

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer

If the YSR Congress Party wins the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will continue reservations for Muslims. The people of Andhra Pradesh will teach a lesson to Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan for joining the BJP-led NDA. Can Naidu change Modi's stance on Muslim reservations?

-Asaduddin Owaisi



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'LADAKH WAS A HAVEN UNTOUCHED BY COMMERCIALISM AND FEW DARED TO VENTURE'



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Disciplined approach balances Suhas' busy SCHEDULE



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DON'T MISS...

Heatwave continues in...

Heatwave continued to prevail in Telangana as Nalgonda recorded the highest 46.6 degrees Celsius and Hyderabad recorded 43.1 degrees Celsius; a report by the Indian Meteorological Department -Hyderabad (IMD-H) said. As per the report, on May 2 dry weather prevailed over Telangana; on May 3 prolonged heat wave is likely to prevail over districts including Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Karimnagar, Mulugu, Bhadrachalam, Kothagudem and Khammam. Districts including Peddapalli...

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Dalit bastis of western UP...

In the rural expanse of western Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and Firozabad, where the pastoral beauty belies deep-seated challenges, those living in Dalit colonies want basic necessities and dignity and freedom from filth and sewage. Several villages this PTI reporter visited had a Dalit colony separately and these villages had debilitating homes and sanitation issues. In these villages, the realities of sanitation and poverty shape the narratives of women like Aarti Devi...

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Nagpur region farmers pin...

In the baking-hot fields of central India around Nagpur, onion has hit orange hard in a mini-trade war whose battle lines were drawn thousands of miles away. Caught in the crossfire, cotton too has become a casualty. Thousands of farmers in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, famous for its oranges, are sitting on a surplus of the fruit, unable to sell it in its main export market, Bangladesh, because of a complex web of conflicting foreign trade policies, market forces and...

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KKR look to iron out flaws against...

Kolkata Knight Riders will look to iron out their flaws and get the better of a mis-firing Mumbai Indians when the two teams, placed on the opposite ends of IPL points table spectrum, clash here on Friday. With six wins in nine games giving them 12 points and the second position in the IPL points table, a berth in the playoffs looks within the grasp of two-time winners KKR. But the Shreyas Iyer-led side will have to find consistency across departments and avoid any slip-ups in order to make it to the final...

-SPORTS

'Ready for jail if CM's circular is proved genuine'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KTR said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had tweeted a fake circular regarding the shortage of fresh water and electricity in Osmania University and had tried to mislead the public.

He said that he is ready to go to Chanchalguda Jail if the circular tweeted by Revanth Reddy is not fake.

KTR was speaking to the media at the Telangana Bhavan.

He demanded that Krishank should be released unconditionally immediately.

"If the CM and OU officials prove that I am wrong, I am ready to go to Chanchalguda Jail. Forgery is an offence. We demand action. The evidence will be placed before the judge. Krishank is one of those who openly exposed this government on social media. So he was targeted. He should be released immediately and unconditionally. A case should be filed against the CM who prepared fake notices and action should be taken. Krishank's arrest was a misdemeanour. We strongly condemn it," he said.

"The Osmania University Chief Warden issued notices on March 18 saying that they are closing hostels and messes for a month. The Chief Warden issued a notice saying that there is a severe shortage of water and electricity and that students should leave hostels and cooperate



"If the CM and OU officials prove that I am wrong, I am ready to go to Chanchalguda Jail. Forgery is an offence. We demand action. The evidence will be placed before the judge. Krishank is one of those who openly exposed this government on social media."

with the authorities. The OU students protested against this. They made their voices heard as they were preparing for competitive exams. A dharna was also staged," he said.

KTR said that videos about the sit-in have gone viral on social media.

Around 11 days later, KCR through his social media account tagged the notices issued by the OU Chief Warden and the concerns of students and said that there is a shortage of fresh water and electricity in the OU as well and that they are closing the hostels.

BJP did not conduct 2021 Census as it wants to end quotas: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the BJP is getting ready to scrap reservations if it wins 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the BJP did not conduct the 2021 census as it wants to abolish reservations.

The CM said that increasing reservations for BCs is possible only if a caste census is carried out. However, the BJP and the RSS are trying to abolish reservations, he added.

A census used to be carried out in the nation every 10 years after 1881. However, the BJP-led Centre did not conduct a census in 2021. The Union Home Minister is one of the conspirators behind this, the CM said. The CM said that the Centre did



not conduct the 2021 census as it wants to abolish reservations.

Voting for the BJP means accepting scrapping of reservations, he pointed out.

The CM said the BJP leaders made the Delhi police file cases against him for speaking on reservations. "However, I am not afraid of cases. The Centre will end reser-

ervations if 15 states accept the scrapping of reservations. So the BJP toppled Congress governments in eight states," the CM said.

The CM assured that the Congress will increase reservations if it comes to power. The Congress will carry out a caste census subsequently and will increase reservations.

Taking part in the Asifabad Jana Jataara public meeting on Thursday, the CM said that Prime Minister Modi didn't care even if the CCI got closed. Modi and KCR did nothing for Adilabad district in the last 10 years, Revanth said.

The CM said the Congress implemented 5-guarantees within 100 days after coming to power. "We did not try to escape. We fulfilled the assurances," he said.

Special manifesto for Telangana today

The Telangana Congress is releasing a special manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections in Telangana. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy who is also the TPCC chief would release the special manifesto on Friday at the Gandhi Bhavan at 11 am. The manifesto will reveal what the Congress government in Telangana intends to do if the Congress comes to power at the Centre. Sources said

the special manifesto for Telangana would promise implementation of all the assurances in the AP Bifurcation Act, four industrial special corridors, international schools, a Supreme Court Bench, the Bayyaram Steel Factory, the Kazipet Coach Factory, national project tag for the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy Irrigation project, Navodaya and Sainik Schools, ITIR and other projects.

'Siddipet will get 'freedom' from Harish'

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that it is his job to drive 'Shanishwar Rao' (Harish Rao) out of Siddipet. "On August 15, India got independence and on the same August 15, the people of Siddipet will be freed from Shanishwar Rao after farm loans are waived," the CM said. The CM said that he would come again to Siddipet with a new MLA. "A

meeting will be held in this same square in Siddipet with one lakh people then," he said. "For 45 years, both uncle and nephew (KCR & Harish Rao) have been troubling Siddipet like Shani. In 1980, Indira Gandhi won, became the Prime Minister, and brought many companies to Medak," he said.

FAKE VIDEO CASE

Five Congress leaders arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Hyderabad Police arrested five Congress leaders in connection with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's video morphing case. The police arrested Congress social media incharge Manne Satish, Naveen and Taslima, Geetha & Siva. The Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police filed cases against them in response to BJP State general secretary Gujjula Premender Reddy's complaint.

It is learnt that the Hyderabad Police registered a case a day before the Delhi Police served notices to the Congress leaders. However, Hyderabad Police are tight-lipped on the arrest of the Congress leaders.

On the other hand, Delhi Police came to Hyderabad on Thursday and went to Gandhi Bhavan. Delhi CI Ram Nivas went to Gandhi Bhavan along with a head constable and constable. They enquired about TPCC Legal Cell incharge Ramchandra Reddy.



Rahul may contest from Amethi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the suspense over Congress nominees from Amethi and Rae Bareilly, sources Thursday indicated that Rahul Gandhi is likely to contest from the seat he lost last time.

With Friday being the last date of filing of nominations, the party is expected to announce its candidates from the two prestigious constituencies anytime.

The sources said the party has started making preparations for the nomination filing in both the seats in Uttar Pradesh, which have been traditionally held by members of the Gandhi-Nehru family.

Revanna raped 400 women, alleges Rahul

Seeks PM Modi's apology

PNS ■ SHIVAMOGGA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday alleged that Hassan JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna had raped 400 women and made their videos, and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of helping him to flee the country.

He demanded registering a case against Home Minister Amit Shah alleging that as he was aware of the case following a letter by a BJP

leader to him about the activities of Prajwal and his father and former minister H D Revanna.

Addressing election rallies in the district headquarters towns of Shivamogga and Raichur, Gandhi alleged that the prime minister was in the know about the sex scandal and he could have got Prajwal arrested within seconds but allowed him to flee the country.

CBI not under control of Union

Govt can't supervise its probe, Centre tells SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI is not under the "control" of the Union and the government can't supervise either the registration of offence by the agency or its investigation, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Thursday.

The Centre's submission assumes significance as the opposition parties have been accusing the government of misusing central probe agencies like the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to target its rivals.

The Centre raised preliminary objections before a bench of justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta on the maintainability of a lawsuit filed by the West Bengal government which alleged that the CBI is going ahead with its investigation without securing the prerequisite nod from the state.

However, the West Bengal government countered the Centre's submission and said once a foothold is given to the CBI in a state, the ED enters



and this has huge ramifications on the polity of the country.

The West Bengal government has filed an original suit in the apex court against the Centre under Article 131 of the Constitution, alleging that the CBI has been filing FIRs and proceeding with its investigation, despite the state having withdrawn the general consent to the federal agency to probe cases within its territorial jurisdiction.

Article 131 deals with the Supreme Court's original jurisdiction in a dispute between the Centre and one or more states.

Continued on Page 2

CM charges Rs 68 as 'RRR tax' per square foot: Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's policy is 'cash and carry', BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said that the CM is charging Rs 68 as RRR tax per square foot from builders.

He said the Chief Minister is collecting RRR tax in cash directly from builders. RRR means Rahul Gandhi, Revanth Reddy and the Real Estate mafia, Maheshwar said.

Addressing the media at the BJP state office on Thursday, Maheshwar said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy conducted studies to find avenues of corruption.

Hyderabad's brand image has now become 'settlement image', Maheshwar said and added that realtors are living in fear.

PHONE TAPPING CASE Former SIB chief Prabhakar named AI

CHITHALURI REVANTH ■ HYDERABAD

The former SIB chief, retired IPS officer T. Prabhakar Rao, has been named 'accused number 1' and a Telugu TV news channel chairman, Sravan Rao Aruvella, has been named as 'accused number 6' in the phone tapping case.

The police included them in the case on April 29 after investigating four other accused in the case.

It was revealed that the conspirator behind the phone tapping case was Prabhakar Rao and the police are trying to track him as he is abroad.

On March 22, the police searched the houses of T. Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao Aruvella. Later, the police found out that the two had reportedly fled abroad to escape prosecution.

Meanwhile, the Nampally sessions court heard arguments on the bail petition filed by former Task Force DCP Radha Kishan Rao on April 30.

On May 2, the court accepted Special Public Prosecutor S. Sambasiva Reddy's arguments and refused bail to the accused.

On April 30, the government advocate argued in court that due



to the destruction of hard discs and other equipment, the police lost sensitive data which was collected by them over decades.

The police advocate told the court that the police needed time to record the statements of some other witnesses and victims. If Radhakishan Rao is released on bail he might influence witnesses and therefore there is a chance that it would affect the investigation.

The court granted interim bail to Radha Kishan Rao on April 21 from 11 am to 3 pm so that he could see his ailing mother in Karimnagar. Later, once more he filed a bail petition so that he could write LLM exams in the city. But the court dismissed the petition.

Water tanker bookings register jump in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The HMWSSB (Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board) said that on March 31, around 4,945 tankers were booked but a month later, on April 30, 7,193 tankers were booked by the people. This shows that water tanker bookings had increased by 2,248 a day in 30 days, he said.

On Thursday, the HMWSSB MD held a review meeting at the HMWSSB head office in Khairatabad.

He said that on March 31, the number of water tankers was 613 and there were 70 filling stations and 108 filling points. This increased to 840 tankers, 88 filling stations and 162 filling points by April 30, he added.

On the last day of March, 4,945 tankers were booked. 6,579 tankers supplied water, but on April 30



tanker booking increased to 7,193 and daily delivery increased to 9,275 tankers. 1,69,452 tankers supplied water in March and it increased to 2,37,570 tankers in April.

Due to the scorching summer,

there are chances of the temperature increasing. HMWSSB MD Sudarshan Reddy ordered officials to increase the number of tankers, filling stations and filling points.

Consumers are booking water tankers through various channels.

Consumers are booking water tankers through various channels. Around 48.96 per cent of tankers were booked through a mobile phone application, 36.78 per cent through customer care, 14.16 per cent through the water board's official website and 0.10 per cent through other channels.

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Modi says Pak eager to see 'shehzada' as PM

Flays 'vote jihad' comments

PNS ■ JAMNAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday targeted Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, saying Pakistan was eager to make the 'shehzada' of the grand old party India's next PM as the country's enemies want a weak government at the helm.

During a whirlwind campaign tour of Gujarat, Modi addressed four poll rallies in support of BJP candidates and in his speeches alleged the Congress wants to change the Constitution to give reservation to Muslims and challenged the opposition party to give in writing they will not grant religion-based quota in government jobs and education.

He slammed the Congress for not condemning the "vote jihad" comments made by a candidate of the Samajwadi Party (SP), an ally of the grand

old party in Uttar Pradesh. Modi addressed rallies in Anand, Surendranagar, Junagadh and Jamnagar a day after speaking at two election gatherings in Banaskantha and Sabarkantha districts of Gujarat, where voting will take place on May 7.

The BJP's star campaigner alleged the Congress is fighting the 2024 elections on twin strategies of creating a division in society on caste lines and uniting its vote-bank through appeasement politics.

Modi's comments linking the Congress with Pakistan came a day after Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, a former minister in Imran Khan's cabinet, reportedly shared a video featuring Rahul Gandhi on his social media handle and praised him.

"Pakistan is crying because the Congress is dying here. You all must have learnt that Pakistani leaders are now pray-



ing for the Congress. Pakistan is eager to make 'shehzada' or prince (referring to Rahul Gandhi) the next PM. This is not surprising because we already know that the Congress is Pakistan's 'murid' (follower)," he remarked.

"The partnership between Pakistan and the Congress has now been exposed completely. It shows the country's enemies want a weak government in India, not a strong one... a weak government which was

there at the time of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. They want a corrupt government which was there before 2014. But Modi's strong government neither bows down nor does it stop," the BJP stalwart asserted.

Unlike under the Congress rule, the "tyres of Pakistan's terror have got punctured" now (under BJP-led government), he said, attacking the neighbouring country and highlighting its economic woes.

HC to EC: Examine Konda Vishweshwar Reddy's petition

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court asked the Election Commission of India to examine the petition submitted by the BJP's Chevella Lok Sabha candidate, Konda Vishweshwar Reddy, regarding names appearing on the EVM and to take a decision as soon as possible.

Advocates who appeared on behalf of the petitioner argued that 46 nominations were filed along with that of Konda Vishweshwar Reddy in Chevella.

A person with the same name as the petitioner Konda Vishweshwar Reddy also filed a nomination. The petitioner's name is serial number 2 in the EVM list. However, another candidate who has the same name, that is, Konda Vishweshwar Reddy (S/o Kantha Reddy), is at serial number 5 in the EVM list.

The petitioner told the court that there is a possibility of confusion among voters if the names are displayed very close to each other on the EVM and requested the court to direct the ECI to provide 10 names between the two similar names on the EVM.

'Complaining to ECI is like talking to wall'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA KTR said that the BRS had filed 27 complaints with the ECI of which eight are connected to Revanth Reddy. He said, "So far no action has been taken by the ECI."

He said that the ECI is toeing the line of the BJP and not taking action. "Complaining to the ECI is like talking to a wall. They are making a mockery of the Constitution," KTR said. "Why are you not issuing



notices to Modi or Revanth Reddy? Bada bhai and chota bhai are trying to stop KCR," he said.

"The ECI is neither inde-

pendent nor impartial. In fact, they are extremely biased, have been looking the other way when it comes to the PM and the CM of Telangana. But that is not the case with other leaders of the country. Today, when KCR was speaking about the farmers of Telangana, there was possibly a small emotional outburst. They could have censured him and asked him not to repeat it. But they banned him for 48 hours," said KTR.

Owaisi backs YSRCP, says Jagan will continue Muslim quota in AP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on May 1 expressed confidence that if the YSR Congress Party wins the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy would continue reservation for Muslims in the State.

"People of Andhra Pradesh will teach a lesson to the Telugu Desam Party supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan for joining the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA," Owaisi said.

While addressing a rally in Hyderabad, the AIMIM chief stressed that the reservation provided to Muslims in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is based on socio-economic status and not on religious basis.

The Hyderabad MP asked Naidu if the latter could alter Modi's stance on Muslim reservation. Owaisi expressed confidence that Reddy would win the Assembly elections and uphold Muslim reservation in the State. He then accused the BJP of trying to alter the Indian Constitution and deleting Articles 29 and 30 which protect the rights of the minorities in India.

Cong releases second ad campaign titled 'Delhi Darbar'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Congress released its second ad campaign video titled 'Delhi Darbar' on Thursday.

This satirical ad addresses the injustice faced by Telangana in GST distribution, contrasting it with the full allocation received by states like Gujarat. Additionally, the ad features the popular 'Gadida Guddu' (donkey egg) contributing to it going viral.

India blasts USCIRF, describes it as biased

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday came down hard on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and said it continues to publish its propaganda on the country "masquerading" as part of an annual report.

In an unusually sharp reaction to the USCIRF's latest report that has criticised India for alleged violations of religious freedom, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the organisation is known to be a "biased" entity with a political agenda.

EC TO POLITICAL PARTIES

Stop registering voters for beneficiary schemes under guise of surveys

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission Thursday asked political parties to immediately stop and "desist" from any activity that involves registering people for post-election beneficiary-oriented schemes through advertisements, surveys or mobile applications.

The election watchdog said it has taken a "serious view" of political parties and candidates seeking details of voters under the guise of various surveys for their proposed beneficiary schemes and cautioned that it amounts to a cor-



rupt practice under the electoral law.

The poll panel pointed out that some political parties and candidates have been engaging in activities that "blur the lines between legitimate surveys

and partisan efforts" to register individuals for post-election beneficiary-oriented schemes.

In an advisory to all national and state-level political parties, the commission asked them to immediately "cease and desist" from any activity that involves registering people for such post-election schemes through advertisements, surveys or mobile applications.

At the same time, the poll panel acknowledged that "generic and general electoral promises" are in the realm of permissibility.

'Siddipet will get 'freedom'...

Continued from page 1

"Do you want those who grabbed farmers' lands and built Mallanna Sagar (BRS candidate) or do you want to be the children of weaker sections (Congress candidate). Venkatrami Reddy has a history of filing false cases against farmers and jailing them. How many more days will the tyranny of the Dora continue

here? Think about the people of Medak," the CM said.

