



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN

Modi urges officials to ensure fire drills in hospitals, public places

'MY DRESS GOT READY 2 HOURS BEFORE I HAD TO LEAVE'

Meera Jasmine as 'Uthphalaa Devi' IN SWAG

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I have evidence. I will prove in which flight Harish Rao travelled and where he met Prabhakar Rao in the US. Will Harish take a vow that he did not meet Prabhakar Rao in the US? I am ready for anything if I cannot prove my allegations. Harish went to the US on May 26 and came back on June 1. KCR has been trying to ensure that Prabhakar does not return to India. KCR will have to go to jail if Prabhakar returns. KCR mocked democracy by using rowdies like Prabhakar Rao, Radha Kishan Rao, Praneeth Rao, Bhujanga Rao, Thirupathanna and others. We thought that KCR was engaged in farming in his farmhouse but he was tapping phones

- Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, R&B Minister, Telangana

DON'T MISS...

Heavy rain likely in parts of AP...

Heavy rain is expected to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours. According to a daily weather report, conditions are favourable for the further advance of the Southwest Monsoon into additional parts of the central Arabian Sea, Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and parts of the West Central and Northwest Bay of Bengal over the next 2-3 days. A cyclonic circulation currently over Coastal Andhra...

-PAGE: 3

Sweltering heat, flash floods...

Sweltering heatwave in north India that have caused scores of deaths, floods and landslides in the northeast that have affected lakhs of people, a spring season that suggests it could soon "disappear" from the calendar — extreme weather events in the first five months of 2024 have got everyone questioning: where is all this headed? Despite having made predictions to this effect, climate scientists acknowledge that the temperatures this summer, including the outlier 52.9 degrees Celsius in Delhi...

-PAGE: 5

AC makers clock two-fold jump in...

A blistering summer has led to an almost two-fold jump in sales of air-conditioners in May even as leading manufacturers have been grappling with delays in installation and replenishing inventories of hot-selling energy-efficient models. The mercury is hovering above 45 degrees at several places including the national capital, which has been under the grip of a severe heatwave for the past few days. At the same time, AC makers are navigating exceptional demand, recording their best-ever sales in a month so far...

-PAGE: 8

Amit Panghal clinches Paris...

Amit Panghal's comeback to the Indian team culminated in an Olympic quota as the world championships silver medalist boxer qualified for the Paris Games with a quarterfinal win in the 2nd World Qualification Tournament here on Sunday. Panghal, India's lone male world championship silver medalist, notched a hard-fought 5-0 win over China's Chuang Liu for a ticket to his second Olympic Games. He thus joins the quartet of Nishant Dev (71kg), Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti...

-SPORTS

Ensure no disturbances at counting centres: CEO

District officials told to take legal action against trouble-makers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena conducted a virtual conference with district officials in preparation for the vote counting on June 4. He emphasised the importance of taking adequate precautions to prevent disturbances at the counting centres and warned that strict legal action would be taken against anyone attempting to cause disruptions. He also urged district electoral officers to announce the exact results swiftly.

During the meeting, the CEO highlighted the intense competition in the elections and advised officials to take measures to avoid emotional situations that could affect the vote counting process. He stressed the need for uncompromising action to maintain law and order.

Meena instructed that each Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) should be sealed and secured immediately after counting is completed. He also outlined the steps to ensure that the Form-21C/21E, related to the declaration of results, reaches the Election Commission of India (ECI) the day after the counting.

Additionally, he stated that agents should be allowed at each counting table only if there is no candidate present at the Returning Officer (RO) table. Agents entering the counting center should only carry Form-17C,



Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena addressing a video conference with district officials on Sunday.

- District electoral officers urged to announce exact results promptly.
- Measures advised to prevent emotional situations from affecting vote counting, maintaining law and order without compromise.
- Each EVM to be sealed and secured immediately after counting.
- Steps outlined to ensure Form-21C/21E reaches the Election Commission of India the day after counting.
- Agents allowed at counting tables only if no candidate is present at the RO table, carrying only Form-17C, a pen or pencil, and plain paper.
- Counting centres must meet fire safety standards, have clear entry and exit points with signboards, and receive fire department certification.

a pen or pencil, and plain paper. Journalists with letters of authority can enter the media centre with cell phones but are not permitted to bring them into the counting centre.

Meena recommended that all counting centres meet fire safety standards and obtain certification from the fire department.

Continued on Page 2

Cop shoots son dead with service rifle

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a shocking incident on Saturday night, a police constable shot his son dead with his service rifle after an altercation over money. The incident occurred near the EVM reserve godown at Bhagyanagar 4th Line.

According to police reports, the accused constable, Kodamala Prasad Babu (ARPC 2929), was on security duty at the EVM reserve godown. His son, Kodamala Seshu Kamal (20), had dropped his father at the godown on his motorcycle.

The argument began when Seshu Kamal asked his father for some money, as the constable had recently received his salary. When the constable refused, a heated argument ensued. In a fit of rage, Prasad Babu rushed into the godown, retrieved his service rifle, and shot his son at point-blank range.

Seshu Kamal collapsed in a pool of blood and was immediately taken to the Government General Hospital (GGH), where doctors declared him dead. Following the shooting, other security personnel at the scene heard the gunshot and rushed to disarm Prasad Babu.

A case has been registered against the constable under Cr.356/2024, u/s 302 IPC, and Sec 27 of the Arms Act. Prasad Babu was arrested, produced before the Executive Magistrate, and remanded to judicial custody.

Naidu confident of NDA victory

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday expressed confidence that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would achieve an indisputable and unquestionable victory in the upcoming elections. He commended the efforts of the leaders and activists of all alliance partners for their contributions to the NDA's success.

Naidu organised a Zoom meeting with NDA candidates contesting for the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly. He praised the hard work of Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, BJP State president Purandeswari, and other alliance leaders and activists. He also provided a roadmap for the actions to be taken during the counting process on Tuesday.

"All exit polls clearly indicate the victory of the NDA, and the alliance is set to form governments both at the Centre and in the State," Naidu told the candidates.

He added that the YSRCP is currently trying to find reasons for its anticipated defeat and that their court move concerning the poll panel's directions on postal ballots is part of this effort. Naidu warned NDA leaders of potential irregularities and attacks from YSRCP leaders on counting day.

Continued on Page 2

Be vigilant till end of counting, TDP agents told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed TDP counting agents to remain vigilant at the counting centres until the end of the counting process. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that counting officials adhere to the norms set by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Addressing a Zoom meeting on Sunday, Naidu stated, "Counting agents must ensure that officials follow the laid down norms and be alert while the EVMs are being shifted from the strong-rooms to the counting centers."

He further advised candidates to leave the counting centres only after obtaining the declaration form from the respective returning officer (RO).

Continued on Page 2

National poll surveys fail to capture voter sentiment

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

The exit poll results announced on Saturday by various survey agencies, intended to give the public an idea of which party might win the 2024 elections, have instead caused confusion. Some exit poll agencies have been accused of bias, with reports favouring either the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) or the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The State anxiously awaits the vote count on June 4.

Each political party employs its own survey agencies to gauge public sentiment. While some organisations predict a decisive victory for YSRCP, others claim the TDP alliance will emerge victorious. Ideally, exit polls from different institutions should align closely. Significant discrepancies raise concerns about the credibility of these polls. The recent exit polls illustrate this issue, highlight-

ing inconsistencies in predictions. Reputable organisations like Aaraa, known for their accurate surveys, risk their credibility if their estimates are wrong. In contrast, lesser-known firms may publish unreliable exit polls without hesitation. This inconsistency has led people to joke that waiting until June 4 is the best course of action.

Notably, Aaraa Mastan's survey, known for its credibility, came under scrutiny from TDP leader Buddha Venkateswara Rao (Venkanna). He sensationally claimed he would slit his tongue if the TDP-led NDA alliance did not come to power and challenged psychologist Aaraa Mastan to do the same if the NDA won.

On the other hand, national media exit polls have predicted a significant victory for the NDA in the Andhra Pradesh assembly elections.



'It's 'Modi media poll'

INDIA bloc will get 295 seats: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Termining the exit polls "bogus," the Congress on Sunday said they were a "deliberate attempt" to justify rigging of the elections and part of "psychological games" being played by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lower the morale of the INDIA bloc workers.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi dubbed the exit polls as "Modi media poll". "This is not called an exit poll but its name is 'Modi media poll'. This is Modi ji's poll, it is his fantasy poll," Gandhi told reporters after a meeting with party's Lok Sabha MPs via video conference.

Asked how many seats INDIA bloc will get, Gandhi said, "Have you heard Sidhu Moose Wala's song '295'? So 295 (seats)."

YSRCP moves SC on postal ballots

Sajjala asks counting agents to be alert and not lose temper

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has appealed to the party's counting agents to remain vigilant, emphasising the importance of maintaining composure throughout the process. He referred to the influence exerted by Opposition Leader Chandrababu Naidu in past elections, urging agents to be alert and not lose their temper.

Training sessions for YSRCP counting agents are currently being conducted in preparation for the vote counting. During a virtual meeting from the party's central office on Sunday, Sajjala stressed the need for strict adherence to election rules to ensure every valid vote is counted. He advised agents to stay



Sajjala stressed the need for strict adherence to election rules to ensure every valid vote is counted. He advised agents to stay calm and immediately report any irregularities to the authorities.

calm and immediately report any irregularities to the authorities. Sajjala specifically mentioned the need to verify the official's signature on postal ballots, cautioning agents to be aware of any attempts by opponents to provoke or distract them.

Highlighting Naidu's tactics, Sajjala warned agents to be cautious of any disruptive activities and to report issues to the party's central

office immediately. Furthermore, Sajjala said that the YSRCP had challenged the Election Commission of India's (ECI) postal ballot orders in the Supreme Court. The party opposes the ECI's requirement for an official seal, designation, and specimen signature on postal ballots, arguing that existing conditions should remain unchanged.

US media has good & bad terrorist bias, says NRI-led study

P5



Heavy rain, gales throw life out of gear in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Port City of Visakhapatnam was battered by strong winds clocking speeds of 30-40 kmph, accompanied by thunderstorms and heavy rainfall. Many trees were uprooted in the city, disrupting traffic operations. The thunderstorms led to a noticeable drop in temperatures by 3°C to 5°C. The rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, began around 6:00 am, lasting for about two hours before recurring intermittently till afternoon.

According to meteorologists at the Cyclone Warning Centre (CWC), Visakhapatnam, the

Continued on Page 2

inclement weather was a consequence of a trough passing over the State, coupled with high levels of humidity persisting in the atmosphere for several days. Forecasters anticipate the thunderstorms to persist intermittently for the next few days. Areas such as Poorna Market, Gnanapuram, Allipuram, Gajuwaka, Maddilapalem, NAD Junction, and Appu Ghar experienced water stagnation due to the heavy downpour. Traffic disruptions were widespread, with multiple trees uprooted and hoardings collapsing in the southeastern parts of the city.

Continued on Page 2

BJP sweeps Arunachal polls, back in power for 3rd time

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

The BJP on Sunday returned to power in Arunachal Pradesh for the third time in a row, winning 46 seats in the 60-member assembly, and bagging four more seats compared to its 2019 tally.

In sweeping the assembly elections, the counting of which was held during the day, the BJP decimated the opposition parties, especially the Congress which was relegated to the fifth position with only one seat after NPP (5), NCP (3) and PPA (2). Three seats went to Independent candidates.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu asserted that the momentum of what happened in the 'Land of the rising sun, a sobriquet for Arunachal Pradesh, will spread to other parts of the country on June 4 when votes for the Lok Sabha elections will be counted.



"This is a historic occasion for the BJP and entire Arunachal Pradesh. The people of Arunachal Pradesh have declared that they want BJP to stay in power for the next five years. This time, the mandate is more than what we got in 2019. In the 2019 Assembly polls, BJP won 41 seats, while we have won 46 seats this time," Khandu said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the people of Arunachal Pradesh for the landslide

SKM RETURNS TO POWER IN SIKKIM

PNS ■ GANGTOK

The Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Sunday returned to power in the Himalayan state for the second consecutive term by a landslide victory, winning 31 seats in the 32-member assembly.

The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), which ruled the state for 25 years in a row till 2019, could manage only one seat, though its president Pawan

Kumar Chamling lost in the two constituencies he contested.

SKM president and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, however, won from two seats, and the party bagged 58.38 per cent of the votes polled. The SKM had won 17 seats in the 2019 assembly polls.

Elections to the assembly were held simultaneously with the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on April 19.

@BJP4Arunachal yet again. Our Party will keep working with even greater vigour for the state's growth," Modi said in a post on X.

In response, Khandu said, "Your guidance and vision have played a

Monday Mirchi

COMMISSIONER OF FOOD SAFETY CHEWS EATERIES AND WATERING HOLES

Among the great heroes of *The Mahabharatha*, Karna occupies a pride of place for his fierce loyalty to Duryodhana as well as unostentatious and unstinted charitable acts. His namesake and Telangana's new Commissioner of Food Safety R V Karnan, however, seems to have a Bhimalike appetite for chewing errant pubs, hotels, and eateries that do not comply with prescribed safety and hygiene standards. He has them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The food for thought that he and his team have been giving to raise awareness following a slew of raids on eateries and watering holes has nudged the Hyderabad chapter of the National Restaurant Association of India to form a Task Force and moot hygiene rating for these establishments. Thanks to these raids, even some media-shy bureaucrats have become vocal. That is not all. Netizens, having seen viral post-raid videos of their beloved adda, have gone gaga over Karnan's required recipe for wholesome food and hailed him as the new food blogger in Telangana. A little bird told us that Karnan wants only his work to speak and that he is working relentlessly to put the system on autopilot so that, regardless of the incumbent Commissioner, the good work continues. Interestingly, the distasteful bits of these raids have reached not just Tollywood but also Bollywood stars, some of whom own swanky hotels. For the likes of Karnan, even stardust is not OK in eatables.

HOLES IN JAYESH'S PICK FOR CEO POSITIONS IN IT SHOWPIECES

There seems to be many holes in IT Secretary Jayesh Ranjan's pick for CEO positions in Telangana's IT showpieces. In particular, the CEOs he appointed for We-Hub and T-works, apparently based on their Andhra origin, has not gone down well. For bureaucratic and other circles, it is as plain as the nose on their faces, that these are his desperate attempts to scrub 'BRS man' tag nagging him. Given the predictable consequences of his desperate pick, several officials are certain that he will be moved out. A little bird told us that, complicating matters for him, there are a dozen appointees in his own team who are on a shaky ground because they have been in the same positions for years despite the commencement of Praja palana.

FROM PANCHAYAT RAJ TO MONEY SPINNING?

Granting the Revanth Reddy government has the will to fully implement the Congress party's Six guarantees, it needs money-spinners who can keep the wheels of the state economy running smoothly against odds without creaking or cracking. With Chief Minister Revanth Reddy confirming that there would be another round of transfers, and with the Finance Department due for an overhaul, there are whispers in the cor-

ridors of power that Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary Panchayat Raj & Rural Employment, could be elevated in the upcoming reshuffle for helming the Finance Department. Long-standing Finance Secretary Rama Krishna Rao, who does not have a magic wand to improve on the status quo, might be replaced. Let's hope the newcomer doesn't turn out to be 'Do din ka Sultan'.

CM WATCHING COMMERCIAL TAXES DEPARTMENT

After shaking up the Mining Department from top to bottom, the Revanth Reddy government seems to have trained its eye on a clean-up of the Commercial Taxes Department. For, the Chief Minister is reportedly fed up with its functioning, though the CT department per se has potential to turn around the fortunes of the state by just plugging the tax loopholes. A little bird told us that complaints have gone to the Chief Minister about efficient and honest employees being troubled. This is too much for the Chief Minister at a time when dearth of revenues is getting on his nerves. The whispers in the corridors of power are whether lobbying would work this time. For, in the imminent reshuffle, nobody, even if he has somebody backing him, would be spared.

POLICE BRASS UPTIGHT AMID WHIFF OF RESHUFFLE

Although Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had hand-picked the present Commissioners of Police immediately after forming the government, whiff in the corridors of power about impending replacement of Hyderabad and Cyberabad Commissioners have left the Police Department brass uptight. Khaki-clad bureaucratic circles are not able to figure out what went wrong. All they know is that currently some of the department wings are headless, including Hyderabad Traffic, Legal Metrology, Joint CP Crime, and Joint CP Special branch. At the state level, there are many more 'sarphira' wings with officiating incumbents leaving much to be desired.

GINGER GROUP OF BABUS

Babus in Andhra Pradesh are currently 'pro-government' (hopeful of YSRCP's victory in polls), 'anti-government' (keen on TDP-led combine's win) or neutral (*bindaas*). Babus in the first two categories are extremely worked up over the eventual outcome of the polls, since both netas in the race for the Chief Minister *gaddi* - YS Jaganmohan Reddy and N Chandrababu Naidu -- know their true colours. Amidst all this, there is another ginger group of officials working on deputation. They are trying to go to their parent organisations just to stay clear of all controversies and be in reckoning for plum posts regardless of which party or combine comes to power

--Yours truly

National poll surveys fail...

Continued from Page 1

The India Today-Axis My India exit poll forecasts 98-120 seats out of 175 for the NDA, with the TDP expected to be the largest party, winning 78-96 seats, BJP 4-6 seats, and JSP 16-18 seats. The ruling YSRCP is projected to secure 55-77 seats, down from 151 in 2019. The exit poll indicates an 85-seat gain for the NDA compared to 2019, while YSRCP's seats are expected to drop. In terms of vote share, the NDA may see a 5% increase, while YSRCP could face a 6% decrease.

In response, YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy dismissed the national media's exit polls, asserting that YSRCP will be victorious in the 2024 elections. He criticised survey agencies based in Delhi for being out of touch with the ground reality in Andhra Pradesh. Reddy mocked the national surveys, suggesting they were skewed to benefit the TDP in its alliance with the NDA, citing similar inaccuracies in projections for BJP alliances in other states like Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

As the state braces for the vote count, the reliability of exit polls remains a hotly debated topic, with both major parties confident of their prospects despite the conflicting predictions.

2 ex-CMs, 3 ex-Union ministers testing their luck in AP polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Two former chief ministers, including Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N Chandrababu Naidu, and three former Union ministers, including BJP State chief Daggubati Purandeswari, are testing their luck in the election in Andhra Pradesh.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, who held the post of chief minister for 14 years and Leader of the Opposition for 15 years is contesting from Kuppam Assembly constituency in the election. He has won seven times since 1989 in succession to the Assembly from the same constituency in Chittoor district. However, Naidu has faced tough competition from the YSRCP candidate KRJ Bharat in the 2024 election.

Another former chief minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy is contesting for Lok Sabha from Rajampet constituency. Kiran Kumar Reddy was a senior Congress leader who was the chief minister of the undivided AP state from 2010 to 2014. However, he quit the party after bifurcation of combined AP against his wishes and joined the BJP. He contested from Rajampet to LS which is bastion for the YSRCP facing a



strong competition from YSRCP candidate PV Mithun Reddy, who is close relative of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Another prominent leader in AP, former minister D Purandeswari is in fray from Rajahmundry constituency. Interestingly, Purandeswari is the daughter of TDP founder and former chief minister NT Rama Rao. She is also sister-in-law of N Chandrababu Naidu. Purandeswari joined the Congress in 2004, was elected to Lok Sabha from Visakhapatnam constituency. She was again elected to LS from the same constituency and was inducted into the Union Cabinet by then PM Manmohan Singh.

