his "dearMoon" project from 1 million applicants. They included a lead rapper for the K-pop group Big Bang, and Americans DJ Steve Aoki and filmmaker Brendan Hall. Separately on Saturday, Maezawa said in his message on X: "I can't plan my future in this situation and I feel terrible making the crew members wait longer, hence (I made) the difficult decision to cancel at this point in time." "I apologize to those who were excited for this project to happen," he said. He said he signed the contract with SpaceX in 2018 assuming the launch would be possible by the end of 2023. "It's a developmental project so it is what it is, but it is still uncertain as to when Starship can launch." "SpaceX's two test flights of its mega-rocket last year ended in explosions minutes after liftoff. In a third test in March, its spacecraft was lost as it descended back to Earth. Maezawa and his producer in December 2021 became the first self-paying tourists to visit the space station since 2009.

Maezawa made his fortune in retail fashion, launching Japan's major online fashion mall, Zozotown.

The venue of the event, George Everest Peak is a major tourist attraction in Mussoorie which offers spectacular views of the snow-clad Himalayan peaks and the Doon Valley.



## India's first astro tourism campaign begins in Mussoorie

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

India's first astro tourism campaign "Nakshatra Sabha" was inaugurated at the George Everest peak in Mussoorie on Saturday. The venue of the event, George Everest Peak is a major tourist attraction in Mussoorie which offers spectacular views of the snow-clad Himalayan peaks and the Doon Valley.

Starscapes - India's leading Astro tourism company, is jointly organising the event which will go on till June 2. After this, astro tourism events will also be organized in places like Harsil-Jadung, Benital, Rishikesh, Jageshwar and Ramnagar.

Various activities like star gazing through special instruments, solar observation through solar glasses and H-Alpha filter are being organised as part of the event.



## Braving icy heights: Election at world's highest polling station

PNS ■ TASHINGANG (HP)

Prem Lal arrived early at the subdivisional magistrate's office on Thursday, the icy cold and crisp morning air hinting at the challenges ahead.

As one of the 29 booth-level officers deployed from Kaza to polling stations in Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, Lal knew that the next few days would be demanding.

Wearing sunglasses to shield his eyes from the glaring sun, the trained graduate teacher joined others in a semi-circle. The SDM, carrying a bunch of papers clipped together, called out the names of the booth officers and their assignments.

It is Tashingang for Lal and his team of five others. Tashingang is a tiny village perched high in the icy Himalayas at a staggering altitude of

15,256 feet. The village holds the distinction of hosting the highest polling station in the world.

Located near the India-China border, the Spiti valley is part of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, one of the four parliamentary constituencies in Himachal Pradesh and the second largest in India. Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is up against the Congress's Vikramaditya Singh from the seat.

The polling station at Tashingang, serving 62 voters from Tashingang and Gete, has been made a model polling booth. The hour-and-a-half-long journey to Tashingang, located on the other side of a mountain facing the SDM's office in Kaza, is as formidable as the landscape itself - rugged terrain, narrow winding dirt roads and unpredictable weather.

Yet, for Lal and his team, the assignment carries a sense of pur-

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pose. In a place where the harsh environment shapes every aspect of life, facilitating the democratic process is both a "duty and an honour".

"I have been part of a team that conducted elections at Hikkim (also in the Spiti valley), the second-highest polling station in the country, in the past. So I have some experience," Lal said, laughing as he walked to board a white Bolero car with an electronic voting machine (EVM) in his hands.

After a brief pause, he added, "Thoda dikkat to hoga (there will be

some difficulties)," acknowledging the challenges ahead, especially for those unaccustomed to such a difficult terrain with no mobile connectivity and limited power supply.

But the polling preparations are meticulous.

"The team will get a satellite phone and runners will be deployed to relay polling data to the headquarters," Additional District Commissioner Rahul Jain told PTI. "The terrain is tough, but our teams are committed and we have made all the preparations," he added.