"If the Congress flag does not fly in Siddipet, we will have to live like slaves forever. Neelam Madhu Mudiraj must win to break the Dora's walls. Who is Venkatrami Reddy and where does he come from? Didn't he bring thousands of policemen and attack people in Kishtapur? Isn't it Venkatrami Reddy who

grabbed the lands of the poor and looted this area? Venkatrami Reddy was a collector and a burden on the people. He worked for KCR like Kashmir Rizvi worked for the Nizam. Venkatrami Reddy should not get his deposit here. They swallowed lands like an anaconda. I came here for a chance to break the barriers for the first time," Revanth said.

Rahul may contest...

Continued from page 1

They added that Rahul Gandhi is the most likely choice of the party for Amethi, a seat he lost to Smriti Irani in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi is also likely to attend the nomination filing Friday, the sources said. They also said that the Congress has prepared an alternative plan in case Priyanka Gandhi Vadra does not contest

from Rae Bareilly, adding a grandson of former Congress leader and Indira Gandhi's aunt Sheila Kaul may be fielded from Rae Bareilly.

Confidantes of the Gandhi family who held the fort at the ground level are already in Amethi and have prepared the nominations for the both Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi, even though the party is yet to make any formal announcement. Sources said

Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge, who were both in Shimoga at a joint poll rally in Karnataka, held discussions over his nomination from Amethi.

Former SIB chief Prabhakar...

Continued from page 1

On April 26, the bail petitions of the other accused in the case, that is, Praneth Rao, Bhujanga Rao and Thirupathanna were dismissed by the court.

The police submitted a memo to include Section 66 F (1) (B) in the case, although IPC 409, 427, 201, 120-B R/W 34 and Section 3 of The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act (PDPP) and Section 65, 66 and 70 of IT Act were included when the case was filed in the Panjagutta police station.

CM charges Rs 68 as 'RRR tax'...

Continued from page 1

"During the BRS government's time, KTR used to take floors, plots and sites from real estate businessmen. However, under the Congress government now, Revanth is stating that his policy is 'cash and carry' as he has to send money to his bosses in Delhi. Revanth is collecting money stating that he has to pay EMIs to his Delhi Shehanshahs. There are no receipts for RRR taxes and it is all cash and carry," Maheshwar said. He said that many construction companies are not coming to Telangana due to the settlement regime in Hyderabad. He said that thousands of crores of corruption took place without any bills.

CBI not under control...

Continued from page 1

During the hearing on Thursday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the bench that Article 131 is "one of the most sacred" jurisdiction conferred upon the apex court and can't be allowed to be misused or abused.

He said the cases referred to in the state's suit have not been filed by the Union of India.

"The Union of India has not registered any case. CBI has done," Mehta said, adding that state has arrayed the Union of India represented by secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) as party in the suit.

"CBI is not under the control of Union of India," he said. The solicitor general said that cases referred to in the suit include those which were

ordered to be registered by the Calcutta High Court.

"The supervision (of CBI) is not with the Union of India. I (Centre) can't supervise either registration of the offence, I can't supervise the investigation and I can't supervise how it would lead to either a closure or a charge sheet or conviction or acquittal," said Mehta, who also referred to the provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946.

He said the suit filed by the West Bengal was not maintainable because there was no cause of action against the Union of India.

"This (Article 131) is a very sacred jurisdiction and therefore, the principles which would govern entertaining of the suit or dismissing the suit on the ground of maintainability etc.

'Ready for jail if CM's circular...'

Continued from page 1

Strangely another notice came from TSSPDCL on how instead of the Vice Chancellor they wrote Vice Chairman," KTR said.

"Then Revanth entered the field comparing KCR to Goebbels. He said that similar notices were issued in May 2023 too. But that notice was a fake. We got hundreds of messages from OU students saying that the notice issued by the CM was also fake," KTR said. "A forged document was created and shared from a personal X account. He

misled the people. Finally, they even tried to change the stamp too. Our leader Krishank was arrested for the mistake committed by the Chief Minister. He was remanded to custody for 14 days. Who should be in jail now? The Chief Minister who forged the document or Krishank who informed the people that the CM had shared a fake circular and that he was misleading the public," KTR said.

He made it clear that this was a false case.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Dashami: May 03 01:53 AM to May 03 11:24 PM
Ekadashi: May 03 11:24 PM to May 04 08:39 PM
Nakshatram: Shatabhisha: May 03 01:48 AM to May 04 12:06 AM
Purva Bhadrpada: May 04 12:06 AM to May 04 10:07 PM
Rahukalam: 10:38 AM to 12:13 PM
Yamagandam: 3:23 PM to 4:58 PM
Varjyam: 05:58 AM to 07:26 AM
Gulika: 7:27 AM to 9:02 AM
Amritakalam: 05:25 PM to 06:54 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 AM to 12:38 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 42°
Humidity: 20%
Sunrise: 5:49 AM
Sunset: 6:37 PM
Updated: May 2, 2024 5:00 PM

Revanna raped 400...

Continued from page 1

Prajwal, grandson of former Prime Minister and JD(S) patriarch H D Deve Gowda, is facing allegations of sexually abusing women. The state government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case.

Scores of explicit video clips allegedly involving the 33-year-old MP had started making the rounds in Hassan in recent days.

He was the NDA candidate in the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency where polling was held on April 26.

The JD(S) joined the NDA in September last year. Gandhi said a BJP leader wrote a letter to Shah stating that Prajwal was raping women but no action was

taken. "This is not a sex scandal, it's mass rape," he alleged.

"If Amit Shah knew this, then the prime minister also knew it. Why is Modi protecting him (Prajwal), why is he promoting him and why is he seeking vote for him?" the Congress leader asked.

He said Shah allowed Prajwal to flee the country despite knowing about him. "All the agencies were with them, such as CBI, Customs, Immigration and ED. The PM knew about it, he could have arrested him (Prajwal) in a second, which he did not do and allowed him to flee," Gandhi charged.

"The women of Karnataka know that you protected Prajwal Revanna because you wanted power and alliance. The PM and HM,

the two people who control the nation, protected him," the former Congress president alleged.

"This is the difference between our and their (BJP) ideology. They (BJP) can do anything for power. There is no limit. There is no truth to them. There is no meaning to the pains and sufferings of women," he said.

Gandhi said Modi has to answer to every woman of the country, why he protected Prajwal and why he was allowed to flee the country.

He said the prime minister is now afraid of visiting Karnataka and claimed that "he has cancelled all the meetings and escaped".

"Dear PM, don't run away from Karnataka. Come here and tell the country about Prajwal Revanna," Gandhi said.

Heatwave continues in TG; temp rises to 43.10 C in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Heatwave continued to prevail in Telangana as Nalgonda recorded the highest 46.6 degrees Celsius and Hyderabad recorded 43.1 degrees Celsius; a report by the Indian Meteorological Department - Hyderabad (IMD-H) said.

As per the report, on May 2 dry weather prevailed over Telangana; on May 3 prolonged heat wave is likely to prevail over districts including Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Karimnagar, Mulugu, Bhadrachalam, Khammam, Peddapalli, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Suryapet, Nalgonda, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet and Jogulamba Gadwal.



Similar conditions are likely to prevail across Telangana on May 4, 5 and 6. On May 6, light to moderate showers are expected in isolated place in the State. On May 7, thunderstorms accompanied with lightning are expected in the aforementioned districts. The State is expected to experience showers till May 9.

Among districts Nalgonda, Peddapalli, Mulugu, Bhadrachalam, Jagtial, Khammam and Mahabubabad

recorded 46 degrees Celsius, Kumaram/Bheem, Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri, Mahabubnagar, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Nirmal, Narayanpet, Hanamkonda recorded 45 degrees Celsius. Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Jogulamba Gadwal and Nizamabad recorded 44 degrees Celsius. Rangareddy, Sangareddy, Medak, Kamareddy and Adilabad recorded 43 degrees Celsius.

As per the Telangana State Planning and Development Society (TSDPS), dry weather is expected to prevail in the State from May 2-5. The maximum temperature is expected to remain between 41-45 degrees Celsius; the minimum temperature is expected to remain between 26-29 degrees Celsius. Areas under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) are likely to experience dry weather. The maximum temperature is expected to remain between 41-43 degrees; while the minimum temperature is expected to remain between 28-30 degrees Celsius.

Among areas under the GHMC, Kapra recorded the highest maximum temperature (43.2) followed by LB Nagar, Santoshnagar, Karwan, Jubilee Hills, Chandanagar and Mehdiapatnam (43), Malakpet, Saroornagar and Uppal (42.9).

TSPSC Group 1 prelims exam in OMR-based offline mode

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) on Thursday announced the conduct of the Group-1 preliminary exam in OMR-based offline mode.

The officials stated that the candidates who have applied for Group -I Services vide Notification No.02/2024, dt:February 19, 2024, that the Group-I Preliminary Test (Objective Type) which is scheduled to be held on June 9, 2024 will be conducted in OMR based offline mode. The candidates appearing for the test are hereby informed accordingly. The exam consists of one paper with 150 objective-type questions, each carrying one mark. The duration of the preliminary exam is 2.5 hours, and is conducted in three languages - English, Telugu and Urdu languages.

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY DEVICE AT RAILWAY STATIONS

Distance restriction relaxed for ticketing through UTS mobile app

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There has been a steady rise in the use of the Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) mobile application, which was introduced by the Indian Railways in the form of an app to provide a hassle-free and convenient ticketing system for passengers purchasing unreserved tickets. To further encourage the passengers to use the app, Indian Railways has relaxed the distance restriction facilitating more convenience to the unreserved passengers to use the digital purchase option.

Earlier, the outer distance restriction limit for using the app to purchase unreserved paperless tickets was 20 kms and 50 kms for suburban and non-suburban stations. This restriction limit has been removed thereby aiding the rail users to purchase tickets from



any place without any distance restriction. Accordingly, now, paperless unreserved journey or platform or season tickets can be purchased from any location beyond five meters from the railway station for both suburban and non-suburban stations.

Generally, a huge segment of passengers travel by purchasing unreserved tickets for whom UTS mobile app is a more convenient option to obtain hassle-free train tickets. The app works on smart phones with Android, IOS

and Windows versions of the operating system and the same can be downloaded free of cost. The main benefits of this app are that passengers can purchase paperless unreserved platform and season tickets through their mobile as per their convenience without standing in the queue at the booking counters. Being paperless, it is also environment-friendly. The payment can be made through wallets like R-Wallet, traditional wallets or through Internet banking. This facility is a big leap in unreserved ticketing and a boon to the rail users.

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway, stated that rail users in general and passengers travelling in unreserved compartments can now extensively get the benefit of using the UTS app with the relaxation of distance limits.

Cyber crime police advise people to shun crypto trading

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the rise in cyber frauds these days, innocent people fall a prey to fake schemes where they unknowingly transfer funds to accounts provided by fraudsters. However, there is another group of victims, especially those who are engaged in peer to peer (P2P) crypto trading who endure the consequences of cyber fraud without being direct targets or beneficiaries.

With law enforcement agencies intensifying efforts through the 1930 online financial fraud helpline and cyber-crime reporting portal, freezing bank accounts linked to fraudulent transactions has become more common. Consequently, fraudsters have resorted to using intermediary "mule" accounts to evade detection. Moreover, these culprits continuously devise new tactics to avoid apprehension and launder illicit proceeds, making it challenging for authorities to intercept and recover stolen funds.

As the popularity of cryptocurrency rises and P2P trading becomes more accessible, cyber fraudsters actively target



participants through various communication channels, including Telegram. They exploit unsuspecting individuals by converting criminal proceeds - whether from Indian rupees to crypto or vice versa - under the guise of legitimate trading.

Unfortunately, individuals eager to profit from P2P crypto trading often remain unaware that they are inadvertently handling illicit funds. Consequently, when these individuals file complaints through the 1930 helpline, their transactions become flagged, leading to the freezing of their bank accounts.

Initially, the individual's bank account is frozen, and if restitution is necessary for the original victim, the bank is

obligated to refund the amount from the individual's account. Consequently, while the fraudster absconds with converted funds, the innocent crypto trader faces significant hardships.

The officials advised people to ignore any messages regarding part-time job offers or online trading and refrain from engaging with messages or calls concerning cryptocurrency trading.

It is strongly recommended to abstain from participating in peer-to-peer (P2P) crypto trading and exercise caution when trading with anonymous individuals or new acquaintances encountered online.

For any complaints related to cyber issues, promptly contact 1930.

Man carrying Rs 2,30,000 held by RPF

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of general elections, Secunderabad railway staff, along with Railway Protection Force (RPF) were conducting checks on Tuesday. During the checking, at 5:30 am, the officials apprehended accused Seetharama Rao for carrying net cash of Rs 2,30,000 at platform No. 2.

Accused Seetharama Rao (60) S/o Hanmanth Rao, R/o Plot no.13, RK Nagar, Malkajgiri, Hyderabad, N/o Mangalagiri, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, along with a bag was apprehended on platform no. 2. On thorough checking, the officials found net cash of Rs 2,30,000 (500x400 nos), (200x100 nos) (100x100nos) in his bag.

On further inquiry, the accused was carrying cash for land registration at Mangalagiri by Intercity Express train, but didn't show any valid documents about it. He also didn't give a satisfactory answer. Further the cash was seized under cover of panchanama.

The seized cash was handed over to District Grievance Committee, Hyderabad.

MEDICAL DEVICES PARK OF HYD

UoH startup ties up with US unit for cancer diagnostics

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Eliciton Innovation Pvt Ltd, a startup incubated at ASPIRE BioNEST of the University of Hyderabad (UoH) has tied up with Vivi Biologics, a US-based company to develop a low-cost cancer diagnostic kit to detect breast cancer on Thursday.

The collaboration between Eliciton Innovation and Vivi Biologics was formalised through an MoU, emphasising their joint mission to develop early cancer detection technologies that are both cost-effective and accessible. The primary goal of their partnership is to create novel diagnostic tools that can detect cancer at its earliest stages, facilitating timely and effective intervention.

The startup has already specialised in producing microbial-based nutritional supplements with enhanced health benefits beyond basic nutrition. It has also expanded its portfolio of human and animal diagnostics and plans to establish a diagnostic manufacturing



facility at Medical Devices Park of Hyderabad. In a strategic move to advance this new venture, the company has partnered with the US-based Vivi Biologics, founded by Dr Kiran Velpula, an acclaimed cancer researcher and a member of Peoria City Council, to validate early cancer diagnostics. Dr Velpula is an alumnus of University of Hyderabad from School of Life Sciences, a professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in

Peoria and head of the Velpula Neuro-Oncology Lab. He is pioneering in cancer research focusing on new treatments and early diagnostic tools.

A new entity named VIVI-GEN Bio Labs has been established and incubated at ASPIRE-BioNEST.

This collaborative effort aims to democratise cancer diagnostics and significantly improve global health outcomes in oncology through innovative solutions.

SHE Teams nab eight for misbehaving with women

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The SHE Teams arrested eight persons involved in indifferent cases of misbehaviour with women.

In the first case, the Special Magistrate sentenced a man to six-day imprisonment and penalised him for Rs 200; in the second case five persons were caught as they misbehaved with women. The Metropolitan Magistrate sentenced each of the convicts to two days in jail; they were penalised for Rs 200. In a similar case, a man was sentenced to five-day imprisonment and the Magistrate imposed a penalty of Rs 200 on him.

In another case, the SHE Teams booked a lawyer for misbehaving with his junior on court premises and seeking sexual favours. The accused was booked under Sections 354, 354D and 506 of the IPC by the Charminar Police.



FGG concern over low voter turnout in urban areas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based Forum for Good Governance (FGG) has raised concerns over low voter turnout in urban areas during elections. In a letter to Telangana Chief Election Officer Vikar Raj, the forum has listed the reason for it and has made recommendations to ensure the polling percentage increases.

Polling in Telangana is scheduled on May 13, 2024. May 11th and 12th may be holidays. Employees, especially working in IT sector may club these three holidays as May 13 is a paid holiday just to facilitate the employee to exercise his franchise. The paid holiday on May 13 is for specific purpose as such a conditional holiday i.e. a person (employee) who goes to vote should get holiday, if he abstains from voting the

holiday should be treated as absence from work.

For this message to percolate, all the managements should issue a circular that on May 14, when the employees come to work, they should show the mark on their finger as a proof of having voted, otherwise the paid holiday should be converted into absence from duty resulting in loss of pay.

The forum made the following recommendations; it appealed to petrol bunk owners to reduce Re 1 per liter of petrol and diesel if the customers show their inked finger; the offer could be valid on May 14 and 15. It also urged food joints, malls, wine shops and cinema halls to provide incentive to customers if they show the inked finger.

The offer could be valid on May 14 and 15.

Negligence of polling staff unpardonable: Nitesh Vyas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stressing the importance of serious vigilance and warning that any error during the last 72 hours before polling would be unpardonable, Senior Deputy Election Commissioner Nitesh Vyas took control of the situation in Telangana on Thursday before proceeding with the next phase of parliamentary elections scheduled for May 13.

Nitesh Vyas interacted with observers, District Collectors, Superintendents of Police and Returning Officers of the 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State via video conference from the Commission's headquarters in Delhi. He gathered feedback from each observer, issuing necessary directions to DEO/RO as required. All participants assured that



arrangements were in place and the system was ready for polling.

Vyas ensured the readiness of arrangements, including VIS and EPIC cards distribution, ballot, EVMs and facilities at polling stations such as drinking water, dedicated medical teams and security for strong rooms. He emphasised impartiality, transparency and equal treatment of all candidates and political parties,

urging officials to address genuine complaints speedily.

He also advised deploying efficient personnel as Sectoral Officers with multi-booths in charge and making foolproof arrangements.

District Collectors, CPs/SPs, and ROs briefed on the situation in their respective areas, with Vyas issuing guidelines based on the local context. Officials from Hyderabad and Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituencies requested additional forces for deployment in certain Assembly segments in the city.

State's Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj, Expenditure Nodal Officer Sanjay Jain, Additional CEO DS Lokesh Kumar and Joint CEO Sarafraz Ahmed were among those who participated in the conference.

Deadline to pay fee for Inter suppl exam extended

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) on Thursday extended the due date for payment of Intermediate Public Advanced Supplementary examination fee to May 4 after considering the requests received from students, parents and colleges.