However, she quit the Congress opposing the bifurcation of the combined AP

state and joined the BJP. Another former Union Minister Y Sujana Chowdary was the TDP leader but he quit the party when it exited from the NDA in 2017 and later joined the BJP.

Sujana Chowdary contested to the Assembly from Vijayawada (West) constituency. He was the Union Minister of State Science for three years in the Narendra Modi Cabinet.

Another former Union minister Kotla Surya Prakash Reddy has contested to the Assembly from dhone constituency. He is facing a stiff competition from Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy.

Film hero turned politician and Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan is contesting for the Assembly from Pithapuram constituency and faced a tough

competition from YSRCP candidate and Kakinada MP Vanga Geeta.

Noted industrialist and political novice P Chandrasekhar has contested to LS from Guntur constituency, retired IPS officer T Krishna Prasad has contested from Bapatla constituency and another industrialist Magunta Srinivasa Reddy has contested to LS from Ongole constituency on TDP tickets.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has contested to the Assembly from his foresters Pulivendula constituency. Meanwhile, the stage has been set for the counting of votes across the State on June 4. The election officials prohibited taking out victory rallies and bursting crackers in the wake of post poll violence incidents in three districts.

Add eco-friendly choices to daily routines: Experts

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As World Environment Day approaches on June 5, a global chorus of environmentalists and organisations is urging people to embrace a more sustainable lifestyle and take ownership of the planet's health. This year's theme underscores the transformative potential of individual action. Environmental experts say that incorporating eco-friendly choices into daily routines can significantly contribute to positive change.

Saranya Sree, Vice Principal of Oxford Talent school exemplifies this approach. Witnessing the devastating impact of plastic pollution firsthand, she switched to biodegradable alternatives, demonstrating the far-reaching influence individual decisions can have.

The onus of environmental responsibility extends beyond individual actions. Numerous organisations are actively promoting sustainable practices. The Visakhapatnam Port Authority has planned a week-

Cycle rally held in run-up to Environment Day celebrations



long series of impactful initiatives, including strategic tree plantation drives and educational competitions designed to engage students. Furthermore, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel (AMNS) India has made a substantial contribution by planting over 1 lakh saplings across Visakhapatnam, demonstrably bolstering the city's green infrastructure.

RINL, the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), organised a 4 km bicycle rally in the township, featuring placards with messages promoting the protection of Mother Earth and raising awareness about environmental issues.

As many as 100 children actively participated, taking the LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment) Pledge, committing to incorporate environmental protection into their daily lives and advocating for sustainable practices within their communities.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like India

Youth For Society (IYFS) play a vital role in fostering environmental consciousness among younger generations. Partnering with the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board, IYFS is organizing elocation and drawing contests themed "Our Land, Our Future." These initiatives empower students to become agents of change and inspire them to champion environmental well-being.

World Environment Day serves as a stark reminder of the urgency for collective action.

By adopting sustainable practices in our daily lives and actively participating in community-driven environmental initiatives, we can all contribute meaningfully to securing a greener future for ourselves and generations to come. This year, let us leverage World Environment Day not just for a single day of awareness, but as a springboard for a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship.

BJP sweeps...

Continued from Page 1

The party will sweep the Lok Sabha polls with a huge margin and Narendra Modi become the Prime Minister for the third term," he told reporters.

To a question regarding the formation of the new ministry, Khandu said that after the Lok Sabha polls counting on June 4, all the winning candidates of the party would convene a meeting where the chief ministerial candidate would be decided.

"BJP is a disciplined party. The party will select the leader with consensus from all elected candidates," Khandu said.

While the BJP's vote share is 54.57 per cent, as many as 14 party candidates including Education Minister Taba Tedir, were defeated this time. The minister was defeated by NCP nominee Toko Tatung, a greenhorn, in the Yachuli constituency.

A total of 20 first-timers tasted victory in the northeastern state.

INS Mysore celebrates 25 years of exemplary service

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

INS Mysore, the frontline destroyer of the Eastern Fleet, commemorated its Silver Jubilee today, heralding a quarter-century of remarkable dedication to the nation. The vessel, a product of indigenous design and construction, stands as the second of the Delhi class destroyers and has served the country with distinction.

Throughout its distinguished tenure, INS Mysore has engaged in numerous pivotal missions and operations, garnering praise and recognition.

Affiliated with the Madras Regiment of the Indian Army, the ship has reinforced the synergy between the naval and



land forces. To honor this significant milestone, the ship hosted a blood donation camp onboard, with around 250 personnel and their families actively participating in this altruistic endeavor.

Bestowed with the motto 'Na Bhibheti Kadachan,' translating to 'Always Fearless,' the crew of the Mighty Mysore continues to strive for excellence and gallantly uphold their legacy. As INS Mysore celebrates its Silver Jubilee, it stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment and valor of its crew.

ling to 'Always Fearless,' the crew of the Mighty Mysore continues to strive for excellence and gallantly uphold their legacy. As INS Mysore celebrates its Silver Jubilee, it stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment and valor of its crew.

Ensure no...

Continued from Page 1

He also emphasised the importance of clearly marked entry and exit points, approved by the district-level committee, and the installation of signboards indicating these points. The CEO directed District Election Officers to implement robust and planned measures to ensure the smooth conduct of the vote counting process. Additional CEOs P Koteswara Rao, M.N. Harendhira Prasad, Joint CEOs. Venkateswara Rao, and all district election officers.

Naidu confident of NDA victory

Continued from Page 1

He emphasised the importance of counting agents ensuring officials adhere to the norms and staying vigilant while EVMs are transferred from strong-rooms to counting centers. He instructed the candidates to remain at the counting centers until they receive the declaration form from the returning officer. BJP general secretary Arun Singh echoed Naidu's optimism, noting that exit polls suggest the NDA will secure at least 21 Lok Sabha seats and form the State government. He advised counting agents to request recounts if they have any doubts about the process.

Purandeswari and Jana Sena Political Affairs Committee (PAC) Chairman Nadendla Manohar urged candidates to stay in touch with their legal teams, anticipating possible violent attacks from YSRCP due to their fear of defeat.

Be vigilant till end of...

Continued from Page 1

Expressing confidence in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) securing power in Andhra Pradesh, Naidu commended the efforts of leaders and activists of all alliance partners for the NDA's success in the elections.

"All exit polls clearly indicate the victory of the NDA, and the alliance is set to form the government both at the Centre and in Andhra Pradesh," Naidu asserted.

Criticising the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), Naidu claimed that YSRCP leaders, fearing defeat, are making baseless allegations against the TDP regarding the vote counting process. "The YSRCP is trying to find excuses for its defeat and is attempting to create commotion over the poll panel's directions on postal ballots by moving the court," Naidu remarked.

He cautioned NDA leaders about potential irregularities and attacks by YSRCP leaders on the counting day. Naidu urged TDP counting agents and chief election agents to arrive at the counting centers on time.

BJP general secretary Arun Singh stated that exit polls indicate the NDA's victory in at least 21 Lok Sabha seats and that the alliance is likely to form the government in Andhra Pradesh. He advised counting agents to request a recount if they have any doubts about the counting process.

BJP State president D Purandeswari and Jana Sena Political Affairs Committee (PAC) Chairman Nadendla Manohar instructed candidates to stay in contact with their legal teams, warning of potential violent attacks by YSRCP during the counting due to their fear of defeat.

'It's 'Modi media poll'...

Continued from Page 1

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also hit out at Prime Minister Modi for holding several meetings, including a long brainstorming session to review the 100-day agenda of the "new government", saying these were "pressure tactics" to send out a signal to the bureaucracy and the administrative structure that he is coming back.

"These are mind games -- 'I am coming back, I am going to be the prime minister again'. He is sending a signal to the bureaucracy, the administrative structure of the country and we hope that the civil servants who have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring a fair counting of votes will not be intimidated and not be frightened by these pressure tactics," Ramesh told PTI at the AICC headquarters here.

He also said that the exit polls that

came out Saturday evening are "completely bogus" and have been "orchestrated and masterminded by the man whose exit is inevitable and guaranteed on June 4".

"These are all part of the psychological games being played by the outgoing prime minister (Narendra Modi) and the outgoing home minister (Amit Shah). The outgoing home minister called up 150 District Magistrates and collectors yesterday. The results that the exit polls have come up with bear no relation to reality," the Congress leader claimed.

Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister 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.

While India Today-Axis My India has forecast 361-401 seats for the BJP-led alliance and 131-166 seats for the opposition INDIA bloc in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the ABP-C Voter

predicted 353-383 seats for the ruling alliance and 152-182 seats for the INDIA bloc. Slamming the exit polls, Ramesh said in some states the NDA has been given more seats than the number of seats available in that state.

"It flies in the face of all political feedback. The INDIA 'janbandhan' parties met yesterday, we went through state-wise analysis and there is no way INDIA janbandhan is going to get less than 295 seats," Ramesh said.

"This is a deliberate attempt to justify rigging, this is a deliberate attempt to justify manipulation of EVMs and this is also psychological ops to lower the morale of the Congress workers and the INDIA janbandhan workers. We are not going to be frightened, we are not going to be intimidated and you will see that the actual results on June 4 will be completely different from what these exit polls show," the

Congress general secretary said. These are political exit polls and not professional exit polls, he added.

Ramesh pointed out that Congress treasurer and senior leader Ajay Maken has raised the issue of candidates' counting agents at the Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) table not being allowed.

"He (Maken) has raised this issue, there has been some response from the CEO of Delhi but the fact of the matter is that he raised this issue based on legitimate fears that had been expressed by the candidates. We have raised the issue of the counting of postal ballots and the effort of the Election Commission to change the methodology that has been part of the law," Ramesh said.

He said the Congress has raised all such issues before the poll watchdog and had filed 117 complaints to it over the last 77 days, 14 of which are against the PM.

YSRCP fears TDP will create trouble on counting day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) met with the Election Commission on Sunday to voice concerns about possible disturbances during the vote counting process on June 4.

Following the meeting, YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu addressed the media, expressing fears that the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which is facing likely defeat in the elections, might attempt to create law and order issues on counting day.

Vishnu stated that the party had submitted a representation to the Election Commission against TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu. He



accused Naidu of instigating the party's counting agents to physically attack YSRCP agents and incite chaos at the counting centers. Vishnu emphasized that the delegation urged the Election Commission to

take action against Naidu and enhance security measures at the counting sites.

Referring to a recent directive from the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) on the validation of postal ballots,

Vishnu alleged that the opposition party was plotting to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere on June 4.

Additionally, Vishnu mentioned that the YSRCP had requested the Election Commission to investigate a complaint filed by the Tadepalli police against the party's General Secretary, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. The delegation also asked the election officials to review the case against Sajjala and direct the police to withdraw it.

Former minister Ravela Kishore Babu and executive vice-chairman of the Navaratnalu programme Ankamreddy Naga Narayanamurthy accompanied MLA Vishnu at the meeting.

Poll results before 5 pm: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr S Dilli Rao, the NTR District Collector, has announced that the district administration is planning to complete the vote counting process and announce the results for Vijayawada Lok Sabha segment and all seven Assembly constituencies before 5 pm on June 4. He said the final results of most of the Assembly constituencies are expected to be available by 3.30 pm, and after consolidation the complete results will be announced between 5 pm and 6 pm. Dr Dilli Rao added that each round of counting, based on the polled votes in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), is expected to take approximately 25 minutes.

The vote counting will take place at Nimra and Nova Engineering and Medical Colleges at Jupudi. Dr Dilli Rao, along with Joint Collector



NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao, along with Joint Collector Dr Sampath Kumar and DRO Srinivasa Rao, speaking to the media at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Sunday

Dr P Sampath Kumar and DRO V Srinivasa Rao, spoke to the media about the arrangements made for counting, at the Pingali Venkayya Spandana Meeting Hall on the collectorate premises in Vijayawada on Sunday.

"The counting of postal ballots will start at 8 am, while the EVM counting will start at 8.30

am. The EVM counting for the Parliamentary constituency will begin at 8 am. The necessary arrangements, such as placing tables and seats for candidates and counting agents, setting up a media centre, and providing parking facilities, have been completed. The vote counting for the Tiruvuru, Vijayawada West, Central, and

Nandigama Assembly constituencies will be conducted at Nova College, while that for Vijayawada East, Mylavaram, and Jaggayyapet segments, in addition to Vijayawada Lok Sabha segment, will be held at Nimra College," he said.

Dr Dilli Rao added that 14 tables have been arranged for each Assembly and Lok Sabha segment, and additional 14 tables will be used for the postal ballots. The postal ballots are expected to be counted within two or three rounds, whereas each round will take at least 3 to 3.30 hours. A total of 17,596 postal ballots, including those of senior citizens and differently-abled people, have been polled, and an additional 153 ETPBS votes have been received so far.

To ensure accurate planning and scrutiny, training has been provided to all counting supervisors, assistants, and micro-observers.

Chief Secretary has Durga Devi darshan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy visited Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Sunday. He performed special pujas for goddess Durga Devi.

Durga Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao accorded a warm welcome to Jawahar Reddy. Later, the Vedic scholars gave blessings to the CS at the Veda Ashirvachana Mandapam.

EO Rama Rao presented Sessa Vastram, Laddu Prasadam and a portrait of the goddess to the CS. Jawahar Reddy also had darshan of Sri Malleswara Swamy and offered special pujas.

Meanwhile, devotees thronged the Durga temple on Sunday to offer special prayers.

Cancer screening drive launched

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major boost to public health, the Andhra Pradesh government has launched a first-of-its-kind Comprehensive Cancer Screening Program (CCSP) in partnership with the prestigious Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (HBCH & RC) and with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO). This program targets individuals aged 30 and above, focusing on three prevalent cancers - breast, oral cavity (dental), and cervical. By enabling early detection and management, the CCSP aims to revolutionize public health outcomes by facilitating early detection and effective management of these diseases.

Dr S Venkateswar, Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, underscored the program's reliance on existing healthcare infrastructure, emphasizing its integration into village health clinics



(VHCs), the cornerstone of rural healthcare delivery. A cadre of healthcare professionals including Community Health Officers (CHOs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), and Medical Officers (MOs) will spearhead the screening efforts at the grassroots level. Further fortifying the program's framework, medical colleges across the state have established dedicated Preventive Oncology Units staffed with specialist teams. These units will serve as hubs for comprehensive diagnosis

and treatment, while also facilitating training initiatives and overseeing screening activities at the grassroots.

Dr Venkateswar elaborated on the extensive training regimen underway to equip healthcare providers with requisite skills. Beginning with specialist sensitization at HBCHRI's Preventive Oncology Units, the training cascade extends to healthcare personnel at all levels, ensuring proficiency in awareness generation, counseling, screening protocols, and seamless referral mechanisms.

Key state officials including Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu and Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare Dr. S Venkateswar are actively engaged in steering the program's implementation. State-level training sessions at HBCH & RC serve as crucial platforms for translating training modules into actionable strategies, particularly in rural hinterlands. As the training phase draws to a close, the program is poised to transition into the NCD 3.0 screening phase, marked by comprehensive house-to-house surveys conducted by CHO and ANM teams. This proactive approach promises to amplify program outreach, extending vital cancer screening services directly to communities' doorsteps.

The collaborative efforts of the Andhra Pradesh government, HBCH & RC, WHO, and other stakeholders herald a new era in public health interventions.

'Women's choices, NDA vote transfers key to poll outcome'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As various media houses and independent agencies released their exit polls and post-poll survey results for the assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, analysts suggest that two critical factors will determine the fate of the political parties. These factors include the voting pattern of women voters and the transfer of votes among the alliance partners of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

According to an analysis by a prominent media house, women voters outnumbered men in Andhra Pradesh. Targeted welfare schemes that placed more money in their hands apparently motivated women to vote in large numbers. Although it cannot be definitively stated that women voters exclusively supported the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu

Congress Party (YSRCP) due to Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's welfare schemes, general trends indicate such a pattern. Consequently, the YSRCP is hoping that women voters will come to its rescue. Regarding the transfer of votes among the NDA alliance partners, it is believed to be a major deciding factor for the alliance's success. In the 2019 elections, the YSRCP secured 49.89 percent of the votes, while the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) garnered 40.19 percent, Jana Sena Party 5.8 percent, and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) only 0.89 percent. This time, the TDP, BJP, and Jana Sena contested the elections together, while the YSRCP competed independently.

Assuming they retain their respective vote shares, the combined vote share of the NDA allies would be around

47 percent, and the YSRCP could scrape through with 49.89 percent. However, if there was anti-incumbency sentiment, the YSRCP vote share would decrease while that of the NDA would increase.

Additionally, there is speculation that the Y S Sharmila-led Congress might further erode the YSRCP vote bank. In that scenario, the YSRCP could lose power, albeit by a narrow margin. "This is possible only if there was a complete transfer of votes between the TDP and the Jana Sena, the TDP and the BJP, and the BJP and the other two allies. If it did not happen fully, then the NDA might not come to power," an analyst commented. As the state awaits the final results, the influence of these factors will be crucial in shaping the future political landscape of Andhra Pradesh.

Attacks on Dalits will not be spared: MRPS



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP MRPS state convener Medara Suresh warned that the Telugu Desam is conspiring to repeat the incident like Karamchedu and they will not tolerate attacks on Dalits anymore. Speaking to the media, Suresh criticised that the Election Commission is biased as it framed rules separately for AP and the rest of the Nation for postal ballot vote counting.

He expressed concern that past incidents like Karamchedu may repeat and

said that the Telugu Desam Party is attacking the Dalits with rods and sticks with evil intention, and the Election Commission is playing a spectator role.

He said that the Election Commission, which should act impartially, supports one party. He said that the constitution written by Dr BR Ambedkar is not for a religion or caste but for the people of India. He warned that the Election Commission and the DGP will be held responsible for any evil incidents that have taken place.

Action against those who create disturbance in counting halls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Election Officer and District Collector DK Balaji has instructed all Returning Officers (RO) and Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSP) to take stringent action against those who create problems in the vote counting hall. The district administration is taking steps to complete the counting process smoothly without any untoward incidents. "If anybody creates a disturbance, it should not be tolerated," he warned.

In view of the vote-counting for Machilipatnam Lok Sabha segment and seven Assembly constituencies to be held at Krihana University in Machilipatnam, Collector Balaji, Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma and SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi conducted a meeting for the ROs and DSPs on Sunday. They discussed maintenance of law and order and security arrangements.

Speaking on the occasion,



Krishna District Collector DK Balaji, along with Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma and SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi, giving instructions to ROs and DSPs regarding counting of votes, at a meeting in Machilipatnam on Sunday

Balaji said that mobile phones are strictly prohibited inside the counting halls. For that, a security system should be set up at the main entrance. The entire vote counting should be conducted smoothly and transparently, he said.

Meanwhile, he gave instructions to all officials to ban sale of loose petrol and diesel, and also crackers. Celebrations and processions at party offices, candidates' residences and other places

are also prohibited. The police should be extra alert on June 3 and 4. Section 144 and Section 30 Act will be imposed in the district from 6 pm on June 3 to 9 am on June 5.

DRO K Chandrasekhar Rao, Returning Officers M Vani P Venkata Ramana, G Bala Subrahmanyam, D Raju, P Padmavathi, and Sridevi, DSDPs Subhani, Nagaraju, Ramesh Babu, Srikanth, Jaya Surya, and Muralidhar, and others were present.