All the principals of junior colleges in Telangana are hereby permitted to remit the examination fee by using Internet banking facility, payment gateway provided in TSBIE's official website and online transfer to TSBIE's account before the due date without fail.

Railway cops apprehend four robbers at Kacheguda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kachiguda Railway Police, along with Railway Protection Force (RPF) staff apprehended a robbery gang of four persons who robbed a gold chain, two phones, a smart watch and net cash of Rs 700 from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) SI, who was travelling in MMTS train on April 27, between Yakuthpura and Huppuguda railway stations.

The accused persons were involved in criminal cases in Hyderabad city and Rachakonda police commissionerate. They are A1- Mohammed Ibrahim alias Ibrahim Pathan, A2- Mohd Touheed, A3- Mohammed Anasuddin and A4- Mohammed Muqeet.

All the accused persons hailed from the same locality and formed into a gang. On April 26, at about 12:30 am, when an MMTS train came on to the platform Yakuthpura, the

accused persons got into the train and found the victim who is working as Sub-Inspector in CRPF. The culprits asked the victim to give cash, phones and gold jewellery on the point of knife, by inflicting an injury to victim's right hand while the others robbed a gold chain, two mobile phones and Rs 700 and got down the train at Uppuguda railway station.

On Tuesday at 5:30 am, while R Yellapa, Inspector of Police, Kachiguda, along with Government Railway Police (GRP) and RPF staff apprehended the accused at Malakpet railway station. Following checking, the officials found two knives, a broken gold chain, one phone and a smart watch in their possession. The accused confessed to the have committed the crime. The officials produced the arrested persons before the court for judicial custody.

Mobile phones inside polling centres prohibited

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prohibiting voters' mobile phones inside the polling centres, District Election Officer and GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose also reminded candidates not to campaign at voter facilitation centres.

He provided a detailed explanation of the postal ballot process, advised on double check of voters ID cards upon arrival along with verifying the voters list and ensuring necessary arrangements at the voter facilitation centre. Ronald Rose instructed the officials to conduct postal ballot polling duties with vigilance.

In preparation for the postal ballot polling com-

mencing on May 3, training sessions were held at the GHMC headquarters meeting hall on Thursday, focusing on pre-arrangements, aspects of the postal ballot process and precautions at the voter facilitation centre.

During the session, DEO Ronald Rose said, "Conduct of postal ballot polling by officials must be carefully done."

Hyderabad District Collector and Returning Officer Anudeep Durishetti said, "All arrangements at the voter facilitation centre were made to ensure minimal inconvenience to voters and staff.

Durishetti urged polling management staff to perform their duties with full under-



standing, suggesting that remaining ballot papers be seized by the respective AROs.

He emphasised the installation of CCTV cameras in every room, maintaining voting process secrecy and avoiding cameras facing the voting

compartment. He also said help desks were set up at each voter facilitation centre to assist voters and stressed the importance of voter education to prevent errors. The postal ballot polling process will continue from May 3 to

8. He advised the polling staff to conduct a preliminary trial run, in coordination with all the members.

He also discussed points related to the postal ballot through a power-point presentation.

Hyderabad Parliamentary Constituency General Observer P1 Srividya, Secunderabad Parliamentary Constituency Returning Officer, Hyderabad Additional Collector Hemant Keshav Patil, Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly Constituency Returning Officer Madhukar Naik, Additional Commissioner Sunanda, and others participated in the programme.

Mirchowk Police nab four for mobile theft in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mirchowk Police on May 1 arrested four persons involved in mobile theft. The incident occurred at Nayapul on April 25.

The complainant identified as Mohammed Abdul Jaleel, a native of Khammam, stated that the incident occurred when he took a ride from Nayapul to MGBS. During the auto ride, Jaleel was compressed between three people in the back seat. He expressed discomfort after which the driver asked the complainant to sit next to him.

Upon reaching the destina-



tion, Jaleel noticed that his phone was missing. He suspected that his co-passengers in the rickshaw might have stolen the phone. On April 26, the complainant blocked his phone number. He purchased a new sim and ported his number to it. After the number was activated, Jaleel received an email stating that

Rs 20,000 was debited from his bank account. On April 27, Jaleel filed a complaint based on which the accused identified as Abdull Khaja (30), an auto driver and resident of Hafizbaba Nagar; Mohammed Imtiyaz (24), a resident of Kanchanbagh; Mohammed Nawaz (25), a resident of Moimbagh and Gulam Hassan (23), a resident of Shaheenbagh were arrested.

Khaja, Nawaz and Hassan were previously involved in several cases of theft under various police limits. The accused were arrested under Sections 420, 379 read with Section 34 of the IPC.

PHONE TAPPING CASE

Minister from Karimnagar protecting KCR family: Sanjay

MP says phones of Revanth & Harish were also tapped

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that attempts are on to water down the phone tapping case, the BJP candidate in the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that a Congress Minister from Karimnagar district is shielding former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's family in the case.

He said that a huge amount of money belonging to former Intelligence chief Prabhakar Rao has been given to Congress leaders in Delhi through the Minister from Karimnagar.

Sanjay said the Congress government is not taking any action even though the suspect Radhakishan Rao had clearly said that the police had tapped the phones of many people as per the directions of BRS Chief Minister KCR.

Sanjay said the Congress government is not taking any action even though Radhakishan Rao's statement was recorded by the police.

Addressing the media at the State BJP office here on Thursday, Sanjay said that not only he but the current Chief Minister and former BRS

Minister T. Harish Rao were also victims of phone tapping. He said the police tapped not only his phone but also the phones of his family.

"Why is the Congress government not taking any action against those responsible for phone tapping? The Congress government is also following the BRS government's footsteps in criminal cases. The BRS government watered down the Nayeem case, the drug seizure case, the Miyapur lands case, the suicides by Intermediate students and the TSPSC question paper leak case even though it appointed a SIT. The Revanth government is also watering down the phone tapping case, Sanjay said.

He said that one Ashok Rao, who is looking after the financial affairs of Karimnagar Congress candidate Velichala Rajender Rao, is a close relative of former Intelligence chief Prabhakar Rao. Prabhakar Rao tapped the phones of opposition leaders while staying in Ashok Rao's residence in Karimnagar.

Sanjay said that Prabhakar Rao and Radhakishan Rao predicted that the Congress would come to power before



the Assembly elections. Both stayed in Room Number 314 at the Prathima Hotel in Karimnagar without entering their names in the hotel register, did not pay bills and engaged in phone tapping.

Sanjay said that Prabhakar Rao is the main reason behind Velichala Rajender Rao getting a Congress ticket. Now Velichala Rajender Rao is contesting in Karimnagar staying in Ashok Rao's residence.

He said that Prabhakar Rao strategically brought the name of Velichala Rajender Rao on to the screen during the Assembly elections and the Minister from Karimnagar introduced Ashok Rao to Chief

Minister Revanth Reddy. Prabhakar Rao's money reached Congress candidates and the Congress high command.

Sanjay demanded that the Congress government should reveal how Rajender Rao got a Congress ticket.

"Who received Prabhakar Rao's money through the Minister from Karimnagar? What is the relationship between the Minister from Karimnagar and KCR?" he said.

"One can easily understand the collusion between the Congress and the BRS if one observes how Prabhakar Rao's money reached the Delhi Congress high command. The Congress government should order a CBI probe into the phone tapping case or else one will be forced to conclude that the Congress government is connected with the case. The Modi government will come back to power even if the opposition hatches conspiracies. The BJP will win a majority of the seats in Telangana. I will submit the evidence I have if the government hands over the phone tapping case to the CBI," Sanjay said.

ORR phase-2 works should be completed by June: HMWSSB MD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy said that in the package-1 of ORR project phase-2, out of 33 reservoirs, 22 have been completed and the rest of them are at the last stage of completion.

On Thursday, Sudarshan Reddy inspected the Tukuguda, Pahadi Sharif, Sultanpur, Kashan Gutta, Gurranguda, Kammaguda, Tirumala Nagar and Nandi Hills reservoirs in Package 1 of the ORR Project Phase-2 to supply drinking water to the villages, colonies and gated communities spread within the Outer Ring Road. He ordered the officials to complete the 11 reservoirs quickly. HMWSSB is laying a new pipeline of 1522.27 km for sup-



Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy seeking details of the tanker at Saheb Nagar division office on Thursday

plying drinking water.

The ORR Phase-2 project is being undertaken at a total cost of Rs1,200 crore in which 73 new service reservoirs (capacity of 138 million liters) and 2,988 km of new pipeline network are being constructed. If this project is completed and

the reservoirs are made available, a total of 3.6 lakh families and 25 lakh population will benefit from it. Overall, 7 Municipal Corporations, 18 Municipalities and 24 Gram Panchayats will benefit. It has been decided to complete the project in two packages.

BRS to conduct roadshow in Medchal tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Medchal legislator Ch Mallareddy and MLC Sambhipur Raju on Thursday visited the venue of the KTR's road show to be held at Medchal on Saturday. They said that they would strive to make the roadshow a grand success.

Speaking on the occasion, Malla Reddy said that the BRS roadshow would receive unprecedented response from the people. The party would receive support from all sections of society in Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituency, he added.

Besides the BRS rank and file, people are ready to take part in the roadshow voluntarily, he observed.

Revanth's public meetings yield good response

SNCN ACHARYULU

■ HYDERABAD

The hopes of BRS candidates are not rising even after the campaign by BRS president and former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. In the past the BRS candidates used to feel that if KCR campaigned in their constituencies their winning chances will increase. But now the situation has changed.

It appears that the BRS candidates in the Lok Sabha elections are not having much hope on the campaign of KCR in their constituencies. The BRS circles are not sure of winning a handful of seats in the Lok Sabha elections.

In contrast, the demand for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's campaign from the Congress candidates is increasing. The Congress candidates feel that if CM Revanth Reddy campaigns in their constituencies their winning chances will be bright.

KCR is telling people in his public meetings that if the BRS wins 15 Lok Sabha seats it will become a king-maker at the Centre in the formation of a new government after the Lok Sabha elections.

At the same time Revanth Reddy is telling that if the Congress wins 14 Lok Sabha seats the BRS will disappear from Telangana politics. The Congress circles are confident

over winning a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha elections. But the BRS circles are not confident even of winning a handful seats.

The arrest of BRS MLC K Kavitha, the daughter of KCR in the Delhi liquor scam, did not have any effect in the Lok Sabha elections. Even the people are not discussing about the arrest of Kavitha.

KCR was silent over the arrest of his daughter Kavitha till the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the same case. The political circles say perhaps that the people felt when her father was silent why should they react on Kavitha's arrest.

Now KCR is telling that his

daughter Kavitha is innocent and she is not involved in the Delhi liquor scam. The political circles are questioning that if KCR really feels that his daughter is innocent why was he silent in the beginning. The people are not reacting to the public meetings when KCR speaks about the arrest of his daughter Kavitha.

The speeches of KCR are not showing much effect among the people in the meetings. In the past, KCR's public meetings used to resound with the public's whistles and shouts whenever he spoke. But now such scenes are not visible in KCR's public meetings. The BRS circles are also clearly recognising this difference.

IGBC to unveil Green Property Show from May 17 to 19

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CII's IGBC Green Property Show will be conducted in Hyderabad with its second edition from May 17 to 19, with an aim to develop a green future, encourage people to buy green homes and secure a sustainable future for their children. The green homes would be set up in the city under one roof with the Government of Telangana as the partner.

With the pressing concerns of global warming and climate change, the concept of green buildings comes forth as a crucial solution, urging people to adopt innovative approaches for environmental conservation through sustainable practices. These structures offer diverse benefits, cultivating healthier and happier living environments while supporting cost-effective energy usage, optimal resource utilisation and efficient waste management.

Reedy focused on the success of the inaugural IGBC Green Property Show, highlighting India's expanding role in the global green building movement. He complimented Telangana for leading the way with this venture, with more than 884 projects contributing to the State, ranking as the world's second-largest supporter for green construction.

He said, during a recent CII conference, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy unveiled the property show brochure,

National Vice-Chairman of IGBC C Shekar Reddy emphasised the organisation's dedication to advancing green initiatives, enlarging itself and growing forward in enhancing green materials with net zero energy building. With over 13,000 registered projects surrounding approximately 11.6 billion square feet, IGBC stands as a global leader in promoting green housing.

highlighting the government's support. Reddy emphasised that the event's aim is to attract potential clients and raise awareness, benefiting both exhibitors and the public.

The IGBC is all set to host its second edition of IGBC Green Property Show at HITEC Exhibition Centre, Hyderabad on May 17 and 18 from 10 am to 8 pm. This property show is also committed to zero waste, presenting stalls equipped with recyclable materials.

Deputy Executive Director of IGBC, M Anand, emphasised India's longstanding relationship with green architecture has been in the DNA, mentioning historical examples. He explained this point with examples like the IGBC headquarters, a structure integrating with modern technology along with traditional architectural elements, getting a global recognition as the world's greenest building.

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Rising mercury impacts electioneering in districts

PNS ■ GADWAL

The rising mercury has impacted the electioneering work of all parties in Mahabubnagar district at a time when the polls are barely 11 days away.

The hectic election activity was not noticed in many villages. In fact, the villages should be abuzz with a lot of election activity. This is attributed to rising day temperatures.

The leaders and party activists have been concluding their election campaign by 10 am and resuming it again at 4 pm.

In undivided Mahabubnagar district, 50 candidates are in the fray including 19 from Nagarkarnool seat.

Leaving the independent candidates, even candidates of

major parties have been hesitating to campaign during the day time after 10 am.

If the people did not turn out impressively at the public meetings and road shows, the parties would have to suffer. Realising this fact, the contestants have been mostly confining to street corner meetings during mornings and evenings. They are holding atmeeyasammelas. The candidates have been attending marriage functions and other programmes to meet the people and seek their votes.

The door-to-door campaigning this time, compared to earlier time, has come down drastically. All parties have been conducting meetings with important aides and preparatory meetings. Further, the candidates have been visiting the venues of fairs, festivals and

other celebrations where people congregate to seek votes.

The political parties are not able to feel the pulse of the voter as the campaign is not up to the mark. Both the constituencies are going to witness tripartite contest lending curious turn to the elections here. While the BJP is trying to regain power at the Centre, the Congress is keen gain good grip over the power gained in Telangana. However, the BRS is seeking to regain the past glory by proving its mettle in the Lok Sabha elections.

Under such a scenario, the voter remained not committal making the political parties unable to feel his pulse.

Doctors have been advising the rank and file of the political outfits and senior leaders of various parties to adopt precautions to avoid sunstroke.

Those who suspect that they have received the sun stroke should take shelter under a shade and avail medical treatment to overcome weakness and fatigue.

Those who wander under hot sun should avoid alcohol as they are bound to suffer dehydration. They have been advised to avoid oily and masala food in their diet. They have been advised to take fresh and green and leafy vegetables. Those who frequently go out under the sun should drink butter milk, coconut water and a good quantity of water.

The collectors of Gadwal and Narayanapeta have warned the people by now asking them to take precautions as the heat wave is likely to sustain for three or four more days. It is equally applicable to leaders and cadres of political parties.

Coal production hit in open cast mines

PNS ■ GODAVARIKHANI

The attendance of SCCL workers in open cast mines is down by 10-20 per cent daily affecting the coal production. The workers are dreading to work in the open cast mines where the temperature is two to three degrees more than normal temperature.

The temperature for the last few days is hovering around 43 degrees Celsius. But the temperature in open cast mines is two to three degrees higher than that of the outside temperature. Therefore, the workers are not able to perform their duty in the open cast mines. Cable boys, electricians and maz-

door workers have to work without any protective gear.

Operators of dumpers, shovels, dozers would have to work under the sun. In fact, cabins of these equipment would have air-conditioner facility, but the outside temperatures are horrible.

Only night shift employees have been reporting for duty in full. The absenteeism was marked among the employees of the second shift. The workers attending the morning shift from 7 am to 3 pm have been facing difficulties with the rising mercury from the morning itself. The second shift employees are dreading to venture out of their homes. Because of the absenteeism, the coal production has been

affected by at least 30 per cent. In fact, 80 per cent of the coal production takes place in open cast mines. The coal produced in these mines would be of the order of 2 lakh tons per day. However, currently the production dropped to 1.4 to 1.5 lakh tons only. However, the coal production in underground mines is going on as per the schedule.

In view of the hot summer season, the employees have been demanding the SCCL management to change the shift timings, but of no use. The workers want the first shift timings should be from 6 am to 1 pm and the second shift timings should be fixed from 4 pm to 11 pm.

British Envoy visits TSRTC office

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

British Deputy High Commissioner Gareth Wynn Owen visited the TSRTC office where he held a discussion with the corporation officials on Thursday. In the meeting, they

discussed the usage of electric buses, technical support, upgrading skills and training of staff. TSRTC MD VC Sajjanar said that electric buses are being introduced in TSRTC to provide a pollution-free travel experience. He said that the meeting will be

useful to further spread the system of electric buses in the organisation. The TSRTC officials explained about the electric buses that are currently available and the buses that will be used in the future through a power-point presentation. The Envoy

congratulated TSRTC for using eco-friendly electric buses. He said that he would strengthen the financing mechanism of zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) as per the agreement with the UK, US and India at the G-20 meetings held in Goa last year.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

YSRCP trashes TDP-JSP manifesto

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP State general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy criticised the TDP-JSP manifesto, labelling it as a collection of falsehoods.

Addressing the media at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, Sajjala asserted that while CM Jagan's manifesto contains promises realistically deliverable to the public, the Opposition's manifesto is riddled with unattainable pledges. He emphasised the public's awareness of the deceptive nature of Chandrababu's manifesto, contrasting it with YSRCP's commitment to responsible

governance in manifesto formulation.

Sajjala further highlighted Chandrababu's misinformation campaign regarding the Land Titling Act, attributing its formulation to the BJP government at the Centre. He urged Chandrababu Naidu to direct his inquiries about the Act to their coalition partner, rather than baselessly accusing the YSRCP and CM Jagan. Describing Chandrababu Naidu's ignorance of the Act's origins and propagation of false claims as politically inept, Sajjala challenged Chandrababu's allegations, questioning the logic behind his assertions.

Do a good job like Bade Bhai, Modi tells Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Modi reacted to the 'Bade Bhai, Chota Bhai' controversy in Telangana.

Speaking to TV9 on the show 'PM & 5 Editors,' Modi said, "If he (Revanth Reddy) called me big brother, I am thankful. If he thinks that he is bada-chota (elder younger), he should learn from me that government can be run sincerely and we can serve the country sincerely. I got a chance to be the longest-serving CM but never had a bad mark. There is always an attempt to slander which is a different thing. So learn from me. Then I will call you chota bhai. If you keep calling me

bada bhai to get my goodwill it won't work. The people will back you if you do a good job."

Responding to a question, Modi said, "If medals are given for corruption, the Congress will get a gold medal and the BRS a silver medal. They are runners up to each other."

He said that Telangana politics is a corruption racket but it is the Congress or the BRS. "They are the same. In the Delhi liquor scam, the BRS was there and a sword is hanging on the Delhi government who are in alliance with the Congress," he said.

Modi raised the issue of 'RR Tax' and said that it would destroy Telangana. When

asked if Revanth is engaging in corruption, Modi said, "Nothing is being spared from cuts and commission in Telangana." The BRS and the Congress are covering each other, he said.

When asked for Modi's guarantee to Telangana voters, Modi said, "When I say three crore houses, PM Surya Ghar Yojana, Nal Se Jal, free ration and free medical treatment Telangana will also be included in that. That is my guarantee for everyone." When asked about KCR saying a coalition government will come to power at the Centre he said, "Why is the BRS lying about a coalition government at the Centre?"

Over 310 SSC students fail in Telugu in Nagarkarnool Dist

PNS ■ NAGARKARNPOOL

The Nagarkarnool district ranked 21 at the state level in pass percentage of SSC students this year. The Education Department officials had been blamed for not showing initiative to get better results in the SSC. Parents are also questioning the government school authorities and managements of private schools for not taking interest in getting better results.

This year, 10,507 appeared for SSC public examination from the district. Of them, 9,621 cleared the exam. While 451 failed in mathematics, 113 failed in English. In all, 34 students failed in social stud-

ies, while 262 students failed to clear biological sciences paper. What is more appalling is that at least 310 candidates failed in Telugu.

In spite of conducting special classes for SSC students in the mornings and evenings and conducting tests daily to assess their ability, many students of government as well as private students have failed to clear Telugu exam. Total number of candidates in all subjects put together is put at 884. Two students were caught red-handed while copying. Their result was withheld. In all, 19 students of private schools have failed in Telugu subject.

The criticism against pri-

vate and government schools was that focusing on students who have been securing better marks, but not on those lagging behind. Out of the 131 government schools, only 27 have achieved 100% result. Parents appeal to the education department officials to take remedial measures to ensure that the failed students pass the Advanced Supplementary Exams.

According to DEO Govindarajulu, special classes will be conducted for the failed candidates to ensure that they clear the advanced supplementary examinations. Measures would be initiated to improve the marks of maths and English.

INDIA CORNER

CIK arrests youth trying to join terrorist ranks in J&K

Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) of Jammu and Kashmir Police on Thursday arrested an alleged radicalised youth, who was on his way to join terror ranks in Budgam district of the Union Territory, officials said. "The CIK arrested one hard-core, radicalised individual Waseem Ahmed Shaikh of Beerwah village who was about to join terrorist ranks on the motivation of some Pakistan based terrorist handlers," the officials said here. The officials said the CIK on Monday launched an operation after getting reliable intelligence input that terrorist outfit Ansar Gazwat-Ul-Hind, an offshoot of the global terror outfit ISIS, was trying to re-establish its base and revive its cadres in Kashmir. "In furtherance to this criminal conspiracy, one Pakistan based terror handler of AuGH identified as Hamzah @Gazi has been brainwashing/ radicalizing Kashmiri youth to join terrorist ranks."



Man killed while making reel with gun in Rajasthan's Kota, 2 detained

A day after a 22-year-old man died while making a reel with a country-made pistol, two accused have been detained for questioning, police said on Thursday. The victim's father, Rodulal has alleged that two of his son's friends, Ajay Salvi and a boy conspired to kill Yashwant Nagar under the pretext of shooting a video, police said. The matter came to light on Wednesday when Yashwant Nagar suffered a bullet injury in the chest while shooting a video with a country-made pistol at a tea shop near Maharishi Gautam Bhawan in Mahaveer Nagar Extension. He was immediately rushed to New Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, police said. While talking to the reporters, Rodulal said that as per the video that he had seen of his son, a boy was loading the gun and shot Nagar in the chest while Ajay was standing nearby.



Misa calls PM Modi 'old', gets slammed by BJP, JD(U)

RJD president Lalu Prasad's eldest daughter Misa Bharti on Thursday drew flak from the BJP-led NDA in Bihar for an uncharitable reference to the 'old' age of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Bharti, who is the RJD candidate from Patliputra, made the remarks while canvassing in the constituency where she attacked the NDA government at the Centre for bringing in the Agniveer scheme of recruitment in armed services. In a video clip, purportedly of Wednesday, now viral on social media, the Rajya Sabha MP can be heard as saying: "What did this government do in 10 years? It brought in Agniveer. Young people fighting for the country will be retired at the age of 22. On the other hand, we have an old Prime Minister who at the age of 75 wants a third consecutive term". Predictably, the BJP flew in rage and sought to remind the RJD leader that her father, too, was at a ripe age.



'BJP not against Muslims'

PM Modi respected by several Islamic countries: Rajnath

PNS ■ SUPAUL/SARAN (BIHAR)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday debunked the opposition charge that the BJP was creating a Hindu-Muslim divide, highlighting the goodwill enjoyed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in several Islamic countries. The former BJP president, who addressed election rallies in Supaul and Saran Lok Sabha constituencies of Bihar, also urged the minority community to be wary of the Congress and its ally RJD, charging the opposition parties with "seeking votes by kicking sand in your face". "In at least five Islamic countries of the Arab world, Modi has been conferred with the highest honour. And they (the opposition) have the temerity of charging us with (creating divisions between Hindus and Muslims)," Singh asserted. "I would, however, urge my



Muslim brethren not to be ensnared by these people, the parties like RJD and Congress, which are trying to get your votes by kicking sand in your face," he said. Singh, in his address, also said reservations along religious lines is not possible under the constitution. "Of course, there is a provi-

sion for quotas for the backward classes and those sections of Muslim population that are lagging behind are covered under the same," he said. "Muslims should also understand our motive behind illegalising triple talaq. How can one tolerate such a practice which had inflicted untold miseries upon so many Muslim sisters and daughters? We took action without worrying about electoral consequences. I am glad to see that our stand against triple talaq has also been appreciated by many Muslims," the defence minister said. Singh also claimed that the NDA was on course to achieve its target of 400-plus Lok Sabha seats, and "a beginning" has been made in Surat, where the BJP candidate got elected unopposed, and in Indore, where the Congress nominee withdrew his nomination papers and joined the saffron party. "Now, the opposition is crying hoarse that this would imperil democracy. Let me tell you that since Independence, at least 28 candidates have got elected unopposed. Twenty of them belonged to the Congress and two were from its ally Samajwadi Party," Singh said, without elaborating.

'Religion being weaponised in 'new India'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Political economist Parakala Prabhakar on Thursday asserted that the "new India" under the BJP dispensation has "weaponised" religion for political purposes. Prabhakar, while addressing a press conference here, said attempts have been made to destroy federalism, and the federal structure in the country signifies the "undemocratic manner in which the government at the Centre is functioning". "Religion was always there. But, the new thing in this 'new India' under the BJP dispensation is weaponisation of religion for political purposes and interests," he said on the sidelines of the Kolkata launch of his book 'The Crooked Timber of New India: Essays on a Republic in Crisis'. Claiming that there is a crisis in the economic and social sphere of the country, Prabhakar said in this "new India", it is difficult to be critical of the government.

Stop illegal mining in Aravallis: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that a balance between sustainable development and protection of the environment has to be made, the Supreme Court asked the Centre and state governments on Thursday to stop illegal mining in the Aravalli area. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Abhay S Oka said the governments must ensure that action is taken against erring officials. "Illegal mining in the Aravallis has to stop. The authorities have to ensure that

the requisite steps are taken in this regard. Otherwise, what is the benefit of having only skeletal structures in the name of mountains? A balance has to be made between sustainable development and protection of the environment," the bench said. The top court is dealing with a matter related to alleged illegal mining in the Aravalli range. In 2009, the top court imposed a blanket ban on the mining of major and minor minerals in the eco-sensitive Aravalli hills.

The Rajasthan government had earlier told the court that the issue regarding the classification between the Aravalli hills and the Aravalli ranges, insofar as mining activities are concerned, needs to be decided by the apex court. "We, prima facie, feel that if the state is of the view that the mining activities in the Aravalli range are also detrimental to the environmental interest, nothing stops the state government from preventing mining activities in the Aravalli range as well," the top court had said



Air coolers for tiger, bird enclosures in Tripura zoo

PNS ■ AGARTALA

With Tripura reeling under a severe heatwave over the past couple of weeks, seven air cooler machines have been installed in various animal enclosures in Sepahijala Zoo to provide comfort to the animals, including tigers, an official said on Thursday. All the water tanks in the zoo were repaired and made operational much before the onset of heatwave. "We knew there would be a long dry spell and heatwave during April. Accordingly, we procured seven air coolers and placed them in different enclosures to beat the heat. Two air coolers have been installed at the tiger enclosure, while three installed at the enclosures for exotic and sensitive birds", Zoo Director Biswajit Das told PTI. In addition, two coolers

have been kept at the veterinary hospital inside the zoo. The Sepahijala Zoo is situated 27 away km from the state capital. "We are changing the water stored in tanks to ensure the supply of fresh water for the animals. Due to proactive measures, the animals at the zoo are fine amid the adverse climate condition," he said. All animals, including the carnivores, are given cold drinking water mixed with ORS. The floors of the enclosures are being sprayed with water to keep the enclosures cool, the director said. Watermelons are being given to herbivorous animals and birds hydrated, he said. "Even as there is no adverse report regarding the health of the animals during the heatwave, the veterinary doctors are keeping a close watch on the animals round the clock," he added.

AMIT SHAH'S DOCTORED VIDEO Delhi Police summon Jharkhand Congress chief

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur was summoned by Delhi Police on May 2 in connection with its investigation into the doctored video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, a party spokesperson said on Wednesday. Thakur has been asked to join the investigation at Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion & Strategic Operations (IFSO) office in connection with an FIR registered on April 28 by its Special Cell, he said. "I received the notice from Delhi Police on Tuesday. But, it is beyond my understanding why the notice was served to me. This is nothing but anarchy," Thakur said. "If there is any complaint, they should first verify the content on my X account. The election campaign is at its peak and my involvement in the campaign could be understood. In such a situation, they have sought my laptop and other electronic gadgets. Sending summons without verifying the things is not appropriate," he added. Thakur said he has sought legal opinion on the issue.

MEA ON PRAJWAL REVANNA'S TRAVEL TO GERMANY

No political clearance was either sought or issued

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said that no political clearance was either sought from or issued by it in respect of travel of suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna to Germany. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal also said that no visa is required for diplomatic passport holders to travel to Germany. Revanna, the grandson of former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, is accused of sexual harassment of several women and is believed to be in Germany.

The Janata Dal (Secular) has already suspended the Hassan MP. "No Political Clearance was either sought from or issued by MEA in respect of the travel of the said MP to Germany," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing while replying to a volley of questions on the MP's reported travel to Germany. "Obviously, no visa note was issued either. No visa is required for diplomatic passport holders to travel to Germany. The Ministry has not issued visa note for any other country," the MEA spokesperson said.

Asked about whether the MEA may consider revocation of his passport in view of the allegations of sexual harassment against him, Jaiswal did not give a direct reply. "As regards the possible revocation of the passport of any individual, I would refer you to the relevant provisions of the Passport Act 1967. We are not in receipt of any directions from any court in this regard," he said. The government of Karnataka has set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the allegations against Revanna

EXCISE POLICY 'SCAM'

Sisodia moves Delhi HC seeking bail in CBI, ED cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia approached the high court on Thursday seeking bail in the corruption and money-laundering cases lodged by the CBI and the ED respectively in relation to the alleged excise policy scam. The bail pleas are scheduled for hearing before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma on Friday. Sisodia approached the high court after a trial court refused to grant him bail in the matter on April 30. The bail pleas were mentioned by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader's counsel before a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P S Arora for an urgent hearing, which agreed to list the same for Friday. "Let the judge go through the file. So let it come tomorrow," the bench said. Advocates Rajat Bhardwaj and Mohammad Irshad, representing Sisodia, told the bench that the petitioner is an

MLA and requested that both the pleas seeking bail be listed for an urgent hearing. The trial court had dismissed Sisodia's bail pleas in the corruption and money-laundering cases lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) respectively in connection with alleged irregularities in the formulation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22. The beneficiaries diverted "illegal" gains to the accused officials and made false entries in their books of account to evade detection, the probe agencies have alleged. The special judge had, in the April 30 order, denied the relief, saying the stage is not right to grant bail to Sisodia. The AAP leader was arrested by the CBI on February 26, 2023 for his alleged role in the "scam". The ED arrested the former deputy chief minister in a money-laundering case stemming from the CBI FIR on March 9, 2023.



LOK SABHA POLLS Dalit bastis of western UP want basic necessities

PNS ■ HATHRAS/FIROZABAD

In the rural expanse of western Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and Firozabad, where the pastoral beauty belies deep-seated challenges, those living in Dalit colonies want basic necessities and dignity and freedom from filth and sewage. Several villages this PTI reporter visited had a Dalit colony separately and these villages had debilitating homes and sanitation issues. In these villages, the realities of sanitation and poverty shape the narratives of women like Aarti Devi and Maya, whose voices echo the aspirations and frustrations of their com-



munities. In Hathras's Pilakhana, the air is heavy with the stench of stagnant water that surrounds modest homes, many of which are precariously perched in disrepair. For Aarti Devi, a Dalit woman whose days are consumed by cleaning the households of so-called upper caste people, her own living conditions are in stark contrast with the cleanliness she strives to

achieve elsewhere. "Our houses are swallowed by filth and sewage. We clean the homes of others, but our own lives are submerged in dirt. Here is swachhata (cleanliness) where," asked Devi, apparently referring to the government's Swachh Bharat campaign. She manages to earn only about Rs 3,000 every month by working in four households and is the sole breadwinner in her family. For her, elections are an opportunity to at least be vocal about her struggles and have some power. "At least party workers come and look at our state and at

times our problems are also addressed right before the polls so we look forward to the assembly and Lok Sabha polls," she said. She is indecisive of whom to vote. "We gave this government absolute power - in Centre and in state - but still nothing beneficial came our way and the situation has further only worsened," she said. Devi's story resonates across the Dalit enclaves in Hathras and Firozabad, where women like Pushpa from Hathras's Akhrabad find themselves caught in a cycle of poverty exacerbated by societal barriers.

Rahul's BJY will end with 'Cong Dhoondho Yatra' on June 4: Shah

PNS ■ BAREILLY/BUDAUN (UP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday attacked Rahul Gandhi, suggesting that his party will get such a drubbing in election that he will have to take out a 'Congress Dhoondho Yatra' after June 4. Addressing an election rally in Bareilly, Shah alleged that Rahul, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and SP's Akhilesh Yadav did not attend the Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya fearing this may alienate their vote bank. "The 'shehzade' (prince) of 'ghamandia' INDI Alliance

started his election campaign with Bharat Jodo Yatra but on June 4 (counting day), it will end with a 'Congress Dhoondho Yatra', Shah said. "In the first two phases, Congress is nowhere, while Narendra Modi has made a century and taken a lead in the '400 race' (race to 400 seats)," he said. He said that this election is for ending terrorism and Naxalism and making India the third major economy globally. Shah hit out at the INDIA bloc partner Samajwadi Party, saying it indulges in dynastic politics, for its president

Akhilesh Yadav has given tickets to five members of his family in the current election. He said that while Akhilesh is contesting from Kannauj and his wife Dimple Yadav is in fray from Mainpuri, Akshay Yadav, Aditya Yadav, and Dharmendra Yadav, all three his family members, are contenders from Firozabad, Budaun, and Azamgarh. "Had he given a ticket to some Yadav youths, it would have been better," he said. Shah said that for the past 70 years, Congress had been stalling the Ram Temple construction, a task the BJP finished.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Voter inertia

Low turnout in early phases of Lok Sabha polls is a cause of concern for parties, EC and democracy

The lukewarm voter response in the first two phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections raises several questions about the underlying reasons for their apathy. Is the weather a deterrent, or is it disillusionment with governance, scepticism towards nominees/parties, or lack of faith in electoral procedures like Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)? Indeed, there is a pressing need to rekindle voter enthusiasm and participation in the electoral process. An initial speculation regarding low turnout often points to adverse weather conditions. The scorching heat can indeed discourage voters, especially in regions prone to extreme climates. However, while the weather may play a role, it is seldom the sole determinant of voter participation. A more substantial factor contributing to voter apathy lies in the prevailing disillusionment with governance. Citizens, disappointed by unfulfilled promises, rampant corruption and inefficient administration, often perceive their votes as inconsequential. This disenchantment can lead to voter inertia,



where individuals feel disengaged from the political process altogether. Also, scepticism towards parties and their nominees exacerbates voter apathy. In an era marked by populism, polarisation and political opportunism, many voters struggle to identify with candidates or parties that truly represent their interests. The prevalence of dynastic politics and candidate selection based on nepotism only deepens this distrust. The leaders' conduct leaves much to be desired. Many times, they switch sides making a mockery of the voters' decision. Sometimes even the party the voters voted for joins hands with its arch-rival. In such scenarios, voters have reasons to feel cheated.

As if all this were not enough, there are doubts about the efficacy of the electoral process itself. Many people are given to doubt the machinery employed, including the EVMs. The introduction of EVMs was hailed as a milestone in ensuring transparent and efficient elections. However, over time, scepticism and conspiracy theories surrounding EVMs have proliferated, eroding public trust in the process. Allegations of tampering, malfunctioning machines and lack of transparency in EVMs handling have sowed the seeds of doubt in the minds of voters. Their perceived vulnerability to hacking or manipulation, coupled with the absence of a paper trail for verification, has fuelled apprehensions about the sanctity of elections. In such an environment, restoring faith in electoral procedures becomes imperative to bolster voter confidence. The situation turned so grave that the matter was taken to the Supreme Court. On this front, introducing measures such as VVPATs alongside the EVMs can go a long way in rebuilding voters' trust. Indeed, it would take an effort by the Election Commission as well as the political class to instil a sense of confidence among people that their vote is sacrosanct. By demonstrating integrity and a genuine commitment to serving the public interest, political parties can rebuild the trust with for-now disillusioned voters.