Make Hyderabad combined capital for 10 more years: Sailajanath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) former president and former minister Dr S Sailajanath has demanded that the Central government retain Hyderabad as the combined capital of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for another 10 years. "The 10-year period expired on June 2; however, many issues remain unsolved between these two States," he said.

In a press release, issued here on Sunday, Dr Sailajanath said that as per the Bifurcation Act, Section - 8, the responsibility of protecting people and their assets was assigned to the Governor. "Many people migrated to Hyderabad and the surrounding areas and settled there. In this situation, who will take the responsibility of protecting the people and their assets," he asked.

The present and previous



governments have failed to resolve the issues between these two States. They also failed to build the new State capital. As a result, the youth are losing employment opportunities. All political parties should come together to fight for making Hyderabad the combined capital for another 10 years, he added.

Municipal Commissioner donates blood

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bapi Raju, Commissioner, Machilipatnam Municipal Corporation, has shown his generosity by donating blood in an emergency situation. A patient undergoing treatment at Vijayawada approached the Red Cross at midnight on Saturday for two units of B Negative blood. The relatives of the patient tried in vain in a number of blood banks in Vijayawada.

On the advice of AP Red Cross Chairman Dr Sridhar Reddy, State Coordinator of AP Red Cross Blood Centres BVS Kumar contacted the blood centres in the neighbouring districts and arranged one unit from Red Cross Blood Centre, Guntur, and continued his efforts for the second unit.

They came to know that Bapi Raju's blood group is B Negative and contacted him immediately. He readily consented to donate blood and reached the Red Cross Blood Centre at Machilipatnam by 6.30 am.

He has set an example to society to respond in emergencies and donate blood to save lives. BVS Kumar appreciated the noble gesture and appealed to the donors of the rare blood group to get registered at their nearest Red Cross Blood Centre, so that they can be contacted during emergencies.



Roja brushes aside exit poll predictions

PNS ■ TIRUPATHI

Stating that the exit poll predictions were concocted, Minister for Tourism Development RK Roja exuded confidence that the YSRCP would come to power with a huge majority.

She worshipped lord Venkateswara at hill shrine Tirumala on Sunday. Talking to the media on the occasion, she responded to the exit polls conducted by various agencies and media houses.

"Fictitious predictions were disseminated as per their wish in the name of exit polls. The exit poll predictions were not trustworthy. People of the state have given a clear mandate in

favour of YSRCP which will be declared on June 4. The exit poll predictions will be proved false on June 4," the Minister opined.

The YSRCP government worked with commitment for the welfare of the poor who were acknowledged by voting for the party. The women and elderly people stood in queue in front of polling stations to cast their vote which clearly indicates the women and elderly people voted for the YSRCP.

The YSRCP government is the only regime which has implemented such a big way in the country since independence, she claimed. "The YSRCP's triumphant victory is certain and people will see the same on June 4," Minister Roja hoped.

Heavy rain likely in parts of AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Heavy rain is expected to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours.

According to a daily weather report, conditions are favorable for the further advance of the Southwest Monsoon into additional parts of the central Arabian Sea, Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and parts of the West Central and Northwest Bay of Bengal over the next 2-3 days. A cyclonic circulation currently over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and its vicinity now lies over the west-central and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal, off the South Coastal Andhra Pradesh-North Tamil Nadu coast, at 1.5 km above mean sea level. Thunderstorms accompa-

nied by lightning and gusty winds with speeds ranging from 30 to 40 km/h are likely to occur 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 likely at many places, a few places, or isolated locations in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

In the last 24 hours, rainfall was recorded at one or two places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and many places over Rayalaseema. The highest maximum temperature of 43.4 degrees Celsius was recorded at Tirupati in Rayalaseema.

The Southwest Monsoon has advanced into additional parts of the central Arabian Sea, remaining parts of the Lakshadweep area and Kerala, Tamil Nadu, parts of Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Andhra Pradesh, the remaining parts of the Southwest Bay of Bengal, and more parts of the Central and Northwest Bay of Bengal, as reported by the Meteorological Centre on Sunday.

Will cut my tongue if TDP loses: Buddha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP north coastal districts in-charge and former MLC Buddha Venkateswara Rao, also known as Venkanna, has made a sensational announcement that he will cut his tongue if the TDP-led NDA alliance does not come to power. He also challenged psephologist Aara Mastan to do the same if the NDA comes to power.

Speaking to the media in Vijayawada on Sunday, Buddha Venkanna said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a fake survey by Aara Mastan with a criminal mindset. He challenged YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to publicly announce that he would not enter the Assembly if YSRCP was defeated in the elections.



Further, he said a majority of surveys predicted that the NDA alliance would come to rule in the State as well as at the Centre. However, the Aara Mastan survey gave different results and it was a fake survey. However, the YSRCP leaders are playing a mind game, he alleged.

Meanwhile, he reiterated that the TDP-led NDA would gain around 130 Assembly seats and his party chief N Chandrababu Naidu.

All steps taken for counting in Eluru, Collector tells CEO

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has informed Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena that all arrangements have been made for the counting of votes to be held on June 4.



Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena held a video conference with the district Collector and election officials including the Returning Officers of the district on Sunday. District Collector Venkatesh informed the CEO that they are ready for the election counting process in Eluru district and all arrangements in this regard have been made.

State Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena reviewed the election counting arrangements in the state with the District Election Officers and Returning Officers

through video conference from the State Chief Election Office on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, Mukesh Kumar Meena said that they should be fully prepared for the counting process. Counting arrangements should be made as per the rules and regulations issued by the Election Commission of India, he instructed.

The CEO instructed the Collector and other officials not to allow mobile phones in

the counting hall and reports should be sent online to the Election Commission in the proforma specifying the exact results round wise. "Precautionary measures should be taken to prevent fire accidents at the counting centers and an emergency door should be arranged in the counting center for emergency exit," the CEO directed the officials.

On the occasion, District

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh explained that counting halls have been set up for seven Assembly constituencies in the district and 28 tables have been set up in each counting hall, 14 tables for the Assembly constituencies and 14 tables for the Parliamentary constituencies. The Collector informed the CEO that according to the number of votes polled counting would be carried out from 16 to 21 rounds.

The Collector said that Section 144 is being enforced throughout the district, and the Red Zone has been declared within 200 meters of the counting hall. Moreover, massive security arrangements have been made to prevent any untoward incident, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh explained to the CEO Mukesh Kumar Meena. Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, ITDA Project Officer Suryateja.

Police pickets set up in 137 villages: SP

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari Superintendent of Police Ajita Vajendla has said that massive security arrangements have been made across the district to maintain the law and order situation during the counting of votes on June 4.

Talking to the media here on Sunday, she said that any act which disturbs peace and tranquility in the district would be dealt with firmly. She instructed the police and election officials to strictly follow the guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

She directed the police officials to ensure that strangers should not stay in hotels and lodges. If any person found staying in the lodges suspiciously he should be held. Without proper reason no one should roam on the streets during the counting day, she warned.

"As many as 137 police pickets have been set up at various villages and 6000 people have been bound over. If anybody defies norms, they will be arrested and booked under



non-bailable sections," she warned.

All major villages and hamlets have been put under strict vigilance to avoid any emotional violence, the SP said, adding that non-bailable cases will also be registered against those who caused the disturbances and those who encouraged them, he said.

"If police registered a case against the youths that would be a hurdle to get jobs and obtain a passport in the future," the SP made it clear. The consequences of registering a

police case would be serious in the future, she warned, asking the youths to understand the situation.

The SP appealed to all to cooperate with the police to conduct counting of votes in a peaceful environment. She reiterated that a three tier security is being provided to the EVM strong rooms. Section 144 is being enforced across the district, she added.

Meanwhile, district Collector Sumit Kumar said that all arrangements for the counting of votes have been

completed in WG district. He told Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena at a video conference here on Sunday that on randomization of election personnel, ETPBS, counting of postal ballots and training programs required for the counting of staff have been completed.

The Collector apprised the CEO that the tabulation of results in rounds and feeding in encores, setting up of necessary IT systems and awareness of the procedure for sealing the next EVMs after the counting of votes have been completed.

The Collector said that counting of votes would be held on the campus of SRKR College and all arrangements for the same had been completed. Comprehensive security arrangements have been made at the counting centre and surveillance cameras were installed in the counting centre at important points. All needed arrangements have been for counting of votes in a peaceful environment, the Collector explained to the CEO.

Woman constable shoots herself dead

PNS ■ RAYACHOTI

A woman constable, who was on sentry duty at police headquarters here, allegedly committed suicide by shooting herself with service rifle on Sunday.



According to the police, the deceased constable Vedavati (26) was working as security guard at the police headquarters. She fell in love with Dastagiri and got married in 2016. The deceased constable Vedavati worked in Chittoor and she was transferred to the Annamayya district police headquarters one year ago. She was living along with her husband at Indramma colony.

However, controversy shrouded on her death as her family members claimed that she did not commit suicide.

They argued that the rifle which she was carrying might have gone off accidentally. DSP Ramachandra Rao and CI Sudhakar Reddy visited the body of deceased constable Vedavati in the Area hospital in Rayachoti.

DC: Counting staff selected through randomisation rule

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector K Madhavi Latha has made it clear that the counting officials and staff have been selected through randomisation rule and they were imparted training.

The Collector attended as chief guest to the training programme conducted to the counting officials and staff on the campus of Nannaya University here on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the officers and staff participating in the duties were selected through the first randomization, adding that the second randomisation was done in the presence of the election observers and allotted by constituencies.

She said that a training pro-



gramme was organized to impart training to the counting officials and staff on the counting. The counting procedure will begin at 5 am on June 4 and continue till end without break. She directed the counting officials and staff to work diligently and sincerely during the counting. She underlined the need for coordination between the officials during the counting.

Collector Madhavi Latha said that 15 tables have been set up in the administration building for the Parliamentary constituency postal ballot counting process. The total 15,300 postal ballot votes would be distributed equally to all the tables before the counting begins, she clarified. DRO G Narasimhulu, KRCC Special Deputy Collector M Krishna Naik and other officials were among those who were present.



9 hurt in bus-lorry collision

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

As many as nine passengers were injured when the private travel bus in which they were travelling collided with a lorry at Bandapuram village on the flyover bridge on Sunday.

Police said that the Kaveri travel bus was going to Bhubaneswar from Hyderabad with 40 passengers on board. The bus collided with a cement-laden lorry which was going to Jaggayyapeta from Jaggampet. Police said that nine passengers travelling in the private bus and its driver suffered various degrees of injuries.

Drivers among 12 injured as two buses collide

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

As many as 12 people, including drivers of two buses, were injured when an APSRTC bus collided with a private travel bus at Annampalli village in Mummidivaram mandal in Konaseema district on the national highway on Sunday.

Police said that the RTC bus going to Amalapuram

from Mummidivaram collided with a private travel bus which was going towards Kakinada.

The drivers of the two buses were among 12 injured in the accident. The injured were shifted to the GGH in an ambulance. The police removed the vehicles from the highway and cleared the traffic.

AP Chambers Women Entrepreneurs Wing inaugurated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP Chambers has inaugurated its Central Zone Women Entrepreneurs Wing in Guntur with women entrepreneurs from Guntur and neighboring districts. The objective of the wing is to empower women and make them a part of the economic development of the State. Business women, budding entrepreneurs and professionals can be part of the Women Wing.

On the occasion, Sakku Madhavi Latha took charge as the chairperson of the Central Zone Women Entrepreneurs Wing and Dr Rayapati Mamatha took charge as the vice-chairperson. Speaking on the occasion, AP Chambers president Potluri Bhaskara Rao said, "Women's participation in the economy is essential for the sustainable economic development, gender equality and poverty alleviation."



Security beefed up at strongrooms: DIG

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Deputy Inspector General of Police GVG Ashok Kumar has stated the security at strong rooms was beefed up and prohibitory orders under section 144 were promulgated at the counting centers for the smooth counting of votes.

Talking to the media here on Sunday, the DIG said that after inspecting the strong rooms and the security arrangements at the counting centers at the JNTUK campus here on Sunday that four-tier security was made at the counting centers on the day of counting on Tuesday.

All the vehicular traffic in the area is being diverted to various routes. Separate entry points are also being arranged

for the duty officers, leaders of political parties, counting agents and media," he added.

The DIG said Prohibitory orders under section 144 were extended to the entire district, police pickets were posted and patrolling was being done by deploying special police parties to prevent any type of disturbances. He warned that stringent action would be initiated against those indulging in creating unrest.

Superintendent of police P S Sathish Kumar, Additional SP MJV Bhaskara Rao, Armed Reserve Additional SP B Satyanarayana, Kakinada sub-divisional police officer Dr K Hanumantharao accompanied the DIG during the visit to strong rooms and counting centers.

'Chitti' - a visionary initiative against child marriage menace

PNS ■ PADERU

Deep-rooted societal practices like child marriage and child labor continue to plague the tribal villages of Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district. From a courageous teen defying forced marriage to a vulnerable 13-year-old pressured into wedding a man over three decades her senior, these cases expose the ongoing struggle. However, a beacon of hope emerges in the form of 'Chitti', an initiative spearheaded by Paderu Sub-Collector P. Dhatri Reddy. "Our mission goes beyond merely stopping ceremonies," explains Dhatri. "We aim to dismantle the very root of the problem."

One case exemplifies this resolve. A 17-year-old girl, burdened with the responsibility of four siblings and a single mother, faced forced marriage as a financial escape. "Her bravery in reaching out was inspiring," reveals Dhatri. The authorities empowered her with an alternative - tailoring classes - paving a path independent of marriage.

Another case from Pedabayalu underscores the complexities involved. A 13-year-old girl, swayed by a much older groom, clung to the idea of marriage. Despite tireless efforts by authorities and the community, changing



One case exemplifies this resolve. A 17-year-old girl, burdened with the responsibility of four siblings and a single mother, faced forced marriage as a financial escape. "Her bravery in reaching out was inspiring," reveals Dhatri. The authorities empowered her with an alternative - tailoring classes - paving a path independent of marriage.

her mind proved challenging. "She was a real hurdle," admits Dhatri. Eventually, she was enrolled in a residential school, ensuring her education continues into 8th grade. The battle against child marriage is hampered by limited information access and fear of retribution. An Anganwadi worker who bravely reported a case now fears returning home due to community backlash.

To combat these challenges, a dedicated control room with the number 9440933450 has been established in the Sub-Collector's office. Accessible via text messages, WhatsApp, or phone calls, this initiative streamlines the reporting and intervention process. Its effectiveness is evident in two recent cases brought to light through this system. 'Chitti' prioritizes education

as a weapon against child exploitation. "Instead of dictating, we focus on opening their eyes to the vast opportunities available," says Dhatri. Authorities are also proactively tracking school dropouts in Chintapalli and Madugula mandals, aiming to understand the reasons and motivate their return. "This will be a prime focus once schools reopen in June," she asserts. An alert system is being implemented across 11 Paderu mandals to track children with unexplained absences exceeding a week. The battle against child marriage and child labor in ASR district is ongoing, but 'Chitti' serves as a powerful testament to the possibility of breaking the cycle and securing a brighter future for these vulnerable girls.

Monsoon to begin in Telangana on June 6

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Meteorological Department -Hyderabad on Sunday predicted thunderstorms with occasional intense spells in the city.

For other districts of Telangana, the weather department has predicted heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning and squalls. In view of the expected thunderstorms in all zones of Hyderabad-namely Charminar, Khairathabad, Kukatapally, LB Nagar, Secunderabad and Serilingampally-and other parts of the State, the department has issued a yellow alert.

Though the yellow alert in Hyderabad is for Sunday, June 4 and June 5, it is valid for other districts of Telangana until June 6. Hyderabad, which recently witnessed intense summer heat, is expected to start experiencing the rainy season soon.

According to the IMD's forecast, the monsoon is likely to hit

Though the yellow alert in Hyderabad is for Sunday, June 4 and June 5, it is valid for other districts of Telangana until June 6. Hyderabad, which recently witnessed intense summer heat, is expected to start experiencing the rainy season soon.

Hyderabad and other districts of Telangana after June 6. Usually, the rainy season in Hyderabad is from mid-June to October, bringing relief to the locals from the summer heat.

As the IMD forecasts that the monsoon will hit Hyderabad on time, the rainy season will provide much-needed relief to the residents of the city. K Nagarathna, Head of the IMD Hyderabad said, "Rain is likely to occur in districts including Hyderabad, Sangareddy, Rangareddy and other Telangana districts. Monsoon will set in from June 6 paving

the way for rigorous monsoon." Due to the expected rainfall, temperatures are predicted to drop by 2-3°C, offering a brief respite from the current heat. The yellow alert, indicating light to moderate rains, will remain in effect in Hyderabad until June 6.

Advisories for restricted movement have been issued. Water accumulation on roads and in low-lying areas is expected in several locations, leading to traffic congestion at numerous points. Residents are advised to stay updated with weather advisories and take necessary precautions to stay safe during the anticipated heavy rains.

"Storms have moved from 3rd to 4th gear now with massive storms lashing across Bhupalpally, Karimnagar, Siddipet to cover Jangaon, Hanmakonda, Warangal, Mulugu. Hyderabad is now having scattered intense storms. Consider it as a trailer.

Harassed for male child, pregnant woman ends life

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A pregnant woman has committed suicide following harassment from her husband and in-laws. The incident occurred in Yanamalakuru of Penamaluru mandal in the Krishna district on Sunday. She attempted suicide by hanging and was rushed to a private hospital, where she passed away during treatment.

The deceased was identified as Chandu Kavya Sri, 19. She had previously given birth to a girl and was five months pregnant with her second child. When a scan revealed that she was carrying another girl, her husband and in-laws pressured her to have an abortion. Despite her lack of interest in terminating the pregnancy, the family's pressure led her to believe she could not give birth to a male child, which made her take the extreme step.

Harish went to US to meet Prabhakar: Venkat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that BRS MLA T. Harish Rao went to the US to meet former Intelligence Chief Prabhakar Rao, who is involved in a phone tapping case. He said that Harish asked Prabhakar Rao not to return to Telangana now.

"I have evidence. I will prove in which flight Harish travelled and where Harish met Prabhakar Rao in the US. Will Harish will take a vow that he did not meet Prabhakar in the US? I am ready for anything if I cannot prove my allegations," Venkat said.

Addressing the media at the Minister's quarters on Sunday,



Venkat said that KCR is a 'monster' who engaged in phone tapping. He alleged that KCR behaved like Mohammed Ali Jinnah of Pakistan during State Formation Day celebrations.

He reiterated that no one will remain in the BRS after the results of the Lok Sabha elections and that KCR has no regard for the Telangana peo-

ple. KCR took up the Telangana movement as he did not get a Minister post and egged on the public. He said that KCR used to collect Rs 1 lakh if one wanted to have food with him during the Telangana movement in the name of donations.

Venkat said that the people of Telangana would be eternally indebted to Sonia Gandhi and that KCR touched the feet of Sonia Gandhi along with his family members after the formation of the Telangana state.

He said that KCR looted thousands of crores in the name of fishlings and sheep distribution.

Venkat lashed out at KCR for describing the

Kaleshwaram Project as a world wonder and for the sagging of the Medigadda Barrage. He said the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) gave a report stating that there is no guarantee even if the Medigadda Barrage is repaired. He said the Congress government has been paying Rs 25,000 crore every year as interest.