PICTALK



People visit the seafont on a hot summer day, in Mumbai

Upholding the Fourth Estate in digital age



SANTOSH MATHEW

In an era marred by misinformation, censorship and threats to journalists, the celebration of press freedom assumes greater significance than ever before

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a Government without newspapers, or newspapers without a Government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter - Thomas Jefferson

Every year on May 3rd, the world comes together to celebrate World Press Freedom Day, a day dedicated to honouring the fundamental principles of press freedom, defending the independence of the media and paying tribute to journalists who risk their lives to report the truth. In an era marked by misinformation, censorship and threats to journalists worldwide, this day holds more significance than ever. Press freedom is the cornerstone of democracy. It empowers citizens by providing them with access to diverse viewpoints and information, enabling them to make informed decisions. A free press serves as a watchdog, holding Governments and powerful entities accountable for their actions. It acts as a voice for the voiceless, bringing attention to social injustices and human rights violations.

Despite the crucial role they play, journalists around the world face numerous challenges in their pursuit of truth. They encounter threats, harassment and violence, both online and offline. Many journalists risk imprisonment or even death for daring to report on sensitive issues. Censorship, propaganda and attacks on press freedom have become increasingly prevalent, hindering the ability of journalists to fulfil their vital role in society. World Press Freedom Day. Since 1993, it has been observed globally to honour a declaration made by African journalists in Windhoek, Namibia, in 1991. It commemorates press freedom principles and acknowledges journalists' courage. UNESCO awards the Guillermo Cano Prize to those preserving press freedom. While technology has revolutionised the way information is disseminated, it has also presented new challenges for press freedom. Social media platforms have become powerful tools for



spreading information, but they have also been weaponised to spread misinformation and silence dissenting voices. Journalists must navigate through a digital landscape fraught with fake news and online harassment, often at great personal risk. India, home to one of the world's largest and most vibrant media landscapes, has faced scrutiny in recent years regarding its press freedom record. According to the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), India's ranking has seen fluctuations. In the 2023 index, India was placed at 163 out of 180 countries, indicating significant challenges to press freedom within the country. "When asked to bend, the media crawled. And when asked to crawl, it cringed." This statement was made by Advani in the context of the Indian media's behaviour during the Emergency period (1975-1977), imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. During this time, press freedom faced severe restrictions, with journalists being arrested, newspapers censored and the Government exerting tight control over media outlets.



PRESS FREEDOM IS THE CORNERSTONE OF A DEMOCRACY. IT EMPOWERS CITIZENS BY PROVIDING THEM WITH ACCESS TO DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS AND INFORMATION, ENABLING THEM TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Advani's quote reflects his criticism of how certain sections of the media capitulated to Government pressure and failed to uphold journalistic integrity and independence. It suggests that instead of resisting unjust demands or censorship, some media outlets complied with the Government's wishes, even to the point of degradation. This quote serves as a reminder of the importance of a free and independent press in holding those in power accountable and safeguarding democracy. It highlights the need for journalists to remain vigilant in upholding the principles of press freedom, especially in times of political turmoil or authoritarian rule. British politician Edmund Burke is often credited with coining the term in the late 18th century, referring to the gallery of the House of Commons as the fourth estate, symbolising the press's influence on political affairs. The term "fifth estate" underscores the transformative role of social media in democratising access to information, enabling individuals to participate in public discourse and challenging established institutions and power structures. Social media platforms

empower users to share news, opinions and perspectives instantaneously, bypassing traditional gatekeepers of information. On World Press Freedom Day, we must reaffirm our commitment to defending press freedom and protecting journalists worldwide. Governments must uphold the principles of free speech and ensure the safety of journalists within their borders. Civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for press freedom and holding those who seek to suppress it accountable. Media organisations must continue to strive for independence, transparency and ethical journalism, even in the face of adversity. World Press Freedom Day is also a day to celebrate the courage and resilience of journalists who risk their lives to report the truth. It is a day to honour those who have faced persecution, imprisonment and even death for their commitment to upholding the principles of press freedom. Their dedication serves as a reminder of the invaluable role journalists play in safeguarding democracy and promoting transparency. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EMPOWERING VISUAL NARRATIVES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "A picture is worth a thousand words," published on May 1, this is my response. The depiction of sexual violence against women in the media often portrays them as helpless victims, reinforcing stigma and shame. Ankita Anand, a survivor herself, challenged this narrative by spearheading a campaign urging media outlets to rethink their imagery. Instead of portraying women as passive victims, she advocated for images that reflect their resilience and agency. Anand's efforts, along with initiatives like the image bank by the Hri Institute, mark a significant step in reshaping visual narratives around gender-based violence.

Through campaigns like "I Never Ask For It" survivors are reclaiming their stories, using mediums like textiles to challenge societal attitudes towards gender-based violence. These initiatives underscore the transformative power of imagery in shaping public perception and fostering empathy. Ultimately, the portrayal of sexual violence in the media should prioritise dignity and empowerment, amplifying the voices of survivors and challenging ingrained biases. It's a collective responsibility to ensure that visual narratives reflect the strength and resilience of those affected, rather than perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Rian Mehta | Chandigarh

CHINA'S SHADOW POLITICS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Why is the BJP avoiding China in campaigning?" published on May 1, this is my response. The discourse surrounding China in Indian politics is a delicate dance where words and actions are carefully measured. While the former Army Chief's blunt assessment of China as India's primary threat is refreshing, it also underscores the gravity of the situation. The recent revelations about the India-China confrontation shed light on systemic failures and diplomatic intricacies shaping bilateral relations.

Zara Khan | Mumbai

India's semiconductor mission



Apropos the news article, "Semicon ecosystem: A revolution in India," published on May 1, this is my response. The surge of semiconductor development in India marks a pivotal juncture in our technological evolution. As our reliance on technology deepens, so does the significance of these minuscule chips, which power everything from smartphones to space missions. India's strategic vision to foster a robust semiconductor ecosystem is commendable, as evidenced by ambitious projects and partnerships aimed at reducing import dependency and fostering innovation. Initiatives like the India Semiconductor Mission and skill development programmes underscore a concerted effort to nurture indigenous talent and infrastructure. Geopolitical shifts, especially amidst the China-US trade tensions, offer a timely opportunity for India to emerge as a preferred destination for semiconductor manufacturing.

However, challenges persist, particularly in bridging the skill gap and accessing advanced technology. Collaborations with global leaders and initiatives to attract talent back to India are steps in the right direction. The road ahead is promising, with India poised to not only meet its self-sufficiency goals but also emerge as a global leader in semiconductor innovation, contributing significantly to economic growth.

Advait Rao | Bengaluru

The wonderful aspect of dance is its ability to speak volumes without uttering a single word.

It is a great way to share one's passion for dance, impart new skills and foster a sense of unity. One of the greatest strengths of dance is its finesse and ability to touch people emotionally. Remember, every little step counts when it comes to making a difference through dance. Dance comes in many forms, from ballet to hip-hop and from contemporary to folk. A talented dancer will naturally embrace all these styles and weave them into choreography. This not only enriches the dancer's performance but also acknowledges the global tapestry of dance. A dance community is a great space for everyone, regardless of their age, race and gender. After all, diversity is the lifeblood of creativity. Said John Dryden, the literary critic and an accomplished poet from England: "Dancing is the poetry of the feet."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Time to curb fake videos in elections

A deepfake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah sparks outrage during the Lok Sabha election campaign

The ongoing Lok Sabha election campaign has suddenly taken a very ugly turn after a fake video involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah has surfaced. Accusations and counter-accusations are common during campaigns and are not considered harmful. However, it is unacceptable for anyone or political party to resort to using 'deep fake' technology to release fake videos against their opponents to win elections. In a recent case, the country's Home Minister, Amit Shah, has become a victim of 'deep-fake' technology. Amit Shah delivered a speech at a BJP election rally in Siddipet, Medak district of Telangana on April 25. The video of this speech was allegedly tampered with and shared on social media. Fact checks have proven this video to be completely fake. In this fake video, Amit Shah is allegedly seen announcing the abolishment of reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Now, imagine if someone could abolish the reservations provided to the



above-mentioned classes in the country. It is an impossible thing. In reality, an old video of Amit Shah has been edited, in which he was talking about ending Muslim reservations. In this original video, ST and SC have been added in place of Muslims. However, the question arises as to how the fake video may look exactly like the real one. Fake videos are created with the help of software. As we know, the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence tools has increased in the market these days. In this technology, the tone and voice of a person are captured with the help of machine learning. In fact, with the help of new technology, the face of a person who is not even a part of that video is fitted into the

video. It is difficult to tell the difference between real and fake in a video manipulated through this technique. Whoever leader or political party created and released fake videos showing Amit Shah announcing the abolishment of reservations, how serious an act they have committed to spreading hatred in society. A complaint has been lodged by Prateek Karpe, an office bearer of BJP's Mumbai unit, at Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) Cyber Police Station. The complaint states that a deepfake video of Amit Shah was created, posted and shared on the internet, to defame BJP leader Amit Shah. The complainant also requested the police to immediately remove the fake video and register a case against those accused who allegedly shared it to create enmity and hatred among various castes. Based on the complaint, a case has been registered against the social media handle of Maharashtra Youth Congress and 16 others under various sections of the IPC and IT Act at Bandra-Kurla Cyber Police Station in Mumbai.

Of course, technological development has taken place rapidly in the world in the last few decades. The increasing use of digital platforms has made life easier and faster, but along with this benefit, some serious risks related to cyber security are also coming to the fore. With the boundless nature of cyberspace, the threats associated with it and the deceitful methods and tools of cyber criminals, the trend of cyber-attacks is constantly changing. Apart from this, terrorism and fundamentalism are also finding shelter in cyberspace. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Cybersecurity is no longer limited to the digital world. It has become a matter of national security." Cyberspace has become the new battleground. The Government must take strict action against these elements. Meanwhile, one only hopes that the authorities concerned would curb the menace of deep fake videos sooner rather than later with an iron hand. (The writer is a senior journalist and author of two books; views are personal)



VIVEK SHUKLA





FIRST COLUMN THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The mastery of emotions is a pivotal factor in shaping success and fulfilment



SAKSHI SETHI

In a busy world, as individuals navigate through various personal and professional challenges, their ability to understand and manage emotions plays a critical role in determining success, well-being and overall fulfilment. It is the emotions that shape how individuals interact, communicate, lead and innovate, thereby ultimately driving organisational success and fostering a positive work culture. Often it is found that much of an individual's behaviour is the result of emotions. However, these emotions are not a great guide to how one should behave in challenging situations. That is why identifying and working through them helps make better decisions. Feelings and needs are intertwined and knowing one helps an individual understand the other. It is the feelings that are the gateway into what health needs are thereby, promoting the individual to take appropriate action and enabling the self to grow and heal. If one is not in touch with their feelings, one may end up not knowing what they need which may further lead to indecision or emotional outbursts and the same is being faced in today's scenario be it the corporate world or the world of education.

The importance of emotional intelligence cannot be overstated in this fast-paced and interconnected world. At the workplace, what forms the utmost need is the combination of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, effective communication and a supportive work environment. By implementing such strategies, organisations can foster a culture where employees feel empowered to manage their emotions positively, leading to increased productivity, job satisfaction and overall well-being. Emotional intelligence positively correlates with job satisfaction. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs, as it fosters purpose, belonging and commitment.



Employees with high emotional intelligence excel in interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution and adaptability, while emotionally intelligent leaders inspire trust, motivate teams and cultivate a positive work environment. By promoting emotional well-being, organisations optimise employee performance and achieve better business outcomes. Recognising the importance of emotional well-being, organisations implement initiatives to support employees' mental health be it wellness programmes, counselling services or flexible work arrangements. Stress-reducing activities, workload management, work-life balance and emotional validation can reduce absenteeism, turnover and healthcare costs, promoting a healthier and more resilient workforce.

Organisations should look for silver linings or alternative perspectives that can help reframe the situation in a more positive light, for emotionally intelligent employees can bounce back from failures, learn from setbacks and thrive in the face of uncertainty. By practicing self-compassion, focusing on strengths and investing in ongoing learning and skill development to enhance competence and confidence, can an individual effectively manage challenging emotions in the workplace and foster a more positive and productive work environment.

Remember, a workplace that acknowledges and supports the emotional needs of employees can promote mental health, reduce stress and prevent burnout. Emotions are not only inevitable but the most essential ingredient in the workplace. Recognising them and then cultivating them can lead to a more engaged, collaborative and resilient workforce which will ultimately contribute to the organisation's success and sustainability.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

AFSPA repeal: A step towards 'Naya Kashmir'



ABHINAV NARAYAN

Amit Shah's proposal to repeal AFSPA in J&K could restore normalcy, but it must consider the broader implications and evolving security of the region



Recently, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Centre will consider the removal of AFSPA in J&K. This statement assumes significance as it reflects the Government's vision towards J&K and most importantly Prime Minister's promise of Naya Kashmir. Soon, after the Lok Sabha elections, the focus will be panned towards J&K as the Union Territory is scheduled to go for polls in September this year. After abrogating article 370, the Government seems to be turning towards solving another long-standing conundrum in J&K - AFSPA. At the security and strategic level, this attempt will accelerate the cleaning of Pakistan's propaganda by cleaning up their psychological warfare designs in J&K and will provide full throttle for holistic development. Before the Government sets its approach, it must see the bigger picture first.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act gives sweeping powers to armed forces (which also extends to CAPF under Section 2) and most significantly provides them legal immunity for their actions under Section 7 of the act. However, the Supreme Court in 2016 struck down this blanket protection from prosecution. The Supreme Court said "It does not matter whether the victim was a common person or a militant or a terrorist, nor does it matter whether the aggressor was a common person or the state. The law is the same for both and is equally applicable to both". The sweeping powers under Section 4 of the act include

1. Arrest without warrant,
2. Fire (After due warning) upon or use other kinds of force even if it causes death, against the person who is acting against law or order in the disturbed area for the maintenance of public order.
3. To enter and search any premises in order to make such arrests, or to recover any person wrongfully restrained or any arms, ammunition or explosive substances and seize it.
4. Stop and search any vehicle or vessel reasonably suspected to be carrying such person or weapons. The AFSPA debate stems from two perspectives first is security necessity and second is cases of extrajudi-



THE IMPOSITION OF AFSPA IN THE STATE OR UT ITSELF EXPLAINS THAT THE STATE HAS ALMOST LOST ITS CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION AND WHEN THE STATE LOSES ITS CAPACITY, IT MEANS THAT THE ADVERSARY OR ANY ADVERSE SITUATION WILL SOON GRIP THE STATE, LEADING TO MAYHEM AND A BREAKDOWN OF NATIONAL SECURITY

cial killings in the Northeast. The most debatable part is the second one which has made this act controversial. In 2004, a thorough review of the act was done by the Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission which concluded that the act should be repealed and observed that "agitations such as in Manipur and elsewhere are merely the symptoms of a malaise, which goes much deeper" and called on the Government to address the "core issues". However, the importance of National security somehow gets shadowed by a few cases of misuse of the act.

Call for AFSPA comes under extraordinary situations which if not controlled or mitigated can result in serious consequences from the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, 1986 Kashmir riots killing 2000-2000 people primarily Hindus, Sopor firings in January 1993 killing 40 people to Bij Behara firings in October 1993 killing 60 people. Such horrifying incidents need stringent measures in place and a certain amount of free pass to operate efficiently. "We feel that by revoking special legal provisions, which are in place here, definitely our operational capabilities will be compromised," General Officer Command (GOC) of Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain said in 2011. To deal with a situation that is spiralling out day by day in a state requires effective operational dominance over the adversary which can only be possible if armed forces can freely operate.

The imposition of AFSPA in the state or UT itself explains that the state has almost lost its capacity to deal with the situation and when the state loses its capacity then it means that the adversary or any adverse situation will soon grip the state leading to mayhem and breakdown of national security. Such situations of

breakdowns are not ordinary and demand extreme measures and interventions to normalise and any constraints in intervention will affect the normalisation process therefore to let "normalisation" progress an effective emergency response mechanism is required which AFSPA provides. A call for the removal of AFSPA should only come when the security environment is significantly improved or secured as hurried removal might bring back the old situation. The case of a fresh wave of radicalisation in 2018 in J&K after the killing of terror poster boy Burhan Wani is one incidence where a cautious decision must be made to decide the removal of AFSPA.

AFSPA is not immune; it has its limitations and misuses. For example, the Nagaland case in 2021 of killing innocent 14 civilians or the 1995 Kohima Massacre where 16th Rashtriya Rifles fired upon civilians mistaking the sound of the tyre bursting for a bomb attack killing 7 and injuring 36. The free pass or the freeness in the name of operational efficiency or capabilities has also led to some serious consequences which are eroding the primary objective of the act. The AFSPA Act is in place to mitigate the extreme situation in the state and to aggravate it. Such incidents aggravate the situation and further complicate the situation in a state. Therefore, these immunities either required a removal or needed a proper check to put caution in the exercise of powers by the armed forces which later was done by the Supreme Court in 2016.

AFSPA cannot stay for long as extraordinary or exceptional situations are temporary and once under control, AFSPA could be withdrawn. If it goes beyond necessity, then AFSPA's presence would hinder the normalisation process. The normalisation process does not

only include fighting with the adversary it also includes the restoration of a peaceful and harmonious environment. A state of being normal is only when the state begins to function without any constraints, fear and anxiety. AFSPA being in place distorts the state of being "normal" and rather heightens the anxiety and fear which in the long run affects the democratic ecosystem and governance in a state that might further lead to socio-political instability if overlooked. The case of J&K ever since the removal of Article 370 has significantly improved there was a 66 per cent drop in terror cases in J&K. The union territory has also seen a significant drop in terror recruitment under Army's Operation Sahi Raasta. According to reports only seven youth joined terror groups last year.

As the security environment in J&K is significantly improved, a call for the removal of AFSPA is well reasoned. Now, the CAPF presence would easily tackle any security situation if arises as the substantial threat of terror now seems to be subsiding. Like the Government withdrew AFSPA from Punjab in 1997 it should soon take a call on J&K as well, though few CAPF presence can be there considering bordering areas the operation of the act must be withdrawn.