Venkat said the BRS government's loan waiver scheme did not even waive the interests of farmers' loans and that the KCR government gave Rythu Bandhu sops to landlords who had hundreds of acres.

He said the Congress government will implement the farm loan waiver scheme by August 15.

INDIA CORNER

Mumbai serial blasts case convict fatally attacked

A convict in the 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts case was fatally attacked by five inmates in Kalamba Central Jail in Kolhapur on Sunday, police said. Prima facie, an argument with other inmates over taking a bath in the bathroom area of the jail resulted in the attack on 59-year-old Munna alias Mohammad Ali Khan alias Manoj Kumar Bhawaral Gupta. Khan was serving life imprisonment in the serial blasts case. "Amid the argument, some under-trial inmates removed the iron cover from drainage and smashed Khan's head, following which he collapsed on the ground. He was rushed to hospital where he was declared dead," the police official said. The attackers are identified as Prateek alias Piliya Suresh Patil, Deepak Netaji Khot, Sandeep Shankar Chavan, Rituraj Vinayak Inamdar, and Saurabh Vikas. Kolhapur Police has registered a case of murder against the five men. They will be arrested soon, the official added.



Eight Naxalites surrender before security forces in Chhattisgarh

Eight Naxalites, four of them carrying a cumulative bounty of Rs 5 lakh, surrendered before security forces in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Sunday, police said. The Naxalites turned themselves in before senior officials of the police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), citing disappointment with atrocities committed by Maoists on tribals and 'inhuman' and 'hollow' Maoist ideology, an official said. They were also impressed by the state government's Naxal elimination policy and the Sukma police's rehabilitation drive 'Puna Narkom' (a term coined in the local Gondi dialect, which means new dawn, new beginning), he said. Three women are among eight surrendered cadres, who were allegedly tasked with cutting roads, putting up Maoist pamphlets and posters, conducting reconnaissance on security personnel and collecting illegal levy for Maoists, he said.



Over three dozen scrapped cars gutted in fire at abandoned plot

Around three dozen scrapped cars were gutted in a fire that broke out in an abandoned plot here on Sunday afternoon amid heatwave conditions in the region, officials said. No casualties were reported in the fire incident, Chief Fire Officer Pradeep Kumar Choubey said. "The fire service unit was alerted at 3.10 pm about the fire that broke out in a plot which had been lying abandoned for the last several years and had scrapped Skoda cars parked here," Choubey said. "We had rushed six water tenders to the site immediately and managed to douse the fire completely. Almost 35 vehicles have been gutted in the fire although no person suffered any injury," the CFO, who supervised the relief operation, said. In light of the continuing heatwave and the potential for fire accidents, the Gautam Buddha Nagar Police had on Saturday issued essential guidelines to authorities and emphasized the need for operational equipment management in critical facilities.



PM CHAIRS HOST OF MEETINGS

Modi urges officials to ensure fire drills in hospitals, public places

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday stressed the need to ensure regular fire and electrical safety audits in hospitals and other public places as he reviewed the heatwave situation in the country amid fire incidents which have claimed many lives.

He chaired a host of meetings, including one on the post-Cyclone Remal situation, especially in the northeast region, and another to review the 100-day agenda of the new government to be sworn in after the Lok Sabha results are announced on June 4.

Exit polls broadcast on Saturday predicted a massive win for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with Modi set to retain power for a third straight term.

In the meeting to review the heatwave conditions in parts of the country, Modi instructed officials that proper drills for preventing and handling incidents of fire must be undertaken on a regular basis, according to an official statement.

He also said that regular drills for the maintenance of fire lines in forests and productive



In the meeting to review the heatwave conditions in parts of the country, Modi instructed officials that proper drills for preventing and handling incidents of fire must be undertaken on a regular basis, according to an official statement.

utilisation of biomass must be planned.

Modi was briefed that as per forecasts, the heatwave is likely to continue in parts of

Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Monsoon this year is likely to be normal and above normal in most parts of the country and below normal in

parts of peninsular India, the statement said.

In the meeting to review the post-Cyclone Remal situation, another official statement said,

Modi was briefed about its impact in the affected states, including the loss of lives and damage to houses and other properties due to landslides and floods in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams have carried out evacuation, airlifting and road clearance operations, it said, adding the Union home ministry is in regular touch with state governments.

PM Modi said the Union government will continue to extend full support to the states affected by the cyclone, according to the statement.

Top bureaucrats were part of the meetings the prime minister chaired.

He is also chairing a meeting to review the preparations to celebrate the World Environment Day, which falls on June 5.

Much before the Lok Sabha polling exercise began, Modi had set in motion the exercise for different government ministries to prepare the 100-day agenda for the new government.

Violence erupts in Sandeshkhali, women scuffle with police

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In less than 24 hours after the election was over, trouble-torn Sandeshkhali witnessed another round of skirmishes between women and the police on Sunday when the personnel went there and detained one person in connection with attacks on policemen.

Local women in Agarhati village in Sandeshkhali area got involved in a scuffle with the Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel, fell tree trunks, and blocked roads when the police personnel reached there in search of a few persons accused of attacking them on Saturday night, a senior police officer said.

"We have not arrested anyone, but local women have started protesting. Some of our female colleagues are injured. We are trying to talk to them and

remove the barricades from the roads," the officer in Basirhat Police District told.

There was an attempt by local women to snatch the detained person, but the move was foiled, he said. "We are trying to bring the situation under control. A huge number of RAF, Quick Response Team (QRT) and policemen are present here," the officer said.

Sandeshkhali -- a riverine delta bordering the Sundarbans -- has been on the spot since January 5, when a team of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was attacked when it had gone to raid the premises of TMC strongman Shajahan Sheikh in connection with an alleged ration scam. Sheikh and his accomplices were arrested by the West Bengal Police on February 29 in connection with the attack on the ED officers.

Central govt approves IIM near Guwahati



PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Centre has approved an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) for Assam, and it would come up near Guwahati, making it among the few cities in the country housing top educational institutions, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday.

He said the state government had been pursuing the matter with the Centre for last 18 months, and the new institute will be a "game changer" for higher education in the state.

"Sharing a BIG NEWS! Following our request in 2023, Hon PM Shri @narendramodi ji has given a special gift to the people of Assam by approving an Indian Institute of Management near Guwahati, making it among the few cities to house an IIT, AIIMS, Na'I Law Univ & now IIM," Sarma posted on X.

He said the state government had presented its case before Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and his ministry, besides writing to PM Modi.

US media has good & bad terrorist bias, says NRI-led study

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The United States media differentiate between 'good terrorists' and 'bad terrorists' depending on the country's foreign policy towards terror groups, research led by a Non-Resident Indian has concluded. The research titled "US Foreign Policy and Indexing Theory: A Study of US Press Coverage of the Taliban and ISIS" was published in the latest issue of the International Communication Research Journal.

"We perused hundreds of New York Times and Washington Post articles on ISIS and Taliban over a five-year period from 2014 to 2019," said lead author Abhijit Mazumdar, an assistant professor of journalism at Park University in the US.

Asserting that the results were startling, Mazumdar said the US newspapers would play down atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban while the same media would report regularly on ISIS-inflicted atrocities. Both terror groups had the same goal, which was to establish a theocratic Islamic regime in their area of control, he said.

However, the US press would seldom associate religion with the Taliban even as it sought to associate Islam with ISIS, he added. "We concluded that the US press was supporting the US government's foreign policy on Taliban and ISIS where the US authorities were negotiating a smooth handover of Afghanistan to Taliban while they were fighting to eliminate ISIS in the Middle East," Mazumdar said.

INDIA bloc leaders to EC: Ensure guidelines are followed during counting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation of leaders from the INDIA opposition bloc met the full bench of the Election Commission on Sunday and urged it to ensure that all the guidelines are followed on June 4, when the votes polled in the Lok Sabha election will be counted, including declaring the postal-ballot results before the outcome of the EVMs is announced.

Briefing the media after the meeting, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said this was the third time that a delegation of opposition leaders visited the poll panel during the general election and, among other things, urged the officials to ensure that the postal ballots are counted and their results declared before the results of the



electronic voting machines (EVMs) are announced.

"This is the third multi-party delegation visiting the EC during this process... We spent time with the EC on two-three major issues. Most important was counting the postal ballots and declaring the results first.

This is a very clearly stated statutory rule, which specifically says that you should take up the postal ballots first," Singhvi said.

"Our complaint is that this guideline has been given a go-by. They have repealed the practice," he added.

The leaders of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) requested the EC to instruct its officials that they should follow the guidelines.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said they have urged the poll panel to ensure that its own guidelines are implemented, which includes ensuring that the control units of the EVMs are moved through CCTV-monitored corridors and a verification of the current date-and-time display of the control units is done.

"This verification is important because unless it is done, there is no authenticity that it is the same control unit that came from the polling booth, that it has not been changed," he said.

INDIA'S WEATHER STORY SO FAR IN 2024

Sweltering heat, flash floods, 'disappearing' spring season

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sweltering heatwave in north India that has caused scores of deaths, floods and landslides in the northeast that have affected lakhs of people, a spring season that suggests it could soon "disappear" from the calendar — extreme weather events in the first five months of 2024 have got everyone questioning: where is all this headed?

Despite having made predictions to this effect, climate scientists acknowledge that the temperatures this summer, including the outlier 52.9 degrees Celsius in Delhi, are "alarming, though not surprising".

"This could be the worst summer in the last 120 years, at least for north India. Never have temperatures gone so high — more than 45-47 degrees Celsius — for such a



vast region, which is also densely populated. This is a record in itself," Vimal Mishra, Vikram Sarabhai Chair Professor, Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences, IIT Gandhinagar, said.

The temperatures, "similar to those in Africa's Sahara desert," are "far beyond expectations" by at least three or four degrees, according to Mishra. Earth system scientist Raghu

Murtugudde, professor at IIT-Bombay, said this was due to the combined effect of multiple phenomena - climate change, El Nino and the water vapour released by Tonga's Hunga Tonga volcanic eruption in January 2022.

El Nino causes a warming of the sea surface temperatures, affecting the world's weather. "The Middle East is getting hotter very fast because the

desert traps the heat during global warming — warmer atmosphere is more humid and water vapour is a greenhouse gas," Murtugudde said.

"This warming is causing winds over the Arabian Sea to shift northward during summer itself and also during the monsoon. These winds are also warming the Arabian Sea very fast and bringing more humid air to Delhi, thereby

This could be the worst summer in the last 120 years, at least for north India. Never have temperatures gone so high — more than 45-47 degrees Celsius — for such a vast region, which is also densely populated. This is a record in itself," Vimal Mishra, Vikram Sarabhai Chair Professor, Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences, IIT Gandhinagar, said.

raising the heat index. "However, adding fuel to fire is Delhi's killer urban heat island effect, which amplifies the misery," said Murtugudde. The effect is caused by built-up surfaces in cities, made of concrete and asphalt, that store

heat during the day and release it when the temperature cools in the evening. This heat doesn't escape to space but bounces around between buildings and inhibits nighttime cooling.

Mishra said such extreme heat has wide-ranging consequences on public health, electricity, water and the economy.

Studies have linked longer, intense heatwaves to a rise in hospitalisations, premature births and also adverse outcomes such as miscarriages in pregnant women. Research has also projected a rise in inflation and a decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across the world due to climate change.

On May 29, the day Delhi's Mungeshpur station recorded the exceptional maximum temperature of 52.9 degrees Celsius, the city's power demands peaked to an all-time high of 8,302 megawatts.

Cong's state leaders confident of much better returns for party



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders from some politically crucial states on Sunday exuded confidence that the party will do much better than what was projected in the exit polls and asserted the INDIA bloc is going to form the next government.

Leaders from states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Gujarat stressed that the Congress' performance would be very good, belying all the predictions in the exit polls.

The assertion was made at an online interaction Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh had before the media with key state leaders, Pradesh Congress Committee presidents and legislature party leaders of various states.

During his Zoom call with Ramesh, Assam Congress chief Bhupen Borah said his party would win at least seven Lok Sabha seats in the state. He said that alleged internal squabbling in the

The assertion was made at an online interaction Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh had before the media with key state leaders, Pradesh Congress Committee presidents and legislature party leaders of various states.

BJP and the impact of the INDIA bloc's unity would ensure a good performance of the Congress in Assam.

The state sends 14 members to the Lower House of Parliament.

Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa said all the surveys have given seven to nine seats to the Congress.

"We are ahead on nine seats, one seat will go to the AAP and three seats will be won by the candidates who will not in any way help the NDA or the PM. The INDIA bloc will get a minimum of 10 seats...In Punjab, the NDA is not going to get even a single seat," he said. There are 13 parliamentary constituency in the state.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the Congress has an edge on two parliamentary seats and is in a tight contest on the two other seats in the hill state. He exuded confidence that the Congress was also winning the six assembly seats where the bypolls have taken place.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said the Congress would win at least two-third of the 28 seats on the back of the popularity of the guarantees the party fulfilled after coming to power in the state.

Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh said his party would definitely win six to seven seats out of the nine seats it contested in the state.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

An encore?

Exit polls predict an easy win for NDA, though INDIA says it is confident of 295+ seats

If what the exit polls say holds true, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is going to form its third successive Government at the Centre. The seventh and final phase of polling has concluded and the nation eagerly awaits on June 4 a formal announcement of the results. The exit poll predictions notwithstanding, the Opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) coalition remains optimistic of securing over 295 seats. This juxtaposition of predictions raises intriguing questions about the electorate's intentions as well as the efficacy of exit polls itself. These polls, often seen as a barometer of public sentiment, do give a sense of the electorate's mood though it may or may not be accurate. If the predictions ring true, we can confidently say that it reflects a continued endorsement of the NDA's policies and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. We can conclude that the BJP's focus on economic development, national security and social welfare schemes seems to have struck a chord with a substantial number of voters. Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and various infrastructure projects have likely contributed to this favourable outlook. On the other hand, INDIA has been claiming, based on its own assessment, a clear majority for itself. Despite the exit polls, the INDIA alliance, comprising 28 major Opposition parties, remains confident of winning over 295 seats.



This coalition, which includes the Congress too, believes that their emphasis on inclusive growth, social justice and a more decentralised governance model has resonated with a significant segment of the population. INDIA's campaign has centred on addressing economic

disparities, improving education and healthcare and promoting secular values. Their optimism suggests a belief that there is a substantial undercurrent of support not fully captured by the exit polls. As far as exit polls are concerned, it would be too early for the NDA to start celebrating and for INDIA to sulk. There have been instances when exit polls have been wide of the mark and actual results have been at total variance with the predictions. Experts say the sample size must be at least five per cent (which is rarely the case) and it should be spread across demographics. Besides, predicting the number of seats based on exit votes is always subjective. What is important right now is a smooth transition/retention of power by whichever alliance takes Delhi. As the nation waits for the final results, the exit polls and INDIA's confidence set the stage for a potentially transformative election. The voters' message appears to be multifaceted, reflecting a balance between a desire for stability and development on the one hand and a push for inclusive growth and accountable governance on the other. Ultimately, regardless of the outcome, the next Government will need to respect the mandate and address the aspirations of the populace without discrimination and bias. So, till the actual verdict comes, keep your fingers crossed!

Dawn of a new era in Indian politics

Beyond the immediate winners and losers, the aftermath promises to be marked by potential new alliances, power shifts and the rise of emerging political forces



KALYANI SHANKAR

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are closing and the results will be on June 4. The aftermath of the election is not simply about winners and losers. It is about more than just the anticipated outcomes. It includes the potential for unforeseen alliances, dramatic shifts in power dynamics and the emergence of new political forces, all of which are yet to be unveiled. The BJP's potential win in the election is a significant event that could reshape the political landscape. However, the outcome is uncertain, with two possible scenarios, each with implications. One scenario predicts a massive victory for the BJP, possibly even exceeding 400 seats. The other scenario suggests a more modest result for the BJP with fewer seats.

A landslide victory for the BJP could have far-reaching consequences.

In a worst-case scenario, if the BJP wins fewer seats, the party could still secure support from other parties. If the party emerges as the single largest, albeit with fewer seats than in the 2019 poll, it has a plan B to form the Government with the help of some neutral parties.

The strategic decisions made by the Congress party, such as reducing the number of contested constituencies, highlight the depth and complexity of Indian politics. Each move is a calculated step towards a larger goal. As the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls concluded on Saturday, the Congress claimed the BJP's fate is "all but sealed," with the INDIA bloc having already crossed the halfway mark of 272 seats and is on course for a total of over 350 seats.

The INDIA Alliance, a significant player in Indian politics, was formed by 26 Opposition parties last year to fight Modi unopposed. However, if the BJP returns to power, the alliance may face a significant challenge. Some partners, such as the Trinamool Congress and the AAP, have decided to refrain from forming partnerships for the Lok Sabha polls, weakening the Congress's position. A BJP victory could lead to reevaluating the INDIA



Alliance's strategy, with some partners choosing to align with the BJP and others seeking new partnerships or independent paths.

If the BJP wins more seats, smaller parties may rush to join the alliance. This rush may be fueled by their desire to align with the winning side, which could impact the post-election scenario. However, this rush to join the coalition may be more than just motivated by political interests. Some parties want to oppose Modi, while others see alliances as a failed attempt. Others, like the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, have chosen to refrain from engaging in partnerships. They, along with the Congress and the Left Parties, would challenge the NDA.

This could result in the collapse of the newly formed India coalition, as this alliance has many fair-weather friends who may ally with any party based solely on their self-interest. The BJP's ability to secure more seats or gain support from other parties will not be a surprise. This could impact the political landscape, potentially leading



THE UDDHAV THACKERAY FACTION OF THE SHIV SENA AND THE SHARAD PAWAR-LED NCP WERE PREVIOUSLY WITH THE BJP AND IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING IF THEY HELPED THE NDA

to a realignment of political forces, including the INDIA Alliance.

The BJP has lost some crucial allies, such as SAD, Shiv Sena and JD(U). However, JD(U) and the TDP have now rejoined. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK, a former NDA ally, may also rejoin the NDA depending on its performance in the polls. Even the ruling DMK is considering its options after the election. The party understands the importance of maintaining a solid working relationship with the NDA and PM Modi. These potential alliances and shifts in power dynamics could significantly impact the political landscape after the elections.

The BJP could seek support from parties led by influential leaders such as Naveen Patnaik, Jagan Mohan Reddy, K Chandrashekar Rao, Mayawati and others. Though not aligned with any coalition, these leaders have significant political influence and have helped the BJP in the past when the ruling party needed them. Their potential role in the post-election scenario could significantly shape the political landscape.

The Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP were previously with the BJP and it wouldn't be surprising if they helped the NDA.

Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal is ambitious and eyeing the prime ministership. He will remain in opposition. Kejriwal predicted that if Modi wins again on June 4, he will put Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge in jail. He would also be sent back to jail. However, it's important to note that these are potential scenarios and not confirmed outcomes. Various factors, including the election outcome, can influence it.

The June 4 election results will show how politics will shape the Indian alliance, splintering or strengthening it. They will also indicate whether the BJP will become more arrogant with a hat trick under its belt. A third consecutive BJP win could embolden the party, leading to a more assertive political landscape.

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

PICTALK



People take a boat ride on the Ganga at Assi Ghat, in Varanasi

PTI

Tobacco addiction grows steadily among the youth

With 24 per cent of children under 16 already using tobacco, the urgency for immediate intervention and education cannot be overstated

The escalating trend of addiction among the youth in India is a serious challenge to public health. Each year, tobacco consumption claims the lives of 1.2 million people in the country. The theme of World No Tobacco Day 2024, 'Protecting Children from Tobacco Industry Interference', underscores the urgent need to shield the younger generation from the harmful influence of the tobacco industry. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable deaths and diseases worldwide. It significantly contributes to heart disease, cardiovascular issues and brain strokes. The Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016-17 revealed that approximately 29 per cent (270 million) of Indian adults use tobacco products, including cigarettes, gutkha, supari tobacco, jarda, bidi and hookah.

Alarming, about 24 per cent of children under 16 years old in India consume tobacco in some form, leading to devastating health outcomes. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) indicates that about 38 per cent of Indian men are addicted to



tobacco. Notably, tobacco consumption is higher in rural areas (42.7 per cent) compared to urban regions (28.8 per cent). Among women, tobacco use stands at approximately 8.9 per cent, with rural women showing higher consumption rates than their urban counterparts. These statistics are a cause for significant concern. World No Tobacco Day, celebrated by the World Health Organization and global partners, aims to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of tobacco use and promote cessation. The 2024 theme focuses on protecting children, as the majority of regular smokers start before the age of 18. This highlights the necessity of safeguarding adolescents from the perils of tobacco.

Smoking damages the alveoli in the lungs, leading to lung diseases, with most lung cancer cases linked to cigarette

smoking. Tobacco increases the risk of cancers such as oral, throat, oesophageal, bladder, kidney and lung cancer. It also leads to chronic diseases like COPD, heart attacks and strokes. Smoking is responsible for approximately 90 per cent of cancer deaths. The risk of death from heart disease and strokes rises significantly among tobacco users.

Smokers are prone to numerous diseases, with a general decline in overall health. Additionally, tobacco use reduces fertility in both men and women and can cause severe complications during pregnancy. Smoking and use of tobacco can lead to severe lung diseases, including COPD, Asthma, TB and Lung Cancer causing significant suffering. Smokers are significantly more likely to die from COPD and are at a higher risk of developing TB. People should avoid tobacco products and seek medical help if addicted. Various resources, including nicotine replacement therapy, prescription medications, counselling services, support groups and smartphone apps, are available to help individ-

uals quit tobacco. Among youth, smoking is often wrongly perceived as a sign of masculinity. Additionally, tobacco use is not universally seen as a vice. The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003 aims to protect consumers, reduce tobacco use and prevent related diseases. It includes measures such as banning smoking in public places, regulating sales near educational institutions and issuing health warnings to inform the public. The Telangana Government in May 2024 has recently banned all tobacco products for one year, realising the grave consequences of tobacco usage.

The rising addiction among youth threatens their future health. Young people must resist industry influences that target youth and promote e-cigarettes and flavoured nicotine pouches and candy which are also harmful and lay the foundation for tobacco use later on.

(The author is a public health expert working as an Assistant Professor at MLB Medical College, Jhansi UP; views are personal)



SUDHA SHARMA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPPOSITION ASSURED OF VICTORY

Madam — Apropos the news story "Congress assured of 295+ seats for INDIA bloc," published on June 1, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, I find the recent claims by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge quite significant. The assertion that the INDIA Bloc will secure over 295 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 elections reflects a strong confidence in their coalition's appeal. The strategic meeting, attended by prominent opposition leaders like Sonia Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Akhilesh Yadav, underscores their united front and meticulous planning for vote counting on June 4.

Kharge's emphasis on staying vigilant during the vote count, particularly concerning EVMs and Form 17C, highlights the coalition's commitment to ensuring a fair process. The involvement of various party leaders, including Sharad Pawar and Tejashwi Yadav, signals a robust alliance to overcome the BJP's influence. The INDIA Bloc's confidence, bolstered by their internal survey, suggests a significant shift in Indian politics. If their predictions hold, we could witness a transformative phase in the country's governance.

Tisha Reddy | Hyderabad

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Madam — Apropos the news story "Economic growth raises sustainability concerns," published on June 1, this is my response. India's economic ascent is remarkable, with its GDP growth rates positioning it as the fifth largest economy, surpassing the UK in 2022 and poised to overtake Japan by 2025. This growth is fueled by increased consumption, driving production and employment. However, this surge in consumerism raises significant sustainability concerns. The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2022-23, shows a notable rise in average Monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE), with urban and rural households increasing their spending by 33.5 per cent and 40.42 per cent respectively since 2011-12. This shift from 'needs to

Haryana thrives under current Govt



This is my response to the news story "Haryana is driving towards progress and prosperity," published on June 1. Haryana embodies courage and strength. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has savoured Haryana's spirit, has led with vigour for ten years. Seeing Rafale jets soar in Ambala skies today is a proud moment

for all of us. Modi recently highlighted the opposition's deceitful intentions and reaffirmed the BJP's dedication to Haryana's development. Earlier this month, former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar led a mega rally endorsing Lok Sabha candidate Mohan Lal Badoli, marking a significant moment in Haryana's political landscape. The rally, attended by over 15,000 supporters, showcased the deep-rooted admiration for Khattar's leadership. The Modi-Manohar effect has propelled Haryana towards economic prosperity and social development. Initiatives like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* and PM-KISAN have brought transformative changes. Haryana's rise as an investment hub, with significant contributions in textiles and agriculture, underscores its progressive vision and commitment to holistic development.

Rishabh Khanna | Chandigarh

wants' echoes Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also underscores the unsustainable wastage of resources.

High consumption depletes non-renewable resources, leading to scarcity and environmental degradation, including pollution, deforestation and climate change. Income disparities exacerbate these issues, as benefits are unevenly distributed, increasing economic inequality. To balance economic growth with sustainability, India must promote environmentally friendly consumption through education, incentives and regulations, investing in renewable resources and green technologies and implementing policies that encourage sustainable practices. Prioritising sustainability can ensure growth benefits society while preserving the environment for future generations.

Yashika Mehta | Mumbai

REVIVE FARMING, SAVE ENVIRONMENT

Madam — Apropos the news story "Recycle nutrients to mitigate fertiliser crisis," published on June 1, this is my response. As someone who follows environmental issues closely, the growing concerns about the disruption of natural

nutrient cycles due to human activities are alarming. Historically, sustainable farming practices effectively maintained the balance of essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

The staggering Rs. 2 lakh crore annual subsidy on fertilisers in India underscores the scale of this problem. Compounded by the separation of livestock farming from crop production, vast amounts of nutrients now pollute water bodies, causing eutrophication and damaging ecosystems. It's encouraging to see advancements in wastewater treatment and nutrient recovery. Cities like Delhi and Hyderabad are expanding their treatment capacities and exploring nutrient recycling. However, the challenge remains immense. Implementing efficient nutrient recovery systems and adopting best practices from Europe could significantly reduce environmental pollution and support sustainable agriculture, potentially transforming India's agricultural landscape and mitigating the ongoing nutrient crisis.

Aarav Singhania | Jaipur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN MIND MANAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL FOR HAPPINESS

We can truly celebrate only if we are able to silence our mind



RAVI VALLURI

What is the difference between PK and PIKU? Two letters, 'I' and 'U'; I is us and U are them (an extra-terrestrial Aamir Khan). Their CPU is cerebral and our CPU is at the level of abdomen. Or say for vast multitudes the focus is at the abdomen. It would be quite captivating watching the main protagonists PK (of the eponymous movie) and Bhaskor (of Piku fame) sharing their thoughts and respective metabolisms in a spaceship. Food has a tremendous impact on our system, which we do not quite comprehend. Improper diet first takes a toll on the metabolism and then attacks other organs of the body. Simply put, intake of toxic foods generates repugnant thoughts and results in a weak mind and body.

The human mind is an enigma and a reservoir of potential. But the moot question is how do we tap this potential? The mind is a movie theatre where we script and enact innumerable movies and soap operas.

Technology alone cannot be a substitute for the enormous potential of the mind. It needs to be cultured, harnessed, and harmonized with needs and wants.

We need to distinguish brain from the mind. The brain is an organ that serves as the center of the nervous system in all vertebrate and most invertebrate animals. Only a few invertebrates such as sponges, do not have a brain, diffuse or localized nerve nets are



present instead. Mind on the other hand is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect or memory or his attention span or will. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has captured it very succinctly. He says mind is like the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Your thoughts make or mar the progress and development of the mind.

To be happy in life humans need to calm the obdurate and recalcitrant mind. Further keep reminding ourselves that we are blessed, grateful and have abundance in our lives. Life is full of valleys and peaks. It can never be a rising curve or a straight line permanently.

The human mind vacillates between the past and the future. In the past, the mind is regretful and if it is in the future, it is anxious. In either situation the mind is not at peace nor in the present moment and thus remains unhappy.

Incidentally there is a deep connect between the stomach and mind. That is why it is called the gut feeling or the sixth sense. Our solar plexus keeps sending us signals. It depends as to whether we are conscious and wakeful enough to grasp those signals.

We humans can truly celebrate only if we are able to silence our mind. There are techniques to do it and develop a relaxation room or space in our minds and harness the energy so that it does not get enervated. By practicing Suryanamaskars and Padmasadhana as crafted by Gurudev we can enhance our Prana, (chi) or energy levels substantially.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

New sankalps from the sadhana in Kanyakumari



NARENDRA MODI

Kanyakumari has always been close to Modi's heart; on his recent visit to India's southernmost part, he gets into a pensive mood to reflect on Bharat's future

My dear fellow Indians, the biggest festival of democracy, the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections, are concluding today in our nation, the Mother of Democracy. After a three-day spiritual journey in Kanyakumari, I have just boarded the plane for Delhi. Through the day, Kashi and numerous other seats have been in the midst of voting. My mind is filled with so many experiences and emotions... I feel a boundless flow of energy within myself. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are the first in the Amrit Kaal. I began my campaign a few months ago from Meerut, the land of the First War of Independence of 1857. Since then, I have traversed across the length and breadth of our great nation. The final rally of these elections took me to Hoshiarpur in Punjab, the land of the great Gurus and a land associated with Sant Ravidas ji. After that, I came to Kanyakumari, at the feet of Maa Bharti. It is natural that the fervour of the elections was echoing in my heart and mind. The multitude of faces seen in rallies and road shows came in front of my eyes. The blessings from our Nari Shakti... the trust, the affection, all of this was a very humbling experience. My eyes were getting moist... I entered into a 'sadhana' (meditative state). And then, the heated political debates, the attacks and counter-attacks, the voices and words of accusations which are so characteristic of an election... they all vanished into a void. A sense of detachment came to grow within me... my mind became completely detached from the external world. Meditation becomes challenging amidst such huge responsibilities, but the land of Kanyakumari and the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda made it effortless. As a candidate myself, I left my campaign in the hands of my beloved people of Kashi and came here.

I am also grateful God for instilling me with these values from birth which I have cherished and tried to live up to. I was also thinking about what Swami Vivekananda must have experienced during his meditation at this very place in Kanyakumari! A part of my meditation was spent in a similar stream of thoughts.

Amidst this detachment, amidst the peace and silence, my mind was constantly thinking about the bright future of Bharat, the goals of Bharat. The rising sun at Kanyakumari gave new heights to my thoughts, the vastness of the ocean expanded my ideas, and the expanse of the horizon continuously made me realize the unity, the Oneness, embedded in the depths of the universe. It seemed as if the observations and experiences undertaken in the lap of the Himalayas decades ago were being revived.

Kanyakumari has always been very close to my heart. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari was built under the leadership of Shri Eknath Ranade ji. I had the opportunity to travel extensively with Eknath ji. During the construction of this Memorial, I had the opportunity to spend some time in Kanyakumari as well. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari... this is a common identity that is deeply ingrained in the heart of every citizen of the country. This is the 'Shakti Peeth' (seat of Shakti) where Maa Shakti incarnated as Kanya Kumari. At this Southern tip, Maa Shakti performed penance and waited for Bhagwan Shiva, who was residing in the Himalayas at the northernmost parts of Bharat.

Kanyakumari is the land of confluences.



The sacred rivers of our country flow into different seas, and here, those very seas converge. And here, we witness another great confluence—the ideological confluence of Bharat! Here, we find the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, a grand statue of Saint Thiruvalluvar, Gandhi Mandapam, and Kamarajar Mani Mandapam. These streams of thought from these stalwarts converge here to form a confluence of national thought. This gives rise to great inspirations for nation-building. This land of Kanyakumari gives an indelible message of unity, especially to any person who doubts Bharat's nationhood and the sense of unity.

For thousands of years, Bharat has been moving forward with this sense of meaningful purpose. Bharat has been a cradle of ideas for thousands of years. We have never considered what we have acquired as our personal wealth or measured it purely by economic or material parameters. Therefore, 'Idam-na-mama' (this is not mine) has become an inherent and natural part of the character of Bharat.

Bharat's welfare benefits our planet's journey to progress as well. Take the freedom movement as an example. Bharat gained independence on August 15, 1947. At that time, many countries around the world were under colonial rule. Bharat's independence journey inspired and empowered many of those countries to achieve their own freedom. That same spirit was seen decades later when the world came face to face with the once in a century COVID-19 pandemic. When concerns were raised about the poor and developing countries, Bharat's successful efforts provided courage and assistance to many nations.

Today, Bharat's governance model has become an example for many countries around the world. Empowering 25 crore people to rise above poverty in just 10 years is unprecedented. Innovative practices such as Pro-People Good

Governance, aspirational districts, and aspirational blocks are being discussed globally today. Our efforts, from empowering the poor to last-mile delivery, have inspired the world by prioritising individuals standing at the last rung of society. Bharat's Digital India campaign is now an example for the entire world, showing how we can use technology to empower the poor, bring transparency, and ensure their rights.

Inexpensive data in Bharat is becoming a means of social equality by ensuring the reach of information and services to the poor. The whole world is witnessing and studying the democratization of technology, and major global institutions are advising many countries to adopt elements from our model.

Since the success of the G-20, the world has been increasingly envisioning a bigger role for Bharat. Today, Bharat is being acknowledged as a strong and important voice of the Global South. The African Union has become a part of the G-20 group at the initiative of Bharat. This is going to be a crucial turning point for the future of African countries.

The development trajectory of Bharat fills us with pride and glory, but at the same time, it also reminds the 140 crore citizens of their responsibilities. Now, without wasting a single moment, we must step forward towards greater duties and larger goals. We need to dream new dreams, convert them into reality and begin living those dreams.

We must see Bharat's development in a global context, and for this, it is essential that we understand Bharat's internal capabilities. We must acknowledge Bharat's strengths, nurture them, and utilize them for the benefit of the world. In today's global scenario, Bharat's strength as a youthful nation is an opportunity from which we must not look back.

The world of the 21st century is looking towards Bharat with many

hopes. And we will need to make several changes to move forward in the global scenario. We also need to change our traditional thinking regarding reform. Bharat cannot limit reform to just economic reforms. We must move forward in every aspect of life towards the direction of reform. Our reforms should also align with the aspirations of 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047.

We should take pride in every moment that God has blessed us with birth in the land of Bharat. God has chosen us to serve Bharat and fulfill our role in our country's journey towards excellence.

We must redefine our heritage in a modern way while embracing ancient values in a modern context. As a nation, we also need to reassess outdated thinking and beliefs. We need to free our society from the pressure of professional pessimists. We must remember that freedom from negativity is the first step towards achieving success. Success blossoms in the lap of positivity.

My faith, devotion, and belief in the infinite and eternal power of Bharat are growing day by day. Over the past 10 years, I have seen this capability of Bharat grow even more and have experienced it firsthand.

Just as we utilized the fourth and fifth decades of the 20th century to impart a new momentum to the freedom movement, we must lay the foundation for a 'Viksit Bharat' in these 25 years of the 21st century.

Today, we have the same golden opportunity. Let's dedicate the next 25 years solely for the nation. Our efforts will create a strong foundation for the coming generations and the coming centuries, taking Bharat to new heights. Looking at the energy and enthusiasm of the country, I can say that the goal is not far away now. Let us take swift steps... let us come together and create a Viksit Bharat.

(These thoughts were penned by PM Modi on 1st June during his return flight from Kanyakumari to Delhi)



THE RISING SUN AT KANYAKUMARI GAVE NEW HEIGHTS TO MY THOUGHTS, THE VASTNESS OF THE OCEAN EXPANDED MY IDEAS, AND THE EXPANSE OF THE HORIZON CONTINUOUSLY MADE ME REALISE THE UNITY, THE ONENESS, EMBEDDED IN THE DEPTHS OF THE UNIVERSE

Kerala Govt faces backlash over flawed liquor policy

Criticism has arisen over the demand for bar owners to pay ₹2.5 lakh each to circumvent a Government-mandated monthly closure

The demand that all bar owners in the State should pay Rs 2.5 lakh per establishment instead of cancelling a Government order that makes it mandatory for all watering holes to down shutters on the first of every month and restrictions on opening more bar hotels underscore the opinion that it is time for the Kerala Government to come out of liquor business.

The latest controversy about the demand made by the powers that be to the bar owners to pay exorbitant money as a bribe for altering the excise department's laws establishes that the CPI(M)-led LDF and Congress-led UDF are swindling the State alternately, a charge made time and again by Prime Minister Narendra



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Modi during his campaign speeches in the State.

The Government has no business to be in business and is more so in the case of the liquor business. Unlike other States, Kerala and Tamil Nadu follow liquor policies that promote high-level corruption. The Governments in these two States are the monopolies in the liquor trade. The Beverages Corporation of Kerala (BEVCO) and Tamil

Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), the State-owned entities are the only bodies that can buy and sell liquor. Bar restaurants owned by the private sector should procure the liquor supplied by these two bodies. Long back there were private liquor outlets in these States doing roaring business.

After the "nationalisation" of the liquor business in Kerala, the tippers face severe hardship in getting their daily quota of spirits and they are also forced to consume what the brands that BEVCO 'impose' on them.

Earlier, the tippers had the choice of getting their favourite brands and drinking too. After the taking over of the liquor business by the Government, the brands to be

sold in the States are decided by the party in power and there is no transparency in the selection of liquor to be traded through the outlets or restaurants (bars). The liquor manufacturers who pay the ruling parties get the contract and laugh at the banks.

The Government claims that the nationalisation is the prelude to the introduction of total prohibition in Kerala. This is a dream that will never materialise unless other States bring in legislation banning liquor. Neighboring Karnataka is a tippler's paradise as the private outlets sell all popular brands patronized by the consumers.

While arrack, the country spirit is banned in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the same is available in the rest of the country

much to the delight of the working class. Those who toil in farmlands from morning to evening need a bit of relaxation after a hard day's work and hence it is not proper on the part of the Government to ban the stuff.

Pinarayi Vijayan, chief minister of Kerala, is on record stating that toddy is a most nutritious drink and not alcohol. Tamil Nadu has banned toddy tapping forcing the poor workers to rush to TASMAC with their hard-earned wages to buy the spirit for the evening. If arrack is not banned in these States (where spurious arrack is available from bootleggers) the workers need not have spent the day's earnings in State-owned liquor outlets.

The notion that liquor would

imperil health has to go. Many findings have been confirmed through scientific research that a moderate quantity of liquor is good for health. There is a Chinese adage about liquor: "A man takes a drink. The drink takes more drinks. Finally, the drinks take the man". If the authorities could make the man consume fewer drinks, that would be the best solution to alcoholism. But it should not be by killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. We live in an era when Indian-made scotches have beaten the spirits brewed in Scotland and the USA to emerge as their rivals in the global market.