The removal of AFSPA will facilitate and exhort confidence and peace among people. Most importantly, eliminates the sense of fear and accelerates the pace of normalisation and developmental processes at socio-political levels. The Prime Minister's promise in Naya Kashmir lies beyond the security to society and politics which will only strengthen after the removal of AFSPA.

(The author is an Advocate based out of New Delhi, views are personal)

Engaging in the theatrics of India's electoral carnival

In the realm of political theatre, candidates await their turn in the merry-go-round of power, setting the stage with tension and anticipation

In anticipation of the 18th Lok Sabha elections in India, political parties have fervently engaged in pre-electoral activities, including candidate selection, issue advocacy and public discourse—all these, much before the official announcement by the Election Commission (scheduled from April 19 to June 1, 2024). Of particular significance is the burgeoning cohort of 18 million first-time voters, who observe the electoral spectacle with keen interest as parties vie for their support by proffering ambitious pledges. Within this theatrical milieu, the composition of the Lok Sabha, comprising 543 parliamentary constituencies nationwide, assumes paramount importance. Each constituency plays a pivotal role in



RAJDEEP PATHAK

electing a singular representative, who assumes the mantle of voicing their constituents' concerns within the Lower House of Parliament. Thus, amidst the cacophony of democratic fervour, the formation of the (18th) Lok Sabha emerges as a focal point, embodying the democratic ethos and the intricacies of electoral representation within India's diverse polity - as we witness this chaotic carnival

(read dance) of democracy. Now picture this: Rallies echoing with rehearsed oratory; meetings buzzing with the monotonous drone of 'scripted' discourse; and the landscape littered with towering hoardings and captivating advertisements—all vying for attention like desperate contestants in a reality TV show. Each candidate, eagerly awaits their fate in this grandiose spectacle, hoping to shine bright enough to avoid being relegated to the shadows of political obscurity. But, as they say, once a politician, always a politician. This grand orchestra of democracy will see nearly a billion people herded like cattle into over a million polling booths, expected to cast their votes in a choreographed char-

ade to determine the future Government. In the realm of electoral politics, politicians assume the role of adept illusionists, skillfully concocting promises tailored to captivate the electorate. Through artful rhetoric, they conjure visions of development and inclusivity, appealing to voters' emotions despite the potential disparity with reality. Parties engage in a theatrical spectacle, donning elaborate garb and competing for attention with promises of infrastructure, welfare and prosperity. However, voters' decisions ultimately reflect both their susceptibility and the manipulative prowess of politicians. This electoral charade underscores the complex interplay between rhetoric, perception

and voter agency in contemporary democratic processes. Here past performances matter. Enter the Narendra Modi Government, riding high on the waves of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas,' with a later addition of 'Sabka Prayas'. Since 2014, the Modi administration has been pulling rabbits out of hats faster than a magician—from electrifying villages to construction of toilets across the country in a bid to make India defecation-free, to digitising governance (Digital India), Startup India and standing up for the people and the world during emergencies like Covid19. Of course, like any good magic show, there's always a healthy dose of criticism to keep things interesting - after all, what's a politi-

cal spectacle without a little touch of drama? India's diplomatic endeavours have bolstered its global stature, marked by strategic alliances with major powers and initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, etc., fostering collaboration in trade, technology and sustainable development. Concurrently, domestic developments such as Ayushman Bharat for healthcare, Saubhagya for rural electrification, Jan-Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion and so on, underscore efforts toward inclusive progress. Nonetheless, socio-economic disparities persist, emblematic of the ongoing challenges amidst India's democratic evolution on the world stage. The Indian electoral process is characterised by extravagant

rallies, serving as vibrant showcases of democracy where ordinary citizens are swept into the extraordinary theatre of politics. Whether attendees arrive voluntarily or are transported en masse, these gatherings epitomise the essence of democratic engagement. Amidst a backdrop of waving flags and resonant slogans, the democratic spirit radiates, offering a glimpse of both the triumphs and tribulations of competing political factions. Central to this spectacle, is the tireless efforts of party workers, orchestrating the mobilisation of supporters for these occasions. One cannot forget that in this grand symphony, the Election Commission stands as the linchpin, ensuring the sancti-

ty of free and fair elections despite recurrent criticisms. Imagine the stalwart veterans anxiously clinging to their phones, praying for one more display of their experience in the political limelight, while the current faces (read chosen MPs) pace like restless lions in the corridors of authority, fearing either the sweet embrace of reselection or the bitter sting of rejection. But there's nothing to fear. For in the unpredictable world of politics, one never knows when the pendulum of fortune will favourably swing back. So, let us Vote so that the elected parties work to fulfil their manifesto.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Rupee falls 3 paise to settle at 43.46 against US dollar

The rupee stayed range-bound and closed 3 paise lower at 83.46 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid a strong American currency and rising crude oil prices in global markets. Forex traders said positive sentiment in the domestic equity markets and the inflow of foreign capital capped a sharp fall in the domestic currency. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened strong at 83.41 and touched the intra-day low of 83.49 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 83.46 (provisional) against the dollar, down 3 paise from its previous close. The rupee had settled 2 paise higher at 83.43 against the dollar on Tuesday, a day after losing 7 paise on Monday. The foreign exchange market was closed on Wednesday on account of Maharashtra Day. On Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve decided to maintain the status quo on the benchmark interest rates, in line with the market expectations.



South Indian Bank stock declines over 5%

Shares of South Indian Bank on Thursday tanked more than 5 per cent after the company reported a 13.88 per cent decline in March quarter net profit to Rs 287.56 crore. The stock declined 5.10 per cent to settle at Rs 29.20 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it tumbled 6.88 per cent to Rs 28.65. On the NSE, it went lower by 5 per cent to Rs 29.20 per share. The company's market valuation declined by Rs 410.7 crore to Rs 7,638.50 crore. In volume terms, 144.03 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and over 856.36 lakh shares exchanged hands on the NSE during the day. The private sector bank posted a net profit of Rs 333.89 crore in the January-March period of the 2022-23 fiscal year. Total expenditure increased to Rs 2,187 crore in the March quarter from Rs 1,757 crore in the same period a year ago, South Indian Bank said in a regulatory filing on Thursday.



Vedanta shares climb over 3%; hit 52-week high

Shares of Vedanta climbed over 3 per cent on Thursday after the group said it is aiming to invest US\$ 20 billion across all its businesses in India over the next four years. The company's stock advanced 3.22 per cent to finish the trade at Rs 410.70 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 3.99 per cent to Rs 413.80 -- its 52-week high. On the NSE, it climbed 3.25 per cent to settle at Rs 410.80 each. In intra-day, the stock went up by 4 per cent to the 52-week high of Rs 413.90. The company added Rs 4,757.64 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 1,52,665.27 crore. In volume terms, 9.41 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and 127.89 lakh shares on the NSE during the day. The Vedanta Group is aiming to invest US\$ 20 billion across all its businesses in India over the next four years, its Chairman Anil Agarwal said on Wednesday.



India, New Zealand look to boost trade ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and New Zealand are looking to increase collaboration in goods and services sectors like pharmaceuticals, digital trade, and cross-border payment systems to promote bilateral trade.

Issues to promote trade through these collaborations were discussed during the recent visit of Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal to New Zealand from April 26-27.

The commerce ministry said that huge potential is there in both economies to further promote bilateral trade.

"The meetings reviewed progress on market access issues, economic cooperation projects and explored opportunities for new initiatives," it said.

Both sides discussed the establishment of robust bilateral economic dialogue architecture and the creation of working groups in sectors like Agriculture, Food Processing, Storage and Transportation,



"Greater sourcing of medicines from India and cooperation in the medical device sector was also discussed," it said, adding that "both parties briefly explored opportunities for collaboration in digital trade, meeting nationally determined contributions, cross-border payment systems, among others".

Forestry and Pharmaceuticals to facilitate ongoing collaboration on key trade and economic issues.

Deliberations also included increasing cooperation in kiwi fruit as well as the dairy sector.

The meetings addressed bilateral trade matters of mutual interest, including issues related to market access, non-tariff barriers, and sanitary (human and animal health) and phytosanitary (plant health) measures on products like grapes, okra and mangoes.

Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) in organic products, and simplified homologation, including through mutual recognition of comparable domestic standards for vehicles, also figured in the discussions.

"Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to resolve these issues through constructive dialogue and cooperation," the ministry said.

Further, it said that collaboration in the areas of pharmaceuticals and medical devices

was discussed at length, including the adoption of fast-tracking of regulatory processes and quality assessment of manufacturing facilities.

"Greater sourcing of medicines from India and cooperation in the medical device sector was also discussed," it said, adding that "both parties briefly explored opportunities for collaboration in digital trade, meeting nationally determined contributions, cross-border payment systems, among others".

Gold climbs Rs 500; silver jumps Rs 400

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 500 to Rs 72,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a rally in precious metal rates in the global market, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 71,850 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also jumped Rs 400 to Rs 83,500 per kg. It had ended at Rs 83,100 per kg in the previous trade.

The commodity markets were partially closed on May 1 on the occasion of Maharashtra Day/Labour Day.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,350 per 10 grams, up by Rs 500, taking bullish cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,304 per ounce, up by USD 16 from the previous close.

GST National Coordination meeting to plug loopholes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Central and state GST officers will meet on Friday under the chairmanship of Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra and are likely to discuss various issues like stricter registration norms to deter fake companies set up to evade taxes, sources said.

The meeting comes within days of GST collections scaling a record high of Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April on the back of strong economic momentum, increased domestic transactions and tighter audit and scrutiny.

The third National Co-ordination Meeting of senior officers of Central and State Tax administrations would, among other things, discuss further tightening of registration under Goods and Services Tax (GST) to curb fake companies, set up only to claim an input tax credit (ITC).

The meeting is also scheduled to discuss ways to reach out to the mastermind of GST fraud by following the money trail, sources added.

To identify risky taxpayers



GST intelligence officers have detected fake ITC cases worth Rs 18,000 crore in April-December 2023 and arrested 98 fraudsters/masterminds.

suspected of passing or availing fake ITC, tax officers are using data analytics and artificial intelligence tools.

Besides, robust checks in the form of physical verification of premises and Aadhar authentication are in place for GST registration. This has enabled early detection of fraudulent registrations and curbed them to a great extent.

In Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry, a pilot on risk-based biometric-based Aadhaar authentication is being carried out for registration of applications.

As per the government data, between April and December 2023, about 14,600 cases of GST evasion have been registered by central tax officers.

Maximum number of such frauds was registered in

Maharashtra (2,716), followed by Gujarat (2,589), Haryana (1,123) and West Bengal (1,098).

Besides, GST intelligence officers have detected fake ITC cases worth Rs 18,000 crore in April-December 2023 and arrested 98 fraudsters/masterminds.

The first National Coordination Meeting of State and Central GST officers was held on April 24, 2023. The issue of fake/bogus registration under GST was discussed, and it was decided to launch a special pan-India drive to identify fake GSTINs.

The second meeting was held on December 14, 2023, in which best practices adopted by various states to curb evasion were shared, besides deliberation on other issues.

Ajanta Pharma posts 66% rise in net profit to Rs 203 cr in Q4

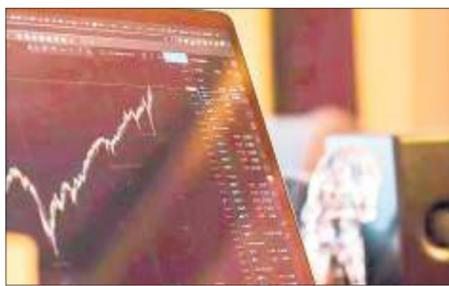
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ajanta Pharma on Thursday said its consolidated net profit increased 66 per cent to Rs 203 crore in the March quarter, aided by robust sales across domestic and international markets.

The drugmaker had reported a net profit of Rs 122 crore in the January-March quarter of the previous fiscal.

Revenue from operations rose to Rs 1,054 crore in the fourth quarter of FY24 as compared with Rs 882 crore in the year-ago period, Ajanta Pharma said in a regulatory filing. For the year ended March 31, 2024, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 816 crore as against Rs 588 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Revenue from operations rose to Rs 4,209 crore for FY24 as compared with Rs 3,743 crore in FY23. The company said it distributed Rs 642 crore to its shareholders in the form of dividend in FY24. The drug firm generated a cash flow of Rs 812 crore and, given this financial position, the board of directors has approved the distribution of Rs 351 crore to shareholders in the form of a buyback.



Stock markets rebound on record GST collections; Sensex up 128 pts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets rebounded on Thursday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 128 points as record GST collections in April, positive manufacturing data, and foreign fund inflows boosted investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 128.33 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 74,611.11 in a restricted trade. During the day, the index rose by 329.65 points or 0.44 per cent to a high of 74,812.43. The NSE Nifty rose by 43.35 points or 0.19 per cent to 22,648.20 as 29 of its constituents advanced and 21 declined.

From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, NTPC, Sun

Pharma, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services and JSW Steel were among the major gainers. Kotak Mahindra Bank was the biggest loser, dropping 2.95 per cent after the bank announced the exit of its joint managing director KVS Manian.

ICICI Bank dropped a little over 1 per cent. India's second-largest private lender rejected a media report that suggested that its MD and CEO was willing to step down.

Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, Wipro and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

"Benchmark indices saw moderate gains, mirroring global trends after the US FED decided to maintain its interest rate, as widely accepted."

RBI says 97.76% of Rs 2000 currency notes returned

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said 97.76 per cent of the Rs 2000 denomination banknotes have returned to the banking system, and only Rs 7,961 crore worth of the withdrawn notes are still with the public.

On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of Rs 2000 denomination banknotes from circulation.

The total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, when the withdrawal of the high value banknotes was announced, has declined to Rs 7,961 crore at the close of

business on April 30, 2024, the Reserve Bank said in a statement.

"Thus, 97.76 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," it said.

The Rs 2000 banknotes continue to be legal tender. People can deposit and/or exchange Rs 2000 banknotes at 19 RBI offices across the country. People can also send Rs 2000 bank notes through India Post from any post office to any of the RBI Issue Offices for credit to their bank accounts in India.

Public and private entities holding such notes were initially asked to either exchange or deposit them in bank accounts



by September 30, 2023. The deadline was later extended to October 7, 2023. Deposit and

exchange services at bank branches were discontinued on October 7, 2023.

Starting October 8, 2023, individuals have been provided with the choice of either exchanging the currency or having the equivalent sum credited to their bank accounts at the 19 offices of the RBI.

The 19 RBI offices depositing/exchanging the bank notes are in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Belapur, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jammu, Kanpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, New Delhi, Patna and Thiruvananthapuram.

The Rs 2000 banknotes were introduced in November 2016, following the demonetisation of the then-prevailing Rs 1000 and Rs 500 banknotes.

Tata Projects posts Rs 120.5 cr PAT in Q4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

EPC firm Tata Projects on Thursday reported a profit after tax of Rs 120.57 crore for the quarter ended March 31 on the back of higher revenues.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 366.42 crore in the year-ago period, Tata Projects said in a statement.

These figures are after

exceptional and/or extraordinary items.

The company's revenue from operations increased to Rs 5,412.80 crore during the March quarter, over Rs 5,015.21 crore in the year-ago period, the statement said.

Tata Projects MD & CEO Vinayak Pai said the company's strategic realignment, organisational transformation and improved focus on oper-

ational efficiencies have started yielding results.

"I feel proud to announce that we have returned to profitability, and we are moving forward on our path to deliver predictable and sustainable projects through innovation and technology," he said.

Tata Projects is a technology-led engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) company in India.

FSSAI to launch quality check of food items

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After starting a probe into alleged violation of norms in branded spices, food regulator FSSAI plans to launch surveillance on other food items like fortified rice, dairy products and spices sold in the domestic market.

According to sources, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is planning surveillance on food items like fruit and vegetables, salmonella in fish products; spice and culinary herbs; fortified rice; and milk and milk products.

FSSAI is already taking samples of spices in powder form of all brands, including MDH and Everest, from across the country in view of quality concerns flagged by Singapore and Hong Kong.

"In view of the current development, FSSAI is taking samples of spices of all brands, including MDH and Everest, from the market to check whether they meet the FSSAI norms," a source had said on April 22.

FSSAI does not regulate the quality of exported spices, sources said.

Early last month, Hong Kong's Center for Food Safety (CFS) asked consumers not to buy and traders not to sell MDH's Madras Curry Powder (spice blend for Madras



"In view of the current development, FSSAI is taking samples of spices of all brands, including MDH and Everest, from the market to check whether they meet the FSSAI norms."

curry), Everest Fish Curry Masala, MDH Sambhar Masala Mixed Masala Powder, and MDH Masala Powder.

The CFS had said that samples of several kinds of pre-packaged spice-mix products of two Indian brands were found to contain a pesticide ethylene oxide.

Singapore Food Agency also directed a recall of such spices. After Hong Kong's directive, the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) also ordered a recall of imported 'Everest Fish Curry Masala' from India.

WITH EXPORT OF ORANGES SQUEEZED...

Nagpur region farmers pin their hope on pulp

PNS ■ KATOL (MAHARASHTRA)

In the baking-hot fields of central India around Nagpur, onion has hit orange hard in a mini-trade war whose battle lines were drawn thousands of miles away. Caught in the crossfire, cotton too has become a casualty.

Thousands of farmers in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, famous for its oranges, are sitting on a surplus of the fruit, unable to sell it in its main export market, Bangladesh, because of a complex web of conflicting foreign trade policies, market forces and international trade dependencies.

Orange growers used to send 6,000 tonnes of the fruit

daily to Bangladesh until last year, but that trade reduced to a trickle after Dhaka increased its import duty on oranges from Rs 20 per kilogram in 2019 to Rs 88 per kilogram in November 2023. This raised the price of oranges in Bangladesh, making it uneconomical for local traders to buy from India.

"We barely send 100 tonnes or five truckloads of oranges per day now," Manoj Jawanjale, president of the Nagpuri Santra Farmers Producer Company, told PTI, as he walked through rows of orange trees in his orchard, about 60 kilometres west of Nagpur.

Farmers in Vidarbha believe that Bangladesh increased the



import duty in retaliation after India banned the export of onion, a staple of local cuisine, to protect the domestic mar-

ket. The ripple effect showed how intricately linked is global trade, where one action can impact tens of thousands of

lives across a continent.

Late last month, the government relaxed the export ban on onions, which was imposed in December last year, allowing its shipments to Bangladesh, UAE, Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. It is not clear if onion exports, particularly to Bangladesh, will lead to its government reducing the import tax on oranges.

If it does, farmers from Maharashtra, the largest producer of oranges in the country, will get some relief for the next harvest in December.

Farmers say Nagpuri oranges are a must for Bangladeshis after every meal because its juicy fibre has the right Ph value to soothe the

gut after consuming a meat heavy diet that is common in that country.

In the tit-for-tat trade fight, it's not just oranges that have suffered. The fluctuation in prices of cotton has also hit farmers of Vidarbha, so rich in the crop that the British colonial rulers set up a railway network in the late 19th century in the region solely to transport cotton bales to Bombay, for shipping onward to the textile mills of Manchester.

"I still have 130 quintals of cotton from last year's harvest. I could have sold it then for Rs 8,500 per quintal. I held back hoping the price will go up, but the opposite happened," Manoj Khutate, a progressive farmer, said.

'Ladakh was a haven untouched by commercialism and few dared to venture'

Travelling being a self-discovery for Hyderabad influencer Shagun Segan, *The Pioneer* connects with him for an exclusive chat with our exclusive Travelogue segment as he embarks on savouring the culture in his every travel.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Travel is love, and food is life! Well, this is how the Hyderabad travel influencer Shagun Segan describes himself. An intrepid traveller, he has embarked on adventures across 36 countries, from the idyllic beaches of Bali to the bustling streets of Singapore, the cultural richness of Vietnam, the scenic landscapes of the Netherlands, and the hospitality of Thailand, among others.

With a passion for exploration and a thirst for cultural immersion, his journey has not only taken him to iconic tourist destinations but also to off-the-beaten-path gems, where he delves deep into local cultures, savours culinary delights, and forges meaningful connections with people from diverse backgrounds.

From enriching experiences to invaluable life lessons, he explains, "Travelling is akin to a lifestyle for me, offering a rich tapestry of experiences at every turn. It's a journey of self-discovery, where each trip, whether big or small, solo or planned, presents an opportunity to understand oneself better and hone one's planning skills. Through traversing the world's landscapes and encountering diverse cultures, we glean invaluable lessons about life and humanity. Every adventure is a chance to broaden our perspectives, challenge our comfort zones, and

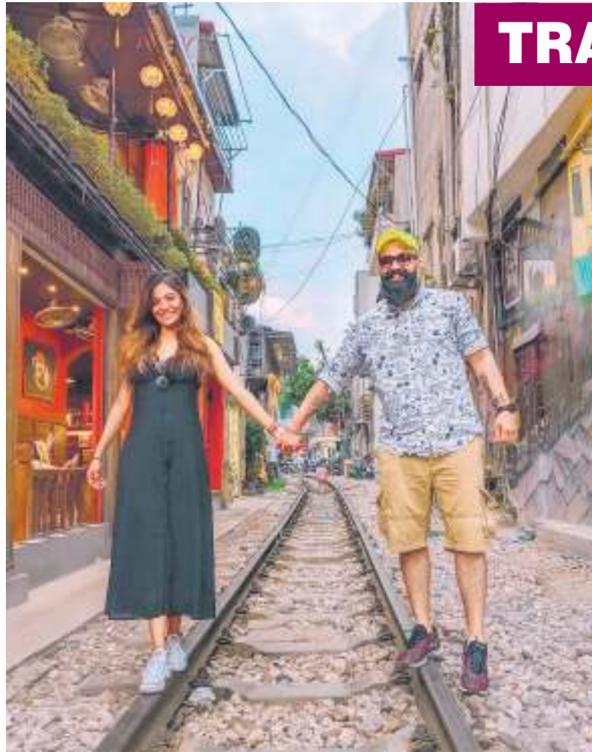
foster personal growth."

He recently got to travel to the picturesque Bali, which, he says, left him utterly enchanted. Unlike the typical week-long visits, he shares, "I decided to delve deeper into the island's vast offerings and extended my stay to a month. Bali's expansive landscape, stretching from the north to the south, offered a plethora of experiences waiting to be explored. Spending ample time allowed me to discover hidden gems, venture to nearby islands, and immerse myself in the vibrant beach culture. Opting to rent a bike proved to be the perfect way to traverse the island's diverse terrain, granting me the freedom to journey at my own pace. From lush landscapes to pristine shores and coral reefs."

Gili Trawangan boasted an abundance of natural beauty and thrilling underwater adventures, making it a must-visit destination for him seeking tranquility and exploration. He reveals, "During my recent trip to Bali, I stumbled upon a hidden gem known as Gili Trawangan. This small island, spanning a mere 15 kilometers, offered a unique experience devoid of bikes or cars. Exploring the island required either walking, taking a horse cart, or cycling, which added to its quaint charm. Despite its small size, Gili Trawangan boasted breathtaking sites ideal for scuba diving and snorkelling enthusiasts."

But again, in India, his heart yearns to return to Ladakh, a place that captured his soul when he first visited in 2008. "It's been 16 years since that unforgettable journey, and now I'm eager to witness how Ladakh has evolved. Back then, Ladakh was a haven untouched by commercialism, a destination few dared venture into. Now, as I contemplate returning, I wonder how the landscape has transformed, how the influx of tourism has shaped its identity, and how the spirit of Ladakh endures amidst change."

He highly recommends a visit to Ladakh in the north, where majestic landscapes and vibrant culture await. Moving towards central India, lesser-explored gems like Orcha, Khajuraho, and Varanasi beckon with their rich history, culinary delights, and cultur-



TRAVELOGUE

Turkish cuisine, particularly its emphasis on Mediterranean and Arabian flavours. What truly captivates me is the simplicity of their approach to cooking, where fresh vegetables like potatoes and tomatoes take center stage. Turkish dishes are prepared with minimal seasoning, allowing the ingredients' natural flavours to shine through. Whether it's indulging in a succulent Turkish kebab or savouring a refreshing salad, each bite is a celebration of freshness and authenticity. The focus on showcasing the quality of ingredients, rather than masking them with excessive spices or oils, sets Turkish cuisine apart and makes it a culinary delight."

With extensive travel experience, he has developed a keen sense of caution and awareness, particularly in certain European cities like Paris and Rome. While these vibrant metropolises offer incredible experiences, he reveals, "They also pose potential risks, especially in crowded areas where pickpocketing is common. Additionally, exploring lesser-known lanes or rural areas at night can increase the likelihood of encountering shady individuals or falling victim to theft. Vigilance is key in navigating these situations, understanding the areas to avoid, and maintaining a heightened sense of awareness to safeguard against potential risks."

Engaging deeply with local communities is a cornerstone of his travel approach, eschewing whirlwind tours for immersive stays of 10-15 days in one destination. "This allows me to connect with locals and learn about their lifestyles, preferences, and historical perspectives, offering insights into their daily routines, favourite spots, and cultural heritage. Bali, with its stunning landscapes and welcoming atmosphere, exemplifies this spirit of hospitality, where conversations with locals reveal their genuine desire for visitors to experience the beauty and warmth of their island home," he shares on a concluding note.

friendly environment, offering seamless experiences from shopping to sightseeing and transportation. With a well-organised system in place, navigating through Thailand is effortlessly convenient, ensuring a hassle-free journey for visitors."

Discovering new foods can be a joy, especially if you are a foodie. Each place has its own selection of local and popular dishes. When it comes to eating, travelling offers you a variety of culinary experiences. What's it with him, we ask and he shares, "I deeply appreciate

health heritage beyond spirituality. "The heart of India offers a tapestry of experiences waiting to be discovered. Venue to the coastal regions; while Goa and the Konkan coast have their charm, don't miss the pristine beaches of Varkala in Kerala, offering a serene escape and a refreshing perspective on coastal beauty."

Thailand, according to him, consistently tops the list for ease of travel, thanks to its exceptional tourist infrastructure. "The country is renowned for its unparalleled hospitality and tourist-

The Broken News Season 2 raises the stakes!

TANISHA SAXENA

PLOT:

Season 2 of *The Broken News* picks up right where Season 1 left off. Radha Bhargava (Shriya Pilgaonkar) finds herself behind bars, while Dipankar Sanyal (Jaideep Ahlawat) of *Josh 24x7* dominates the airwaves with his sensationalist brand of journalism. During her time in jail, Radha comes to a stark realisation: if she wants to clean up the system, she must be willing to get her hands dirty.

Meanwhile, Amina Qureshi (played by Sonali Bendre) is left to fight for the truth all on her own. As the stakes get personal this season, the battle between Radha and Dipankar takes center stage, driving the narrative forward with intensity and intrigue.

THE HIGHLIGHT:

The Broken News fearlessly delves into contentious subjects such as electoral bonds, a clandestine operation exploiting big data to compromise the privacy of countless ordinary Indians, and power-hungry, corrupt ministers. It's commendable how the show seamlessly tackles these pressing issues.

The performances in the show

Director: Vinay Waikul **Writer:** Sambit Mishra
Cast: Sonali Bendre, Jaideep Ahlawat, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Faisal Rashid, Indraneil Sengupta, Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Taaruk Raina, Akshay Oberoi, Suchitra Pillai, and Geetika Vidya Ohlyan **Production:** BBC Studios and Zee5
Streaming on: Zee5 **Rating:** 3

Review



are truly remarkable. Jaideep Ahlawat as Dipankar Sanyal embodies the essence of an ambitious journalist whose moral compass guides him through complex decisions, sometimes leading to the downfall of a colleague and other times pushing him to pursue justice in a news story. These moments reflect the shades of grey

within us all and the nuanced nature of morality.

This season also features Akshay Oberoi, who plays a pivotal role as Ronnie, the CEO of Awaaz Bharati. He adds a layer of mystique to the show, gradually revealing his involvement in a larger scheme. Oberoi's portrayal effectively captures Ronnie's outward focus on financial matters while hinting at deeper complexities beneath the surface.

THE DRAWBACKS:

The series is divided into eight episodes, each concluding with the melancholic tune of *Bol Bol Bol*. While the episodes maintain a consistent tone of drama and tension, the choice of soundtrack feels somewhat discordant. It fails to encapsulate the emotional resonance established throughout the episodes, leaving a sense of disconnect for viewers.

Ameen's character, portrayed by Sonali Bendre, suffers from underdeveloped writing, rendering her portrayal less impactful.

She lacks the depth and complexity needed to fully engage the audience, coming across as too one-dimensional and lacking in nuance. To solidify her character, incorporating elements of her backstory or inner conflict could have provided a more compelling narrative arc, allowing viewers to connect with her journey on a deeper level.

Another notable drawback is the overloaded storyline, inundated with numerous events addressing various societal issues. Furthermore, the portrayal of journalists' lives remains superficial, lacking exploration of the fundamental struggles within broadcast media. While the show depicts newsroom environments, it neglects to authentically convey the challenges faced. For instance, the edited meetings depicted are hastily concluded, failing to capture the essence of genuine newsroom dynamics.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS:

Harendra Singh's cinematography of the show aptly captures the bustling energy of the newsroom, portraying the fast-paced environment with dynamic camera movements and framing. Through skillful use of lighting and angles, it immerses viewers in the chaotic yet organised world of journalism. The juxtaposition of intimate close-ups during tense moments and wide shots of bustling newsrooms effectively conveys the multifaceted nature of the profession.

The direction by Vinay Waikul is also impressive in the climax, especially.

VERDICT:

Despite minor loopholes, the series remains a compelling watch. Its portrayal of real and contemporary issues offers viewers a window into the complexities of society. While some aspects may lack depth, the overall narrative provides valuable insights into pressing social and political issues.

The untold story of India's nano-entrepreneurs

The recent Indian entrepreneurial narrative is often dominated by the meteoric rise of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). According to the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME), India has over 24 million registered MSMEs. These businesses, with their audacious but practical ideas and growth potential, are the darlings of investors and policymakers alike.

Their contribution of about 30% to India's GDP and 45% to exports is a testimony to the immense impact their growth has on the country's economy. Among these are micro-enterprises, defined as businesses with an investment in plant and machinery not exceeding. They form about 97% of the registered MSMEs and significantly contribute to employment generation, GDP, and exports.

However, in this focus on the contribution of microenterprises, we often risk overlooking a crucial segment at the very base of the pyramid: the nanoentrepreneur.

Nanoenterprises are often defined as businesses with less than INR 1 crore in annual turnover. India boasts over 10 million nanoentrepreneurs, with each nanoenterprise estimated to employ an average of 1.5 to 2 individuals. These are undocumented networks of nanoentrepreneurs—individuals with innovative ideas, often operating from their homes or local communities, with minimal investment.

There are a few programs in the country that focus on nanoentrepreneurs. From traditional handloom weavers to small street food vendors, these individuals are the lifeblood of local

economies. But the challenge is recognising and nurturing this potential. Nano-entrepreneurs often lack access to training, mentorship, credit, and basic infrastructure. They operate on the fringes, and their ingenuity is often unrecognised. But Swakalpa is solving this problem one step at a time!

Swakalpa: A self-employment and entrepreneurship development program

"Swakalpa," a program that aims to equip 10,000 ambitious youth with the necessary skills and knowledge on self-employment and entrepreneurship and establish at least 1,000 micro-businesses in the states, with a minimum 25% representation of women at all stages. It offers a 100-hour entrepreneurship skills training program with a curriculum that goes beyond technical skills, delving into critical areas like market research, financial management, and business planning.

Shortlisted candidates will receive 24 weeks of personalised mentoring, helping them navigate the challenges of establishing and running their microbusinesses. It empowers nano-entrepreneurs across diverse sectors by facilitating bank linkages, fostering innovation through digital tools, and supporting traditional businesses to stay competitive in evolving markets.

So far, the program has trained and certified more than 8,500 candidates across 27 districts of Odisha, set up more than 300 nanobusinesses with more than 70% owned by women and some by transgenders, facilitated 300+ financial linkage applications, on-boarded 15+ ecosystem partners, and increased the revenue of many enterprises through mentorship.



what's brewing?

Travis Knight to direct *Master of the Universe*

The live-action movie adaptation of the *Masters of the Universe* series is moving forward at Amazon MGM Studios, with Travis Knight coming aboard to direct the project. *Masters of the Universe* is based on Mattel's famous toy line that spawned a successful animated TV series as well as a 1987 film. According to entertainment news outlet Variety, Amazon, MGM Studios, and Mattel Films have set the project for worldwide theatrical release on June 5, 2026. Knight, best known for directing *Kubo and the Two Strings* and *Bumblebee*, will helm the movie from a screenplay by Chris Butler, following initial drafts written by David Callaham and Aaron Adam Nee. The project was earlier being developed at Netflix, but the streaming service dropped it in July this year. The streamer reportedly spent nearly USD 30 million in development costs over two years for the project, which was meant to star Kyle Allen as Prince Adam, aka He-Man. The story revolves around the warrior He-Man, the only hope for a magical land called Eternia. Dolph Lundgren featured in the original movie as the title character, while Frank Langella played the villainous Skeleto. The movie will introduce a 10-year-old Prince Adam, who crashed to Earth in a spaceship and was separated from his magical Power Sword—the only link to his home on Eternia, according to the official plotline. "After tracking it down almost two decades later, Prince Adam is whisked back across space to defend his home planet against the evil forces of Skeleto. But to defeat such a powerful villain, Prince Adam will first need to uncover the mysteries of his past and become He-Man, the most powerful man in the universe," it read.



"My First Vote" a voters awareness Drive initiated by the First Time Voters - emphasising the importance of each and every vote in the World's Largest Democracy- An Initiative was organised by the Students and Management of Lords Institute of Engineering & Technology, Hyderabad. More than 100 Students from Lords Institute of Engineering & Technology took part in this initiative, students walked from their college main gate till Himayatsagar Village with placards, banners, etc. explaining the fellow citizens. Locality people the importance of vote and mentioning the Date of Election which is 13th May, 2024 in the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.



C. Shekar Reddy, National Vice Chairman, IGBC, graced the announcement of the 2nd IGBC Green Property Show-2024. The event was further graced by Ar. Srinivas Murthy Co - Chairman IGBC Hyderabad Chapter; and C Shekar Reddy National Vice Chairman, IGBC Green Property Show 2024, among the rest.

Gippy refutes rumours of rift with Diljit Dosanjh!

Though both celebrities have consistently refuted such reports, rumors about a purported split between Punjabi musicians Gippy Grewal and Diljit Dosanjh don't seem to be going away. In a recent discussion, Gippy was asked about the supposed conflict between him and Diljit once more. The singer denied these rumors, saying that although they aren't the closest of friends, they still get along well. Not just their fans; even Punjabi's legendary singer Gurdas Maan once speculated that all was not well between the two actors. Recalling an incident, Gippy shared, "I remember we were in Punjab for an award show and Gurdas Maan was performing on stage. He stopped his performance just to say that we are looking good sitting together and that we shouldn't fight and shouldn't listen to what people are saying. We were shocked to hear him say this because there was nothing like that. After that, Diljit went on stage and clarified that there is nothing like that."

Explaining the origin of the baseless speculations, Gippy said, "What happened was that when we started our careers, we did a film, *Jihne Mera Dil Luteya*. That film became a massive hit. So, Diljit set his fees, and so did I. Now, to cast us both in the same film would be very expensive for producers. They couldn't afford both of us. Because of this, we never got to work together, and people think that we aren't working together."

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Gearing up for the release, Universal Pictures India (distributed by Warner Bros. Discovery) paid its own homage to the stuntman community by hosting a special early screening of the film for the Movie Stunt Artists Association. Filled with a lot of action, punches, flips and kicks, the power packed screening was attended by the stunt men and women of the Indian film industry. The special screening was an ode to David Leitch's idea of *The Fall Guy* being a heartfelt tribute to the stuntmen industry.