Colombo and suburbs, hardly an hour of air journey from Kochi is a study in contrast. Though there are many liquor

outlets in Sri Lanka, one cannot come across long queues of tippers in front of these shops. Devan Ramachandran, a judge of the Kerala High Court, said recently that the drinkers need much better treatment from the BEVCO outlets. He was drawing the attention of the Government to the plight of tippers who have to wait for hours in the queue braving the scorching sun and heavy downpours to get their daily evening quota. Sunil Kumar, a fellow journalist, said that the Government's stringent and outdated regulations alone are responsible for making people consume more and more liquor. He says that the decision to down the shutters of liquor outlets on the first day of every month is a regressive

measure as it forces the drinkers to buy an additional bottle in the previous evening to stock for the next day. But what happens is that they consume that extra bottle on the same evening leaving them "high and dry" on the day of shutdown. Let the tippers have the freedom to gulp down their quota.

It is impossible to have total prohibition in the country. Piloos Modi, the veteran parliamentarian said during a debate on prohibition that he could stay away from alcohol for any number of years. But I cannot live even for a minute without the right to consume liquor," Piloos Modi had said. Let better sense prevail.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Income tax dept imposes penalty of Rs 4.68 cr on L&T

The income tax department has imposed a penalty of over Rs 4.68 crore on Larsen & Toubro Ltd. according to a regulatory filing. The department levied a penalty of Rs 4,68,91,352 in connection to the tax proceedings of erstwhile L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary, which was merged with the company on April 1, 2021. L&T said in the filing on Saturday. "Pursuant to the income tax assessment of the company and consequent adjustment in the returned income for the Assessment Year 2020-21, a penalty is levied on such adjustment to the returned income," it said. However, the conglomerate said it will file an appeal against this order as it "does not agree with this levy" and expects a favourable outcome at the higher forum. L&T is a US\$ 27 billion Indian multinational enterprise engaged in engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services, operating across multiple geographies.



NMDC's iron ore output falls 37% in May; sales down 22%

Country's largest iron ore miner NMDC has reported a 37 per cent fall in its production at 2.34 million tonnes (MnT) in May 2024. It had produced 3.71 MnT of iron ore in the same month last year, the company said in an exchange filing on Saturday. NMDC's monthly sales also declined by 22 per cent to 2.82 MnT in May this year from 3.62 MnT in May 2023. The company's cumulative iron ore output fell to 5.82 MnT in April-May 2024 from 7.22 MnT in the year-ago period. Sales during the said period were at 6.35 MnT, down from 7.05 MnT in April-May 2023. On Tuesday, NMDC had increased the prices of lump ore by Rs 250 a tonne and fines by Rs 350 per tonne with immediate effect. The miner revised the cost of lump ore to Rs 6,450/tonne and fines to Rs 5,610 per tonne. Under the Ministry of Steel, Hyderabad-based NMDC caters to India's around 20 per cent demand for the key steel-making raw material



CBIC issues instructions for initiating early GST recovery

The CBIC has said the Principal Commissioner or commissioner level officers can issue directions to recover GST dues before the stipulated three months of serving of demand order. Under the GST law, if a taxable person does not pay the amount specified in an order passed under the CGST Act within three months from the date of service of such order, the tax officer can initiate recovery proceedings only after the expiry of this period. However, in exceptional cases where it is necessary in the interest of revenue, the proper officer, after recording the reasons in writing, may ask a taxable person to pay the amount within a period shorter than three months. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said it has been brought to its notice that some of the field formations are initiating recovery before the specified period of three months from the date of service of the order, even in the cases where the taxable person has not been specifically required by the proper officer, for reasons to be recorded in writing, for payment of such amount within a lesser period.



Classplus expects biz to grow by 65% to over Rs 250 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

B2B edtech firm Classplus expects its business to grow by 65 per cent to over Rs 250 crore in the financial year 2024, a senior company official said. The Tiger Global and Peak XV Partners (formerly Sequoia Capital)-backed firm claims to be on the brink of profitability and continue to maintain the growth by improving operational efficiency. "Classplus achieved remarkable growth in FY24. We expect revenues to soar upwards of Rs 250 crore (unaudited), marking a 65 per cent increase from Rs 149 crore in FY23. Additionally, we made strong strides towards profitability, bringing down losses by 70 per cent to about Rs 80 crore in FY24," Classplus co-founder and CEO Mukul Rustagi said. Classplus helps content creators and educators launch and scale their online coaching businesses by monetising their social media.

RBI unlikely to cut interest rate on June 7: experts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is unlikely to cut the benchmark interest rate at its upcoming monetary policy review meeting, taking place soon after the announcement of the Lok Sabha election results, amid inflation challenges, said experts. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated interest rate of 6.5 per cent (repo) prevailing since February 2023. The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is scheduled for June 5 to 7. The decision will be announced on June 7 (Friday). Results of the Lok Sabha elections will be announced on June 4. The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in



The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is scheduled for June 5 to 7. The decision will be announced on June 7 (Friday). Results of the Lok Sabha elections will be announced on June 4.

February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at same level in its previous six bi-monthly policies. If the interest rate remains untouched again on June 7, it would be the eighth time for the RBI to maintain the status quo

on the benchmark repo rate. On expectations from the June policy, Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said economic conditions have largely remained unchanged since the last policy. High-frequency indicators

like PMI and GST collections do show that growth is on course. He further said concerns on inflation remain even though the last couple of numbers have come at less than 5 per cent. The ongoing heat wave has affected prices of vegetables in particular and while the IMD has predicted a normal monsoon, it would be prudent to wait and monitor how it progresses. "Under these conditions, a status quo on policy rate and stance may be expected. It would be interesting to see, however, if RBI changes forecasts of GDP and inflation for FY25," Sabnavis opined. Sanjay Nayar, President of industry body Assocham, too said the central bank is expected to keep the repo rate unchanged in the ensuing MPC meeting as retail inflation remains above the target of 4 per cent.

Deep tech startup policy likely in forthcoming Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce and industry ministry may propose a dedicated policy for deep tech startups to promote innovation, for the forthcoming Budget to be announced by the new government, an official said. Voting for the Lok Sabha polls is over and the counting is scheduled for June 4. The new government is likely to take oath this month. The new government may announce the full Budget for 2024-25 in July. The official said that startups have to convert their innovation into intellectual property rights and for that extensive R&D is required. The policy is in the final stages and the ministry may forward this proposal for the full Budget announcement, the official said. In July last year, a draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) was released for stakeholders' comments.



It is aimed at addressing the challenges confronting deep tech startups through definitive policy interventions to create a conducive ecosystem. It also aims to harness the transformative potential of technological advancement across diverse sectors, serving as a catalyst to stimulate ripple effects throughout the economy and laying the groundwork for new industry creation. Deep technology refers to innovations founded on advanced scientific and technological breakthroughs. Due to their disruptive nature, they

have the potential to solve India's most pressing societal issues. According to the draft, the priority is to strengthen the research and innovation ecosystem leading to scientific breakthroughs and technological advancements, boosting India's knowledge-driven economy. The main elements which are required to promote R&D and innovation include the creation of intellectual property rights, funding, infrastructure, standards and certification, and capacity building.

Mcap of 8 of 10 most valued firms erodes by Rs 2.08 L cr

Reliance, TCS biggest laggards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms declined by Rs 2,08,207.93 crore last week, with bellwether Reliance Industries, TCS and Infosys taking the biggest hit. While these three firms along with ITC, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were the laggards, HDFC Bank and State Bank of India (SBI) emerged as gainers. Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,449

points or 1.92 per cent. It rose by 75.71 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 73,961.31 on Friday, snapping a five-day losing streak. The market capitalisation (mcap) of index heavyweight Reliance Industries plunged by Rs 67,792.23 crore to Rs 19,34,717.12 crore, while TCS mcap declined by Rs 65,577.84 crore to Rs 13,27,657.21 crore. The valuation of Infosys slumped by Rs 24,338.1 crore to Rs 5,83,860.28 crore, and that of ITC went lower by Rs 12,422.29 crore to Rs 5,32,036.41 crore.

Mcap of LIC dropped by Rs 10,815.74 crore to Rs 6,40,532.52 crore, while HUL's valuation eroded by Rs 9,680.31 crore to Rs 5,47,149.32 crore. Bharti Airtel's mcap fell by Rs 9,503.31 crore to Rs 7,78,335.40 crore, and that of ICICI Bank dipped by Rs 8,078.11 crore to Rs 7,87,229.71 crore. However, mcap of HDFC Bank climbed Rs 10,954.49 crore to Rs 11,64,083.85 crore. SBI added Rs 1,338.7 crore, taking the market valuation to Rs 7,40,832.04 crore.

Mkt Outlook: LS election result, RBI interest rate decision key events to watch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trading in the equity market will largely depend on two major events this week - general elections result and the RBI interest rate decision - analysts said, adding that the benchmark indices may rally on Monday on exit polls' prediction of a massive win for the BJP-led NDA and strong GDP data. Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the NDA expected to win a big majority in the polls. Counting of votes will take place on June 4. "All eyes are now on the



most significant event of the past five years — the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections, scheduled for Tuesday. Before that, market participants will react to the exit polls on

Monday. "The market is approaching the event with caution, and the positive surprise from exit polls can lead to a rally as majority of the exit polls are

giving 350+ seats to the NDA. Conversely, a negative surprise from actual results might trigger a knee-jerk reaction in the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investment Ltd. Following the election outcome, the next major trigger will be the RBI policy announcement scheduled for June 7, he added. "A key aspect to monitor will be the behaviour of foreign investors in the aftermath of the election results. On the global front, macroeconomic data from the US and China will also play a significant role in shaping market sentiments," Meena said.

Major 18 listed builders sell Rs 1.17 L cr worth properties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eighteen major listed real estate developers sold properties worth Rs 1.17 lakh crore during the last fiscal with Godrej Properties becoming the largest player posting Rs 22,527 crore of sales bookings. Except for a few realty players, all major developers have achieved higher sales bookings in 2023-24 compared to the preceding financial year. This was largely driven by strong demand for residential properties, especially luxury homes, across major cities. Many developers clocked record pre-sales in the 2023-24 fiscal, riding on a surge in consumer demand.

'Meganet set to log Rs 1,000 cr revenue in next two years'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Computing hardware manufacturing firm Mega Networks (Meganet) is en route to entering the Rs 1,000 crore club in terms of revenue in the next two years, founder and CEO Amrith Pipada said. During an interaction with PTI, Pipada extensively discussed the firm's expansion

plans, its strategy to encash India's burgeoning AI server market, and the role of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme in its growth. The CEO exuded confidence in the company's capabilities and said the homegrown firm is set to achieve a 30-40 per cent revenue growth in FY25. Meganet recorded a revenue of Rs 300 crore in FY24.

Legacy issues behind us, PNB on right path to outperform its competition: MD Goel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With legacy issues behind, Punjab National Bank (PNB) is on the right path to outpace the competition and achieve greater heights in terms of profitability during the current fiscal and subsequent years, the bank's managing director Atul Kumar Goel said. PNB topped the chart recording the highest profit growth of 229 per cent among

the 12 public sector banks during the fiscal ended in March 2024. The bank's net profit increased over three-fold to Rs 8,245 crore compared to Rs 2,507 crore in the previous fiscal. Recalling the position of PNB three years ago, Goel said it was a laggard on many counts with one of the highest gross and net non-performing assets (NPAs) numbers among PSBs and Provision Coverage



Ratio (PCR) was low. "Today you see my net NPA reduced to 0.7 per cent and even the PCR is more than 95 per

cent. I am better than my peers," he said in an interview. Going forward, he said, the net NPA would come down below 0.5 per cent and the net interest margin of around 3 per cent during the current financial year. "We are on the right path because we have taken a lot of initiatives like improving underwriting, collections, digital and HR transformation. "Whatever efforts we put in

the last two years, results will be visible during this year and subsequent years. Definitely, our profitability would be better than our peers in the coming years," he said. Talking about the strategy to improve profitability, he said, the focus would be on expanding retail, agriculture, MSME portfolio, extending good corporate loans, controlling slippages and improving recovery.

AC makers clock two-fold jump in sales in May amid scorching summer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A blistering summer has led to an almost two-fold jump in sales of air-conditioners in May even as leading manufacturers have been grappling with delays in installation and replenishing inventories of hot-selling energy-efficient models. The mercury is hovering above 45 degrees at several places including the national capital, which has been under the grip of a severe heatwave for the past few days. At the same time, AC makers are navigating exceptional demand, recording their best-ever sales in a month so far. Leading brands like Voltas, LG, Daikin, Panasonic, and Blue Star witnessed robust sales

in May and the industry expects an overall growth of 30 to 35 per cent in 2024 compared to their sales of last year.



Voltas recorded a two-fold jump in the sales of residential AC in May and expects the positive momentum to continue in the remaining period of

the April-June quarter, said its MD & CEO Pradeep Bakshi. "As we reflect on May 2024, Voltas has a remarkable surge

in sales, showcasing a stupendous volume growth of 100 per cent compared to the same period last year. This milestone is particularly significant as May historically stands as one of the highest contributing month in the AC and cooling products industry," Bakshi said. The Tata Group firm is optimistic to achieve 2 million units of AC sales mark within the first six months of this calendar year. Similarly, LG Electronics India said it is witnessing an "exponential growth" in room AC business and has "surpassed the last 5 years' records with a multi-fold surge in demand". "This year created many sales records starting from the south region and now North India. We are expecting a minimum 100 per cent growth in north India. Similar growth trends are expected to be seen in eastern states also," said LG Electronics India Senior VP Sanjay Chitkara.

Agnikul eyes launching satellites by 2025: CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the successful test flight of its AgniBaan rocket, Chennai-based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos is hoping to start launching satellites early next year. In an interview with Agnikul co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Srinath Ravichandran said the 3D-printed semi-cryogenic engines and the rocket will offer quick turnaround for customers who will be able to have customised launch vehicles for their satellites. "Nine to twelve months I would say. Probably by the end of this financial year or the early part of the next financial year is what we are targeting," Ravichandran said.

Job cuts in Tata Steel's UK operations inevitable, says CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Loss of jobs for around 2,500 workers at Tata Steel's operations in the UK, which are in a transition phase, is "inevitable", the company's CEO T V Narendran said. Fear of job losses has attracted criticism of the workers' unions and they are continuously protesting against the company in the UK. India-based Tata Steel owns the UK's largest steelworks of 3 million tonne per annum (MTPA) at Port Talbot in South Wales and employs around 8,000 people across all its operations in that country. As part of its decarbonisation plan, the company is shifting to low-emission elec-



tric arc furnace (EAF) process from the blast furnace (BF) route which is nearing its end of life cycle. Speaking to PTI, Narendran said the transition to EAF with the UK government aid will make the company competitive in terms of reduced production cost, and also help in reduction of 5 million tonnes of Co2 per year. "But all this involves 2,500 job losses and that is what the unions obviously are not happy with. And that's a conversation

going on with the unions to how can we do it in a smooth as possible way. It is inevitable," he said. In September 2023, Tata Steel and the UK government agreed on a joint investment plan of 1.25 billion pounds to execute decarbonisation plans at Port Talbot steel making facility in Britain. Of the 1.25 billion pounds, 500 million pounds was provided by the UK government. Sharing the updates on the UK operations, Narendran further said the coke ovens were already closed in March. One blast furnace will close in June because it is operationally struggling, and the second blast furnace will close in September for reasons of asset quality as well as for reasons of financial bleed.

RAVEENA ACCUSED OF 'ASSAULTING WOMEN' IN MUMBAI



Raveena Tandon has been accused of 'abusing and beating' four ladies in Mumbai's Bandra late on Saturday. In a video of the actor that is extensively shared on social media, Raveena pleaded with a mob not to 'attack her' as she attempted to defend herself.

Raveena is seen in the video clothed in white, surrounded by the claimed victims and locals who attacked her. They were also spotted calling the police, with one of the women shouting, "My nose is bleeding. Raveena assaulted me."

Raveena was also seen requesting that bystanders not film videos of the incident. She implored the mob not to hit her. She said, "Do not push. Please do not hit me." Some others could be heard screaming, "Maaro isko (hit her)."

One of the alleged victims also stated that Raveena jumped out of the car in an intoxicated state to defend her driver and assaulted his mother, causing serious head injuries.

what's brewing?

Preity Zinta wraps up shoot of her comeback movie, *Lahore 1947*



Preity Zinta is set to make a comeback on the big screen after six years with *Lahore 1947*.

In the film, she will appear with Sunny Deol.

Now, the actress has shared an update on the film's schedule with her Instagram followers.

That concludes *Lahore, 1947!* Preity's video, which includes peeks of the tiny party on set as well as candid shots with director Rajkumar Santoshi and his colleagues, is full of fun.

Preity Zinta has also written a thank you note for Rajkumar Santoshi, cinematographer Santosh Sivan, producer Aamir Khan, music maestro AR Rahman, and her co-stars. It read, "It's a wrap on *Lahore 1947*, and I couldn't be more grateful to the entire cast and crew for such an incredible experience. I sincerely hope all of you appreciate and enjoy this film as much as we did making it. It's definitely the toughest film I have worked on. Full marks to everyone for all their hard work and patience during the last couple of months. Thank you Raj [Rajkumar Santoshi] ji, Aamir [Khan], Sunny [Deol], Shabana [Azmi] ji, Santosh Sivan & AR Rahman from the bottom of my heart. Loads of love always."

In addition to Sunny Deol and Preity Zinta, Sunny Deol's son, actor Karan Deol, will appear in *Lahore 1947*. Aamir Khan, who is behind the project, confirmed it in March!

Mandy Moore reveals that she is expecting her third child

Mandy Moore, best known for her portrayal as a mother-of-three on *This Is Us*, has some big news. She is planning to have three children of her own! She shared the happy news on Instagram, claiming that life can be like art at times.

She and her husband, Taylor Goldsmith, have two boys, Gus and Oscar. Mandy discussed her experience as a mother of two children in an interview with Hoda and Jenna. She stated that it has been wild, but she is still open to having more children. It appears like she'll obtain her wish sooner than planned!

"My husband thinks I'm crazy," Moore remarked about becoming a mother again.

Moore and Goldsmith welcomed their first son, August "Gus" Harrison Goldsmith, in February 2021. Moore explained on Instagram that they chose the name August since they discovered they were having a boy in the same month that Goldsmith was born.



Neve Campbell's return to *Scream*

Neve Campbell acknowledged her excitement at returning to the *Scream* series, emphasizing its importance in her life. She added that, despite missing the previous film owing to contractual concerns, she appreciated the gracious invitation to return. She expressed her gratitude, saying she appreciated the opportunity to relive Sidney's experience and continue her story.

Campbell highlighted Sidney's resilience, emphasizing how much the character has inspired others. She commented, "Sidney is so strong and has inspired a lot of people," alluding to the character's fortitude. The actress discussed the series' deep impact on her, stating that it will always have a particular place in her heart.

Neve Campbell stated that the film carries enormous significance for her. She expressed her delight about resuming the character of Sidney, stating that it is more than just acting; it is a passionate return to something very meaningful. She also highlighted meeting people who tell her how Sidney's fortitude has helped them through difficult times, often in ways that exceeded her expectations!

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



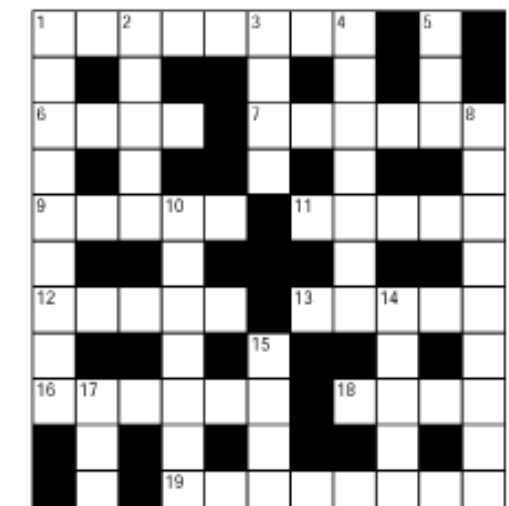
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- 1 Small towns
- 6 Overdue
- 7 Changed direction
- 9 In the lead
- 11 A smelly vegetable
- 12 Unlocks
- 13 A measure of length
- 16 Remained in the same place
- 18 Nought
- 19 Illnesses

DOWN

- 1 Mountains that erupt
- 2 A measure for liquid
- 3 A type of door in a fence
- 4 Very unusual

SOLUTION

S	V	A	B	P
H	E	L	C	H
E	M	P	T	E
A	E	S	R	I
D	I	S	A	P
L	S	V	E	E
I	N	N	E	R
N	E	A	O	T
E	V	E	R	Y
S	O	S	N	R



Actress Alankrita Sahai, who has received much praise for her performance in *Tippsy*, opens up with *The Pioneer* about the dissimilarities of her character and Alankrita in real life, and shooting in the serenity of Goa, among the rest.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Alankrita Sahai, the all-round actress who has played explosive characters, notably in the film *Tippsy*, was seen portraying a character named 'Pony' and has received much praise for shattering stereotypes!

Initially, she was invited to play a different character named 'Tanya', but she says, "I no longer wanted to play the conventionally affluent, beautiful woman. I was keen to break free from being typecast and try new roles. My job is to experiment and progress my career through different genres! That's when I discovered another character named 'Pony'. When I read about her role, I thought she was hilarious and naive, unlike any other character I'd played before."

This film highlighted women's camaraderie. She explains the same: "You don't need a man for a bachelorette trip, but a man's bachelor vacation is never without women. *Tippsy's* idealised premise is that it's acceptable for women to celebrate their bachelorette party, have fun, and not experience prejudice simply because they are women. It's like a *Hangover* movie of girls, and Kainaat and Nazia, who are my good friends, were *Charlie's Angels* for Deepak Tijori, and the myth that Bollywood actors can't become friends is entirely wrong because we can be friends and boosted each other and built beautiful memories during the shoot."

She did this movie since her father died in a horrifying incident in 2022, and she says, "This film came as a saving grace for me because losing a parent so suddenly at a young age is traumatic and depressing. I did not want to do anything in my life. I left Mumbai and travelled to Chandigarh. When I received this movie offer, I assumed that my father would have expected me to work hard and regularly because he wanted my aspirations to come true. So I thought, let's do this for real." Within two months of her father's death, she had to begin shooting. She met several lovely and friendly people, and it was great to be back in Mumbai!



'I NO LONGER WANTED TO PLAY THE CONVENTIONALLY AFFLUENT, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'

Pony's character is amusing and a little naive, but unlike Alankrita, she is quite subservient; she explains, "In real life, I am the leader of my group, whereas Pony is a follower in her gang. Pony is a top student at her college, something I can connect to. She is, nevertheless, a glamorous middle-class girl attempting to fit into society while dealing with hurdles from both her family and society. Unlike Pony, I am a strong and courageous individual, but she is fearful, scared, and vulnerable. To prepare for the role, I needed to play a submissive, sensitive, and emotionally motivated character."

Also, Pony's voice was slow and charming, so the actress needed to adjust her tone of speech and modulate her body language! This role represented the various types of girls we may encounter in a friend circle.

When they were shooting in Goa, they realised they were away from home because of the beach and the scenery, which she appreciated. She says, "The most important thing about shooting there was that we had great food and an environment. Even though we were working in Goa, it felt like we were partying, despite the long hours. Surprisingly, when we completed shooting late, we could always relax at a restaurant, where the women could sit and get to know each other before going for a walk on the beach. Working for me is like a party, and I like it. It was a pleasure to shoot with these gals. Goa is a safe area for women to enjoy themselves, but exercise caution at all times."

She believes *Tippsy* resonated more with a female audience, and that people struggled to accept women partying, being powerful and opinionated, and having independence. Gen Z and millennials will accept it, and the film focused on camaraderie, various people coming together, and harmony. Despite the severe accident she has been involved in lately, she is already working on two projects, and the announcements will be made soon. She remarked, "I feel that regardless of whether movies are successful or not, one should continue working. We have received positive media coverage, which I am quite happy for. A movie is something that some individuals may enjoy while others may not. We cannot please everyone, but we must ensure that we do credit to the role."

Deepti Sadhwani reveals her Cannes look

'My dress got ready 2 hours before I had to leave'

SHRADDHA NEWARE

This year's Cannes Film Festival has left many people talking about fashion taking center stage on the red carpet. From celebrities to influencers, we've seen a diversity of colour combinations and innovation on the part of designers. Actress Deepti Sadhwani's stunning performance at the event astounded many people. The one-of-a-kind appearance was stunning and seemed to evoke a message. Let's find out more as the stunning actress reveals her red carpet look. Excerpts from the interview:

How did you learn the ropes of your profession?

Beauty pageants began at a very young age, at the city level. I was Miss Lucknow, and then I competed in some small beauty pageants with names you wouldn't recognise. Then I competed in Miss North India and won the contest. I opted for Femina, Miss India. I was among the top regionals. The entire process of whether or not a contender wins the crown consists of hard training, discipline, personality development, how to get up, how to sit down, how much you should smile in front of the camera, what your etiquette is, and how you walk. During these pageants, I learned all about ladylike manners. After winning Miss North India, my confidence skyrocketed, and I began conducting several interviews. I was all over the media when I was barely 18! Beauty pageants provided valuable training for me as a young and eager learner. So that was my training experience, and I believe it made a significant difference in shaping who I am today. And it has actually influenced my career.

What is your go-to fashion look?

When it comes to fashion, I strive to be versatile and avoid being the type of person who just wears one type of hairstyle, makeup, or clothes. I constantly look for what looks good on my body and makes me feel comfortable. Where I'm going determines my choice of dress, footwear, hair, and makeup. Most of the time, I prefer to go without makeup because we do so much of it during events. I believe that if I can look good in a pantsuit, short dress, or gown, I can do the same in Indian attire.

Can you tell us more about your red carpet look for Cannes?

So, basically, I didn't have a stylist for my red carpet look and didn't hire anyone because I wanted to design looks that reflected my individualism, personality, and the

Actress Deepti Sadhwani, who very well aced her frills at the Cannes Film Festival this season, speaks to *The Pioneer* about her modelling days, and red carpet look for Cannes.

message I wanted to convey. Three months before Cannes, my friend and I, who is a designer, met together to discuss how and what to do. There was a lot of back and forth about things, whether it was design or colour. I knew my red carpet would be in the afternoon, so I decided to do something daytime with a literal touch of neon. After a lot of fabric selections, we settled on this colour, which was orangey with a tinge of neon, and we got about 100 meters, which ran out when we started stitching, and another 100 meters, which also ran out, so we had to go again for 50 meters. So around 250 meters of fabric were used. We were just doing frills and frills on the dress. We expected it to take a month, but this dress was ready barely two hours before I left for the airport, and I'm not exaggerating.

What are your thoughts on the evolution of women in cinema?

Women's roles have always evolved over time, and we see women-centric films, documentaries, and web series being produced now that are performing quite well. You no longer need a hero to do justice, bring in numbers at the box office, or entice audiences to the cinema. For example, Sanjay Leela Bhansali embodies women's sensuality in the web series *Heeramandi*. It was exclusively about ladies. And I believe that this should improve over time. I would like to see changes that ensure women receive equal pay. That is the only area where we are falling behind in the movie right now. Actors are paid approximately ten times more than actresses. There should be no gender discrimination in salaries.

Do you believe Indian cinema is being noticed these days?

The good news is that Indian cinema is receiving recognition on such large and prominent forums. Indian films are being exhibited at the Cannes Film Festival. Many Indian films are being presented in both main and short film categories.

People acknowledge and appreciate you when you claim, 'I am from India'. When the international press and media interview you, they say, 'Oh, you're from India? It's nice to have Indian films being played here.' People recognise Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and other Indian actresses who visit there. They give you adequate prominence; you feel wanted, involved, and like you belong there because you are from India and represent Indian culture. That was the best part. When you're on the red carpet, people hoot for you and make sure you smile, saying things like 'I love your gown', 'You're so amazing', 'This side, that side', and 'Give us a flying kiss'. So they say stuff like that, which makes you grin and take the best photos on the red carpet. It is very essential to me to reflect Indian culture. I wore a saree at Cannes, but not on the red carpet. But it was one of the looks we created during the day. More power to Indian cinema and culture, which are represented not only at Cannes but also at other film festivals!



Deadly truth behind reverse smoking

Reverse smoking is an unconventional and hazardous form of tobacco consumption that has significant health implications. Unlike traditional smoking, where the lit end of the cigarette is placed in the smoker's mouth, reverse smoking involves placing the lit end inside the mouth. This practice, although less common globally, is particularly prevalent in certain regions such as parts of India, the Philippines, and the Caribbean. Despite its relative obscurity, reverse smoking poses severe health risks, often overlooked in public health discussions.

Prevalence

Reverse smoking is deeply rooted in cultural practices and is often seen among older women in rural communities. In regions where it is practiced, reverse smoking is typically associated with traditional beliefs and social norms. For example, in some areas of Andhra Pradesh, it is believed that reverse smoking helps keep the tobacco from drying out and enhances its flavour! Additionally, some communities view this practice as a way to avoid drawing unnecessary attention or as a method of using tobacco leaves that are not suitable for regular smoking.

Health risks of reverse smoking

The health risks associated with reverse smoking are profound and far-reaching. One of the most alarming consequences is the increased risk of developing oral cancers. Since the lit end of the cigarette is placed inside the mouth, the mucous membranes of the oral cavity are directly exposed to extremely high temperatures. This direct heat exposure, combined with the harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke, significantly damages the oral tissues and increases the likelihood of malignant transformation.

Studies have shown that individuals who practice reverse smoking are at a higher risk of developing cancer of the palate. The constant exposure to heat and carcinogens leads to chronic irritation and inflammation of the palate, creating an environment conducive to cancer development. Additionally, reverse smokers are also at risk of developing other oral health issues such as leukoplakia, gum disease, and dental caries.

Moreover, reverse smoking is not limited to affecting the oral cavity. The inhalation of tobacco smoke through the mouth still exposes the respiratory system to harmful toxins, leading to an elevated risk of lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other respiratory conditions. The practice can also contribute to cardiovascular diseases, as the harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke are absorbed into the bloodstream, causing damage to the heart and blood vessels.

Social and economic implications

The health consequences of reverse smoking extend beyond the individual, impacting families and communities. In areas where reverse smoking is common, the burden of disease places a significant strain on local healthcare systems. Treating conditions such as oral and lung cancer, as well as chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, requires substantial medical resources and expenditures. This can be particularly challenging in low-resource settings, where healthcare infrastructure may already be limited.

Furthermore, the social implications of reverse smoking are notable. The practice often perpetuates a cycle of poverty and poor health, as individuals suffering from smoking-related diseases may be unable to work and support their families. This loss of productivity can have ripple effects throughout the community and exacerbating economic hardships.

Addressing smoking: A public health priority

Given the severe health risks and socio-economic implications associated with reverse smoking, it is crucial to address this practice as a public health priority. Raising awareness about the dangers of smoking and reverse smoking is essential in communities where the habit is prevalent. Public health campaigns should aim to educate individuals about the risks of oral and respiratory cancers, as well as other smoking-related diseases.

Efforts to reduce the prevalence of reverse smoking should also focus on providing support for smoking cessation. Access to cessation programs, counseling, and nicotine replacement therapies can help individuals quit smoking and reduce their risk of developing serious health conditions. Additionally, community-based interventions that involve local leaders and influencers can be effective in changing social norms and reducing the acceptance of reverse smoking.

Policy measures can also play a critical role in addressing reverse smoking. Implementing and enforcing regulations that restrict tobacco sales and advertising, increase taxes on tobacco products, and provide resources for tobacco control programs can help reduce the overall prevalence of smoking, including reverse smoking.

Reverse smoking is a dangerous and often overlooked habit with serious health consequences. The increased risk of oral cancers, respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular conditions highlights the urgent need for public health interventions to address this practice. By raising awareness, providing support for smoking cessation, and implementing effective policy measures, we can reduce the prevalence of reverse smoking and improve health outcomes for affected communities.

(The author, Dr K V Krishnamani, is a Medical Oncologist, at American Oncology Institute, Hyderabad.)

USA THUMP CANADA BY SEVEN WICKETS

BEGIN TRYST WITH TOP FLIGHT CRICKET IN STYLE

PTI ■ DALLAS

USA announced their arrival in top-flight cricket in spectacular fashion as Aaron Jones introduced himself with a 40-ball 94 in a seven-wicket hammering of Canada in the opening match of the T20 World Cup here.

Batting first, Canada posted 194 for five, but USA turned what could have been a tricky chase into a cruise, completing the task with as many as 14 balls to spare.

America's very own Jones, who was born in Queens, a New York City borough, smashed 10 sixes and four boundaries to make a statement on behalf of the team full of expatriates.

While Jones was without an iota of doubt the star batter of the match, Andries Gous too made an impression with his 65 off 46 balls.

Gous hit seven fours and three sixes during his stay in the middle, after USA lost two wickets with just 42 runs on the board.

It was fitting that Jones finished the chase with a pair of sixes.

Before that, left-arm seamer Kaleem Sana gave Canada the perfect start, dismissing the dangerous Steve Taylor for a duck.

Gous joined skipper Monank



Patel, and the duo tried to up the scoring rate with a flurry of boundaries.

Canada, however, maintained discipline with the ball and soon struck again with Monank's wicket. The batter fell a run-a-ball

16 while trying to take on Dillon Heyliger. A 19-run over against Nikhil Dutta, featuring a six each

for Gous and Aaron Jones, helped pick the USA rate up. Jones continued to attack, hitting Canada skipper Saad

Bin Zafar for a six and a four in the 10th over. The duo continued going for their shots, and pumped up

the USA scoring rate. From 81/2, USA added 45 runs over the next three overs. Jones hit three sixes off Saad in the 13th over, reaching the fastest T20I fifty for his side in the same over, from merely 22 balls.

Gous reached a fifty off his own in the next over, and survived a scare after he hit one straight to Dilpreet off Gordon, but the pacer had bowled a no-ball.

His partner, Jones took advantage of the free hit and hit his eighth six off the next ball. The duo brought up their 100-run stand off merely 45 balls.

Earlier, Canada were off to a decent start with the opening duo of Navneet Dhaliwal and Aaron Johnson (23) putting on 43 runs in just over five overs at the Grand Prairie Stadium.

Mumbai-born left-arm spinner Harmmeet Singh effected the first breakthrough of the tournament proper when he dismissed Johnson in the sixth over.

Pargat Singh, another player Canadian player of Indian origin, fell cheaply for five runs when he was run out in the eighth over.

However, Dhaliwal found an able ally in Nicholas Kirton, who got his runs at a brisk pace while hitting three

boundaries and two sixes. Dhaliwal found the fence thrice and cleared it six times during his 66-run partnership with the left-handed Kirton.

After the others have failed, it took former New Zealand player Corey Anderson to break the partnership between Dhaliwal and Kirton as he had the former caught by Jessy Singh at the start of the 15th over.

The dismissal of Dhaliwal did not have any bearing on Canada's game plan thanks to wicketkeeper Shreyas Movva's enterprise. The right-handed batter blazed away to 32 off 16 balls, striking two sixes and as many fours during his cameo to lift Canada's scoring rate.

Dilpreet Bajwa chipped in with a five-ball 11 after Kirton's departure, as Canada posted a challenging total on the board. The USA however, after a wobble initially, completed the task to open their account in their very first match in the World Cup.

The third-wicket stand between Jones and Gous produced 131 runs, laying the foundation of a fine victory on their home turf. The USA and the West Indies are jointly hosting the T20 showpiece.

Amit Panghal clinches Paris Olympics spot



PTI ■ BANGKOK

Amit Panghal's comeback to the Indian team culminated in an Olympic quota as the world championships silver medalist boxer qualified for the Paris Games with a quarterfinal win in the 2nd World Qualification Tournament here on Sunday.

Panghal, India's lone male world championship silver medalist, notched a hard-fought 5-0 win over China's Chuang Liu for a ticket to his second Olympic Games. He thus joins the quartet of Nishant Dev (71kg), Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg). All of them have booked Olympic berths.

Panghal had only one shot at making the Paris Olympics and the 2018 Asian Games champion made the most of his opportunity.

The going has been tough for Panghal as he lost his place in the national team on the basis of BFI's evaluation system to world

championship bronze medalist Deepak Bhoria, who competed at the earlier two qualifying events. Since the Tokyo Olympics, the only big-ticket event that the Haryana boxer has competed in was the Commonwealth Games in 2022, where he won the gold medal.

He also emerged victorious at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament earlier this year.

The quarterfinal bout began on a rather sedate note with both boxers trying to assess each other. One minute into the bout, Liu went after Panghal. At an height disadvantage, the Indian struggled to find his range, and he did manage to land a couple of scoring shots but didn't engage much.

Trailing 1-4, Panghal, a three-time Asian Championship medalist, changed his strategy. He went on the offensive, beginning the second round on a positive note.

The Chinese boxer retaliated by launching some counterattacking blows but Panghal continued with his punches and ended the round on a high, forcing all five judges to rule in his favour.

In the last three minutes, Liu changed his game and moved closer to Panghal. It was an energy sapping affair as both fighters traded punches, going hammer and tongs at each other. In the end, the former world number one prevailed.

Later in the day, Jaisime Lamboria (57kg) and Sachin Siwach (57kg) will also look to secure Olympic quotas.

Sri Lanka look to muffle big guns in South Africa batting

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Sri Lanka will rely on their exceptionally varied bowling attack to tame the unrestrained batting power of South Africa in their Group D T20 World Cup opener here on Monday. They will be eager to get onto the points table at the earliest too as some tricky teams like Netherlands, Bangladesh and Nepal are clubbed with them in the group.

South Africa have spread all their cards on the table as the team selection indicated the most likely route they would take in this ICC showpiece. A batting line-up consisting of captain Aiden Markram, wicketkeeper batter Heinrich Klaasen, Quinton de Kock, David Miller and Tristan Stubbs could be a nightmare for any bowling attack.

Klaasen and Stubbs have been in roaring form of late. In this World Cup cycle, the right-hander has averaged 41 and struck runs at 182. In the IPL 2024 too, Klaasen made 471 runs from 16 matches at a strike rate of 171 for the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Stubbs has been equally impressive for the Delhi Capitals, amassing 378 runs from 14 matches and he made them at a strike-rate of 190. Both these gifted power-strikers come in the middle-order when the spinners will be in operation, and to add to Lanka's worries, they are phenomenal against the tweekers, especially Klaasen.

In the run-up to the World Cup, the 32-year-old from Transvaal has averaged 59 against spin and made runs at an eye-watering strike-rate of 191. It will certainly worry a set of



Lankan spinners such as captain Wanindu Hasaranga (economy 7.42) and Maheesh Theekshana (6.71), both of whom had to battle injuries in the recent past. So, Sri Lanka, who have not reached the knockouts of a T20 WC after their triumph in 2014, will be eager to try a couple of overs from pacers Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madhushanka in that phase when Klaasen and Stubbs are looking for acceleration.

However, Lanka might take heart from the fact that the Proteas went down 0-3 to the West Indies in a recent T20I series at Kingston. Lanka will also hope that the New York pitch will continue to offer some help to the bowlers as it had happened in Saturday's warm-up match between India and Bangladesh, where a few deliveries did not rise above the ankle and knee level.

Beyond that, the Lankans are also one of the teams that have played a good number of T20Is this year. In 2024, they have series wins over Zimbabwe and Afghanistan at home and Bangladesh away. In fact, they have won six of the last nine T20Is. But those external factors will

not have much bearing on a fresh day and Lanka know that their batters too will have to come good against the African rival. They have the experienced Angelo Mathews, the explosive Kusal Mendis and the rock-solid Dhananjaya de Silva to bank on while the former captain Dasun Shanaka can make a few quick runs down the order.

The SA attack does not have that much variety in their bowling unit as it largely revolves around Kagiso pacer Rabada and left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi. Anrich Nortje is still finding his range after coming back from an injury and had an underwhelming IPL where he conceded more than 11 runs an over.

The SA management will hope that the pacer will regain his rhythm in the biggest stage and that will have a major say in avoiding another below-par outing in a World Cup. SQUAD: South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Otttniel Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan

Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs. Sri Lanka: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka. Travelling Reserves: Asitha Fernando, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Janith Liyanage. Match starts at 8 PM IST. Oman face Namibia In a Group B clash at Bridgetown, Namibia, a dominant force in the African Qualifiers, will be hoping for a winning start against Oman. However, it would not be that easy for Namibia as Oman had run them close in April, before conceding the five-match series 2-1.

Hence, Oman, who are making their third appearance in a T20 WC, will be hoping for a better outcome this time. SQUAD: Oman: Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Prajapati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail. Reserves: Jatinder Singh, Samay Shrivastava, Sufyan Mehmood, Jay Odedra. Namibia: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger, PD Blignaut.

We have not really nailed down our batting unit: Rohit Sharma

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The Indian team is yet to "nail" its batting line-up for the T20 World Cup and much shouldn't be read into the think tank's decision to send Rishabh Pant at number three in the warm-match against Bangladesh, said skipper Rohit Sharma.

India emerged winners by 60 runs at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, restricting Bangladesh to 122 for nine after posting 182 for five in the allotted 20 overs on Saturday.

On Pant batting at No.3, Rohit said, "Just to give him an opportunity. We have not really nailed down what the batting unit will look like. Even the bowlers did pretty well. All in all happy with how things went." Pant struck a fluent 53 off 32 balls, while Hardik Pandya smashed 40 in 23 deliveries after Suryakumar Yadav helped himself to an 18-ball 31.

"Quite happy with how things went. Pretty much got what we wanted from the game. Like I said at the toss, it was important to get used to the conditions.

"New venue, new ground, drop-in pitch - important to get used to it and we managed pretty well," Rohit said after the match. Left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh shone with the ball, picking 2/12 in three overs while all-rounder Shivam Dube grabbed 2/13 in three overs.

Asked about Arshdeep, Rohit said, "He has shown us, in whatever games he has played, he has the skills up-front. He



has got a very good skill-set (at the death too). "We saw it today. He bowled pretty well, swung the ball up front, and then bowled one at the backend. We have got 15 good players here. We have to see what the conditions are and then see what combination is best for us."

A little spongy at times: David Head coach Rahul Dravid said the pitch was a bit soft and spongy, while lauding the performance of his players.

"It's great to get a good hit-out. Obviously, it looks like a good facility in terms of as quickly as they have put up. The ground is a bit soft and the guys could feel that on the hamstring and the calves.

"So, that's the area we need to ensure that we are working around and ensuring that the guys are looking after does feel a little bit heavy underneath," Dravid said in a video posted by the BCCI.

India ticked multiple boxes during their comfortable win over Bangladesh in the warm-up match, but none bolder than the fifty by Pant which has all but sealed his place as the first-choice wicketkeeper batter in the ICC showpiece.

Dortmund rues missed chances in Champions League final loss

AP ■ LONDON

The scrappy German team missed a slew of big chances against Real Madrid in the Champions League final before losing 2-0 at Wembley Stadium on Saturday.

"You have to use your chances in the final," midfielder Emre Can said. "Unfortunately we didn't."

The loss comes a year after Dortmund failed to clinch the Bundesliga title on the last day of the season, and 11 years after losing to Bayern Munich 2-1 the last time they reached the Champions League title game, also at Wembley. In 2013, Dortmund coach

Edin Terzic was in the stands as a fan of the black-and-yellow.

Last year, Terzic had tears in his eyes after Dortmund missed the chance to win the Bundesliga when it was held by Mainz to 2-2.

On Saturday night, more heartbreak.

"I'm proud but disappointed and empty," Terzic said. "After a Champions League final that we lost, it is quite hard to find the right words." Karim Adeyemi was in alone on goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in the 21st minute with Dortmund's yellow-clad, flag-waving fans poised to erupt.

But the winger pushed the ball too far to his left as the

6-foot-6 Courtois used all of his length to get down and reach for the ball at the top of the area. Adeyemi got a left-footed shot off, but Dani Carvajal was there to block it.

Two minutes later, Niclas Fullkrug poked a shot past Courtois but it bounced off the right post and across the goalmouth. Dortmund had another chance just before the half-hour mark when Adeyema's shot was saved by Courtois. Fullkrug wasn't able to get a clean header on the rebound. Marcel Sabitzer forced another save from Courtois in the 41st.

"We managed to escape from the first half, when we could have been losing 2-0 easily," Fullkrug faulted himself for

Courtois said. "We never stop and found a way to put it in."

Carvajal's header broke the deadlock in the 74th and Vinicius Junior sealed it seven minutes from time. Madrid star Jude Bellingham summed it up nicely: "Dortmund had the better of the game, the better chances, but if you don't kill us then we will come back."

Fullkrug had another good chance in the 63rd but his header was straight at Courtois, who punched it away. The Germany forward finally did put the ball in the net with a bullet header but he was well offside and the score remained 2-0. Fullkrug faulted himself for

not converting his opportunities and said he feels particularly bad for Marco Reus, who played his final game for Dortmund. Reus is leaving Dortmund after 12 years at the club. Reus and Mats Hummels were members of the last Dortmund team to make it this far. They lost the 2013 Champions League final to Bayern Munich.

"They told us about the game and how it felt," Fullkrug said. "I'm very sad for them." Still, he's optimistic for the future.

"We can go on very confident. We played against the biggest team - a lot of the biggest teams in Europ



'Sricharan Pakala's music will be a major attraction in *Satyabhama*'

K. RAMYA SREE



Kajal Aggarwal starrer *Satyabhama* marks the official debut of Suman Chikkala as a director. As the film nears its release, the director shares getting onboard for the project and more insights about the film.

With anticipation mounting for the upcoming release of *Satyabhama*, director Suman Chikkala opens up about the film's journey from concept to completion, promising audiences a thrilling blend of emotion and action. Suman, a newcomer to Tollywood's directorial scene, credits his friend and mentor, Sashi Kiran Tikka, for entrusting him with the directorial reins. "Sashi's vision of nurturing young talent through motivated me to take on this project," he explains, adding, "I have a passion for movies and an interest in writing. While working a job, I sought opportunities in the film industry. I participated in story discussions for some hit movies. Sashi Kiran is my best friend, and I have done script work for his films. Sashi entrusted me with the responsibility of directing this film, marking my directorial debut in Tollywood. Sashi worked hard to become a director and founded Aurum Arts to start the journey of young talent with his success. His idea is to give opportunities to new talents." In short, he said, "I owe my directorial debut to him." *Satyabhama* stars Kajal Aggarwal in the titular role, with Naveen Chandra portraying her partner, Amarendra. The director emphasises the importance of crafting a story that transcends gender stereotypes. "We wrote *Satyabhama* for a person, not a specific gender. Since the girl is the victim in the story, I thought it would be more impactful if it

were a female lead. We believe that both emotion and action can resonate with the audience. Kajal Aggarwal immediately agreed to the role after hearing the story. Kajal's commitment to performing her own stunts adds authenticity to the action sequences and elevates the emotional depth of the story," expressed the director.

He also shed light on the film's relevance to real-world issues, particularly women's safety. "We integrated elements from the AP Disha and Telangana She Safe apps into the narrative," he reveals. "If our film encourages even one person to utilise these safety measures, it will have made a meaningful impact."

Drawing inspiration from police diaries and real-life incidents, Suman assures viewers that *Satyabhama* remains grounded in fiction while incorporating elements of mythology for added depth. "The name *Satyabhama* carries a sense of power and familiarity, making it the perfect fit for our narrative. It is purely fictional. I read police diaries and listened to their interviews, drawing inspiration from real-life incidents. Initially, our movie didn't have this name, but *Satyabhama* is a powerful name in our mythology, so we chose it for its instant recognition. We want all the movies released this week to do well. If these films succeed, audiences will get used to coming to theatres. The movie will hit theatres next week, and Sricharan Pakala's music will be a major attraction. He elevated the film with his background score," he explains. Despite its local roots, the director believes *Satyabhama* has the potential to resonate with audiences nationwide. "While the film is set in Hyderabad, its themes are universal," he says. "We aim to release it in Telugu initially, with plans for multi-language availability on OTT platforms."

As the film's release date draws near, he expresses gratitude for the support of composer Sricharan Pakala, whose music promises to enhance the cinematic experience. Looking ahead, the director hints at future projects, buoyed by the evolving landscape of digital platforms and audience appreciation for fresh content.



Kubera major action schedules begin in Hyd

The much-anticipated action-packed schedule of Sekhar Kammula's mythological epic, *Kubera*, featuring Superstar Dhanush and King Nagarjuna, has officially kicked off in Hyderabad. Erected on specially crafted sets, this major shoot involves the entire cast, promising audiences a spectacle of breathtaking stunts.

In this magnum opus, both Dhanush and Nagarjuna will dazzle audiences with their contrasting roles, as teased in their captivating first-look posters. While a significant portion of the film's dialogue scenes have already been wrapped up, post-production efforts are running concurrently to ensure a seamless cinematic experience.

Joining the stellar cast are Rashmika Mandanna and Jim Sarbh, who are set to portray pivotal characters in this high-budget social drama. Backed by prominent production houses and under the expert direction of Sekhar Kammula, *Kubera* has been generating considerable buzz nationwide.

Produced jointly by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under the Sri Venkateswara Cinemas LLP and Amigos Creations Pvt Ltd banner, Sekhar Kammula's *Kubera* is a pan-Indian endeavour, simultaneously filmed in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi languages. With such a formidable combination of talent and resources, the stage is set for *Kubera* to captivate audiences across the country.

Passion enters second schedule

Following the successful completion of its first schedule, the *Passion* team is gearing up for the next phase of production. Sudheesh Venkat, Ankita Saha, and Sreyasi Shah take the lead roles in this romantic tale set in a fashion design college. Dr. Arun Kumar Monditoka, Narasimha Yele, and Umesh Chikku produce the film under the banners of BLN Cinema and Red Ant Creations, while renowned fashion designer Arvind Joshua makes his directorial debut in Telugu cinema with *Passion*, having previously honed his craft under the guidance of acclaimed directors like Shekhar Kammula, Madan, and Mohana Krishna Indraganti. With the first schedule

wrapped after 20 days of shooting across various fashion colleges in Hyderabad, the team is now poised for its second leg of filming. Director Arvind Joshua expressed his excitement, stating, "We've captured some pivotal moments of the movie during our extensive shoot in Hyderabad's fashion colleges. As we prepare for the upcoming schedule, we're delving into uncharted territory, infusing our film with a blend of comprehensive technical knowledge and artistic flair that's unprecedented in the world of fashion. *Passion* aims to break new ground, addressing the myriad questions and complexities surrounding love and attraction that resonate deeply with today's youth."



'Indrani' is like Marvel: Director Stephen Pallam

Yaaneya, Ankith, and Ajay play the lead roles in Stephen Pallam's self-directed Indian super airplane movie *Indrani- Episode 1: Dharma vs. Karma*. This is being bankrolled by the Shreyas Motion Pictures banner. This movie, which has already been released, has created a good buzz with its promotional content. This movie will hit theatres on June 14.

The movie's trailer was launched at a grand event. Director Stephen Pallam has created a futuristic world for this movie. Graphics and visual effects are at the Hollywood level, with the highest technical standards. Yaaneya, Ankith, Ajay, and Kabir Singh—all these main characters have impressed with their superpowers...

Speaking at the trailer launch event, director Stephen Pallam said, "Indrani is a movie like an epic. It has amazing content. It entertains all classes of viewers. It features a big lead role and even a robot. The journey of these two characters is amazing. The time travel concept is also there. It shows how technology will be in the future. It presents India in a completely new way to the world. It will definitely impress everyone. Yaaneya played the role of the Indian Super Airplane amazingly. After this movie, people will fall in love with her. Indrani is a mass marvel. Complete entertainer for all classes of audiences."



'INDIAN 2 HAPPENED BECAUSE OF SUBHASKARAN SIR'

Universal Star Kamal Haasan, along with sensational director Shankar, collaborated with leading production houses like Lyca Productions and Red Giant Movies to create the high-budget film *Indian 2*. Releasing worldwide in Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi languages on July 12, this movie is set to be a grand spectacle. The film's audio launch event was held grandly on the night of Saturday, which saw the presence of Kamal Haasan, Simbu, and Shankar. Lokesh Kanagaraj, Nelson, A.M. Rathnam, Asian Cinemas Sunil Narang, and Bharat Narang, among many others. Celebrities like Shruti



Haasan, Mouni Roy, Shankar's daughter Aditi Shankar, and his son Arjit Shankar delivered live performances at this event. Speaking at the event, Kamal Haasan expressed, "I have had the idea to make a film in this genre with Shivaji Ganeshan for 28 years. Shankar came with *Indian* story at that time. Two stories have been converging for a

long time. I discussed this topic with Shivaji Ganeshan. 'Make a film with Shankar, he has already made a film with me. We have already collaborated on many films,' he said to me. With his belief and Shankar's vision, I made *Indian*. I did not talk about the sequel with Shankar back then. If this project has come so far, it's all because of Subhaskaran, Sir. He faced many challenges. But he stood firm in front of us. Until now, he has supported us. This picture is a reflection of the belief he had in us. We are making this film for his beliefs. Thanks to Udayanidhi Stalin, Tamil Kumar, and Semba Murthy for supporting our film. Anirudh's music always has energy. He sang wonderful songs. I know Ravi Varman from my assistant cameraman days. He provided excellent visuals. Working again with Hollywood technicians who worked as makeup artists for Indian cinema is a joy. Thanks to all team members who supported me."

Meera Jasmine as 'Uthphalaa Devi' in *Swag*

Following the buzz generated by the Title Story Glimpse and Queen Gari Swag Glimpse, the latest addition to the *Swag* universe introduces Meera Jasmine as Uthphalaa Devi. Destined for royalty yet denied the throne due to her compassionate nature, Meera's portrayal adds an intriguing layer to the storyline, promising an enthralling cinematic experience.

In the character introduction poster, Meera Jasmine embodies regality, adorned in designer attire and opulent jewelry, perfectly capturing the essence of her role. Returning to the screen after a hiatus, Meera's involvement in this project marks a significant comeback, showcasing her versatility in a pivotal role. Under the adept direction of Sree Vishnu and Hasith Goli and backed by TG Vishwa Prasad's production prowess, *Swag* promises to be a one-of-a-kind entertainment extravaganza.

With Ritu Varma portraying the lead character, Queen Rukmini Devi, from Vinjamaru Vamsham, the film is poised to deliver a blend of drama and excitement.

Behind the scenes, Vedaraman Sankaran handles cinematography, Vivek Sagar lends his musical genius, and Viprav Nysadham shapes the narrative as the editor. Other key contributors include GM Shekar in the art department and Nandu master choreographing stunts, ensuring every aspect of the film's production is top-notch.

Excitement brews as *Villa 369* nears completion of censorship

As anticipation mounts in the cinephile community, *Villa 369* gears up to undergo the final scrutiny of the censor board. With its riveting storyline and promising cast, this film is poised to captivate audiences with its suspenseful narrative.

Produced by Vidya Ganesh and helmed by director Suresh Prabhu, *Villa 369* promises to be a cinematic delight. The film stars Vijay and Sheetal Bhat as the lead couple, bringing their talent to the forefront under the banner of Vigan Creation. Adding to the production prowess is line producer Seelam Pranali K. Reddy, who ensures every aspect of the film is meticulously crafted.

Under the guidance of executive producers Srinu and Laxman Babu, the movie has smoothly transitioned through its production phases. Director Teja recently unveiled the first look poster, signaling the imminent completion of shooting



BUMPER TAMBOLA HELD AT FNCC



FN.C.C. members, family members, guests, and ladies participated in this bumper tambola in large numbers. If they won in this bumper tambola, they were given five rounds of five cars: the Alto, Celerio, Tata Tiago, Toyota Glanza, and the bumper prize of the Mercedes-Benz A Class. Winners who won Benz are Salnam Kaur and D. Sai Kiran. Bumper Tambola winners were given prizes by Secretary Mullaipudi Mohan, Vice President Tummala Ranga Rao, and Nandamuri Vasundhara. Members Kaja Suryanarayana, Shailaja Jujala, Balaraju, Gopala Rao, Edida Raja, Mohan Vadlapatla, Sama Indrapal Reddy, and Tambola committee members Swaroopa, Chelana, Rohini, Shailaja, and Hakeem participated in this program. Sponsors Navanaami: Megaleio, DSR Builders and Developers, Sunshine Developers, Mercedes Benz Silver Star, Sree Mitra Townships, KIMS Hospitals, Pragnya Hospitals, NSL Infratech, Harsha Auto, Mandir, Prakriti Avenues, and Vamseeram Builders participated in this event.

YEVAM releasing on June 14

Consistently, Telugu audiences have shown appreciation for films that bring fresh content to the table. Director Prakash Dantururi expresses unwavering confidence in our film, which, with its different and innovative content, has garnered significant attention. The film *Yevam*, directed by Chandini Chowdary, with Vashista Simha, Bharath Raj, and Ashu Reddy in lead roles, has Navadeep and Pawan Goparaju as producers. Recent promotions have generated considerable buzz around the film, which is set to hit theatres worldwide on June 14.

Speaking on this occasion, the director highlighted the film's focus on women's empowerment, which remains a central theme throughout. Each character in the film is richly developed, and the narrative promises a refreshing take on storytelling. We are confident that the film's unique content will resonate with audiences, offering an enjoyable cinematic experience. The cinematography is handled by Srinivas Vishveshwar, the music by Kiran Sheshu, and the editing by Sujana Adusumilli. Raju Penmetsa serves as the executive producer.