BirthRight by Rainbow Hospitals, Financial District and Star Hospitals, in a collaborative effort, showcased their expertise and dedication by ensuring successful childbirth for a woman battling Non-Cirrhotic Portal Hypertension (NCPH). The collaborative effort exemplified the power of teamwork and specialised care in the realm of maternal health.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8	9	10	11	
		12		
13				
14	15	16	17	18
19				

NANCY

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- Television advertisement
- Group of eight
- A black and white animal in China
- A kind of small glass tube for showing temperatures
- Time of darkness
- Comes to a standstill
- Rang up
- Our planet
- Watchful, ready for anything that might happen
- Playing
- A very strong wind
- Adhesive strip
- Shortly
- Unlock

DOWN

- Mistral
- Leave out
- Put paper around something
- A large African cat
- A very large seabird
- Lucky

SOLUTION

S	P	I	T	R	S	P	O	N
A	B	I	A	B				
E	B	A	D	E				
O	A	S	S	E	S	T		
S	E	P	I	A	V			
I	B	I	G	G	E	T		
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Disciplined approach balances Suhas' busy schedule

Ahead of the film's release, *Prasanna Vadanam*, actor Suhas, speaks to the Hyderabad media, offering some exciting glimpses about the film.

PNB | HYDERABAD

As the much-anticipated release of *Prasanna Vadanam* finally happened on Thursday, lead actor Suhas took the stage with the Hyderabad media to offer a glimpse into the unique suspense thriller helmed by director Arjun YK. Produced by JS Manikantha and TR Prasad Reddy, this riveting tale stars Suhas alongside talented actresses Payal Radhakrishna and Rashi Singh, promising audiences an immersive cinematic experience like never before. "I loved the concept of face blindness as told by the director,"

Suhas enthused, highlighting the innovative narrative approach that sets *Prasanna Vadanam* apart. He added, "The screenplay, survival drama, and climax that he had thought of were overpowering. As soon as I heard the story, I was determined to do it."

Delving into his preparation for the role, Suhas revealed, "We did a workshop for ten days for this role. Sit with the director and see how the character should look and behave? What are the boundaries of that role? After preparing all this in the workshop, we went to the shoot."

With *Prasanna Vadanam* featuring action sequences and Suhas portraying a character with face blindness, the actor acknowledged the challenges inherent in his performance. "It seemed like a challenge to give it any expressions. But I think I have achieved them," he remarked.

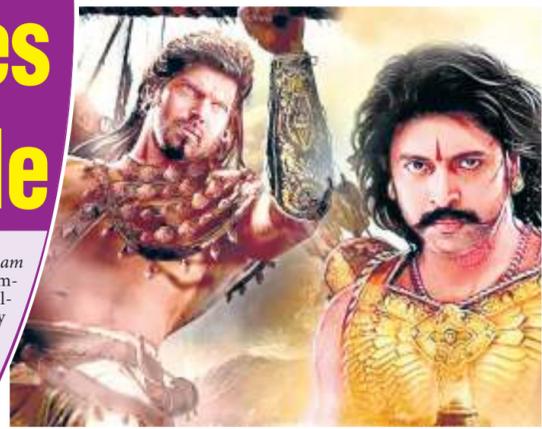
Reflecting on his collaboration with director Arjun YK, Suhas expressed admiration

for the filmmaker's expertise despite it being his directorial debut. "It was a pleasure to work with Arjun. This is his first film as a director but he has worked with Sukumar in big films. He has a lot of experience," Suhas noted. Further, discussing his eclectic choice of projects, Suhas emphasised his instinct-driven approach to selecting scripts. "I listen to the story with a blank mind like a normal audience. If I feel excited and clapping when I hear it, I immediately say OK," he explained.

In response to queries about managing multiple film commitments, Suhas revealed his disciplined approach to balancing his busy schedule. "Eight films are really difficult to balance. But our managers, and I discuss and coordinate very much," he revealed.

As Suhas gears up for the

release of *Prasanna Vadanam* and juggles a slew of upcoming projects, including collaborations with industry heavyweights like Dil Raju and Karthik Subbaraj, audiences can expect nothing short of brilliance from this dynamic actor who continues to captivate hearts with his diverse roles and unwavering dedication to his craft.



Director Sundar's epic period drama *Sangamithra* to take off soon

In a recent interview while promoting his latest venture, *Aranmai 4*, director Sundar C unveiled his unwavering determination to bring his long-awaited project, *Sangamithra*, to life on the silver screen. With plans to commence production later this year, the announcement has sparked anticipation within the Tamil film industry and among cinephiles worldwide.

Set to feature an ensemble cast including Jayam Ravi, Arya, Shruti Haasan, and Disha Patani in pivotal roles, *Sangamithra* stands as Sundar's most ambitious undertaking to date as director. Inspired by the monumental success of SS Rajamouli's *Baahubali: The Beginning*, Sundar embarked on a journey to create a period drama of epic proportions, aiming to captivate audiences with its grandeur and scale.

The project first garnered attention when Sundar, alongside his cast and crew, unveiled the initial glimpses of the

film at the prestigious Cannes International Film Festival in 2017. The unveiling of first-look posters generated immense excitement and speculation, with many anticipating *Sangamithra* to emerge as Tamil cinema's magnum opus, echoing the monumental success of *Baahubali*.

Now, with Sundar's renewed commitment to bring *Sangamithra* to fruition, the Tamil film industry eagerly awaits the commencement of production. The director's vision, coupled with the stellar cast and crew assembled for the project, promises a cinematic experience of unparalleled grandeur and spectacle. As Sundar C prepares to embark on this ambitious journey, fans and industry insiders alike are poised to witness the unfolding of a cinematic spectacle that will leave an indelible mark on the annals of Tamil cinema. With *Sangamithra*, Sundar C is set to redefine the boundaries of storytelling, transporting audiences to a bygone era of valor, romance, and intrigue.

Prasanth Varma extends open invitation to join his PVCU

Following the resounding success of his mesmerising directorial venture *HanuMan*, acclaimed creative mind Prasanth Varma has set his sights on delivering a truly global cinematic experience with the much-anticipated sequel, *Jai Hanuman*. As anticipation mounts among eager fans, Varma has unveiled his ambitious plans for the future, signaling a paradigm shift in the landscape of Telugu cinema. With the release of the poster for *Jai Hanuman* on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami, excitement has reached high, fueled by the memories of the sensational success of its predecessor. In light of the massive anticipation surrounding his upcoming projects, Prasanth Varma has unveiled a groundbreaking initiative that is set to revolutionise the industry. In a bold move unprecedented in Telugu cinema, Prasanth Varma has extended an open invitation to all talented individuals to

join his PVCU (Prasanth Varma Cinematic Universe). This initiative serves as a golden opportunity for aspiring technicians and creatives to showcase their prowess and collaborate on groundbreaking projects with one of the industry's most visionary directors. Varma stated, "Calling all artists, let's talk superpowers! What's your special skill that makes you stand out? Whether it's spinning tales, seamless editing, skillful graphics that enchant, or perhaps you're the marketing maven, breathing life into worlds with your savvy skills? Share your artistic superpower and let's whip up some enchantment together."

Prospective talents are encouraged to submit their portfolios to "talent@thevpcu.com" for consideration, offering a rare opportunity to become part of a dynamic and innovative filmmaking ecosystem.



Baahubali - Crown of Blood set to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar

Fans of the epic saga *Baahubali* have reason to rejoice as a new animated series, titled *Baahubali - Crown of Blood*, is set to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar from May 17. The announcement was made by none other than visionary director SS Rajamouli, who helmed the original blockbuster hit series.

Starring Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah Bhatia, and Ramykrishna,

Baahubali captivated audiences with its gripping storyline, stunning visuals, and stellar performances. Regarded as one of the biggest hits in Indian cinema, the franchise has garnered a massive fan following both domestically and internationally.

Now, with the launch of *Baahubali - Crown of Blood*, fans can immerse themselves once again in the rich and enchanting world of Mahishmati. The animated series promises to delve deeper into the lore and mythology of the *Baahubali* universe, offering viewers a fresh perspective on their beloved characters and storylines.

As anticipation mounts for the premiere, fans eagerly await the opportunity to embark on a new adventure filled with intrigue, drama, and epic battles. With SS Rajamouli at the helm, *Baahubali - Crown of Blood* is poised to captivate audiences and reignite the magic of the beloved franchise.

Mark your calendars and get ready to witness the epic tale unfold on Disney+ Hotstar this Friday. *Baahubali - Crown of Blood* is sure to be a thrilling addition to the legendary saga that has captured the hearts of millions.



King Nagarjuna Akkineni unleashes intriguing first look from *Kubera*

The highly anticipated social drama, *Kubera* by the acclaimed national award-winning filmmaker Sekhar Kammula, is being touted as one of the most awaited upcoming mythological pan-Indian films. Taking global television screens by storm on Thursday, King Nagarjuna Akkineni's official first look from the film was unveiled exclusively on Star Sports, heightening anticipation for the magnum opus.

Premiered during the Sunrisers Hyderabad vs. Rajasthan Royals IPL game, King Nagarjuna Akkineni's first look showcases him in a powerful stance with an air of mystery. He is seen walking under an umbrella in heavy pouring rain, surrounded by trucks of liquid cash, symbolising the film's title *Kubera*, which is known to be the god of wealth. Dressed sharply in a shirt, trousers and sporting glasses, the actor has immensely elevated expectations from the social drama.

Meanwhile, earlier, the first look of actor Dhanush from Sekhar Kammula's *Kubera* was unveiled, earning a thrilling response from audiences nationwide.

Sekhar Kammula's *Kubera* boasts an ensemble cast including Dhanush, King Nagarjuna Akkineni, Rashmika Mandanna, and Jim Sarbh. The film is jointly produced 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-India multilingual film, being shot simultaneously in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi.

Pawan Kalyan's *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* teaser gives glimpse into epic action saga

In a much-awaited revelation, the teaser for Pawan Kalyan's monumental project *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* has been unleashed, sending ripples of excitement throughout the Indian cinema landscape. Produced under the esteemed banner of Mega Surya Productions by AM Rathnam and directed by Krish Jagarlamudi, this period action-adventure marks a significant milestone in Kalyan's illustrious career as he ventures into uncharted territory with a tale of heroic valour set in the 17th century.

Being an adventure actioner about a legendary heroic outlaw during 17th century, Producers have specially built gigantic sets like Charminar, Red Fort and Machilipatnam port with uncompromising grandeur on a lavish budget with International standard production values. Fans and movie lovers have been eagerly waiting for the film to celebrate their favourite star's new action avatar on big

screens in its full glory. Answering their gigantic anticipation, the makers have released a teaser from the film, announcing that it has been divided into two parts.

The first part has been titled *Hari Hara Veera Mallu Part-1: Sword vs Spirit* with the caption, *Dharmam Kosam Yuddham* which loosely translates to "War for Justice". In the teaser, the makers have described Pawan Kalyan as *Hari Hara Veera Mallu's* character, as "A Lone Warrior" who "wages a war for justice" in the land "where the poor are exploited and the rich thrive." And the character appears exactly like the visual representation of those words. The grandeur of sets, visual quality and pulsating background score of Oscar award-winning composer, MM Keeravaani; all promise a spell-binding experience in theatres.

Adding to these elements, Bobby Deol as a mughal emperor and Pawan Kalyan as a hero

of the poor, oppressed and needy look apt for their roles. The body language of both the actors, and fierce looks designed for them promise an epic showdown between two acting powerhouses. Teaser induces goosebumps and inspire us to be on the side of legendary outlaw in his battle for Justice.

On this occasion of the teaser release, makers have made an announcement that writer-director Jyothi Krishna, who earlier directed films like *Enakku 20 Unakku 18*, *Nee Manasu Naaku Telusu*, *Oxygen* and worked as writer for cult blockbusters like *Natpukkaga* and *Padayappa* is going to finish the remaining shooting and post production work of the film under the supervision of Krish Jagarlamudi. Due to prior commitments and unforeseen delay in the completion of the film's shoot, Along with Pawan Kalyan, Nidhi Agerwal, Bobby Deol, Sunil, Nora Fatehi and several others are cast in the film in key roles. Oscar



winning composer MM Keeravaani is composing music and background score for the film. Ace cinematographers Gnanasekhar VS and Manoj Paramahansa are handling cinematography.

Makers have announced that the movie will release towards the end of the year, 2024.

Kamakshi Bhaskarla wins best actress jury award

OMG will also have good dose of comedy

The success of *Maa Oori Polimera*, which premiered directly on Disney Plus Hotstar OTT during the lockdown, surprised everyone and led the creators to develop its sequel, *Maa Oori Polimera 2*, also known as *Polimera 2*. This sequel has become one of the most highly acclaimed horror thrillers in the Tollywood industry. Directed by Anil Vishwanath, *Polimera 2* received a warm reception at the box office and garnered positive reviews. The film was released grandly in theaters on November 3rd by the passionate filmmaker and successful distributor, Vamsi Nandipati. *Polimera 2* achieved remarkable success at the box office, with sensational collections. The franchise has amassed a massive fan base, including audiences, cinephiles, and thriller lovers.

This film has now received another rare honour. The film was screened at the prestigious 'Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival'. The film's actress, Dr. Kamakshi Bhaskarla, won the Best Actress Jury Award at the 14th Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival held in New Delhi on Tuesday. Director Dr. Anil Vishwanath received the award on behalf of Dr. Kamakshi Bhaskarla, in the presence of filmmaker Vamsi Nandipati and producer Gowr Krishna. Along with this prestigious award, both the film's director and producer also received the Certificate of Excellence. Dr. Anil Vishwanath expressed his happiness at receiving such recognition on a prestigious stage and lauded Dr. Kamakshi Bhaskarla for her phenomenal performance in *Polimera 2*.

O Manchi Ghost (OMG) is an upcoming hilarious comedy horror that is coming under the banner of Markset Networks. Directed by Shankar Marthand with comedian Vennela Kishore, Nandita Swetha, Shakalaka Shankar, Navami Gayak, Naveen Neni, Rajath Raghav, and comedian Raghu Babu playing key roles, the film is produced by Dr. Abinika Inabathuni. Anup Rubens has scored the music and the previously released lyrical video of the first song was well-received.

Meanwhile, the makers unveiled a concept poster and a glimpse of the movie. The poster shows the lead actors with fear on their faces, as they see a ghost. We can see a shadow of a ghost in the background, that also has a haunted house. Shakalaka Shankar appeared as an exorciser. The glimpse shows all the main characters, apart from introducing the premise of the movie. It is evident from the glimpse that the movie, besides horror and thriller elements, will have a good dose of comedy. Anup Rubens' background score amplifies the impact. The makers are confident that the film will entertain the audience throughout the runtime. Andrew is taking care of the cinematography, while Supriya is the art director. The editing is by M.R. Varma.



KKR look to iron out flaws against off colour MI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders will look to iron out their flaws and get the better of a mis-firing Mumbai Indians when the two teams, placed on the opposite ends of IPL points table spectrum, clash here on Friday. With six wins in nine games giving them 12 points and the second position in the IPL points table, a berth in the playoffs looks within the grasp of two-time winners KKR. But the Shreyas Iyer-led side will have to find consistency across departments and avoid any slip-ups in order to make it to the final four. Each of their three losses have come in the last six games for KKR, who were at the receiving end of a record run chase by Punjab Kings but did well to bounce back with a seven-wicket thrashing of Delhi Capitals. With the bat, KKR's requisite firepower in the ranks entwined with an ultra-aggressive approach has delivered the goods more often than not but it is their bowling which needs improvement. Mitchell Starc has given nearly 12 runs an over while managing a mere seven wickets in eight outings. On flat, batting-friendly pitches, the

lanky Australian's lack of control has also been exploited well by zealous batters. Harshit Rana is among those with most wickets (11) for KKR this season but the right-arm seamer will serve a one-match ban for his animated celebrations after dismissing DC's Abhishek Porel. Vaibhav Arora's nine scalps in five games make him KKR's best bet with the ball. A small Wankhede Stadium with a batting-friendly wicket tends to encourage scores in excess of 200 and the team would be mindful of that. Spotlight will also be on Rinku Singh, whose exclusion from India's main squad for the T20 World Cup, has triggered an outpouring of sympathy for the 26-year-old. The power-hitter has not got enough game time this season which probably tilted the scales against him. For Mumbai Indians, the race to the IPL playoffs seems lost even though the five-time winners have five more games to play. Even if Mumbai Indians win each of these, they can only get to 16 points and somewhere in the middle of the points table - not necessarily challenging those who have been consistently good.



Jasprit Bumrah (14 wickets) and Gerald Coetzee (13) have been MI's best bets with the ball but despite their impressive showing, the batters' collective failure has resulted in the team's underwhelming season. Tilak Varma has been MI's best batter with 343 runs, including three fifties this IPL, but his performances have not been enough to hide the failings of others. Ishan Kishan has struck the ball well but severely lacks consistency at the top and losing wickets in heaps in the powerplay has been one of MI's biggest woes in this season. India skipper Rohit Sharma's (315 runs at strike rate of 158.29) selfless approach with the bat has not given him big scores consistently but his form will be in focus given the T20 World Cup is now just one month away. All eyes will also be on Suryakumar Yadav who has two fifties in seven IPL games this season, but it is not the consistency which is expected from the batter of his calibre. Mumbai Indians' under-fire skipper Hardik Pandya has neither dazzled with the ball nor the bat after a long injury lay-off. But the fact that he

finds himself in the Indian side as vice-captain for the World Cup should motivate him to turn things around.

TEAMS (FROM):

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwen Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai (wk), Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar, Phil Salt.



Deepak Chahar does not look good: Fleming on his possible injury

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming admitted that seamer Deepak Chahar's latest injury "doesn't look good" but he is hoping for a positive report from the franchise's medical team ahead of the business phase of the ongoing IPL. Although Fleming did not divulge any details on Chahar's new injury, the 31-year-old seamer was seen pulling off his run-up in just the second ball of Punjab Kings chase here on Wednesday night. It could be a possible hamstring injury as, after having a chat with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and the physio, Chahar walked off ground holding his hamstring and did not bowl any further in the match. Chahar's career has been marred by injuries in the last couple of years, costing him a permanent spot in the Indian team. "Yeah, the travelogue is pretty busy. There's a lot of ins and outs. So, Deepak Chahar doesn't look good," said Fleming during the post-match presser. "The initial feeling wasn't great. So, I'm hoping for a more positive report when the physio and the doctor have a look." Chahar's injury somewhat forced Gaikwad to bring in Shivam Dube for an over, who has mainly been used as a batter this season. But Dube went for 14 in the only over he bowled, and Fleming admitted that with the Impact Player rule, Dube is not suited for the role in the IPL and will have his chances in proper conditions. "He (Dube) is ready to bowl and is working hard on it. He will play a role in the right conditions, and with the Impact Player rule, we have players who can fit the role better. Currently, his necessity to bowl is pretty much small," the coach said. CSK suffered a seven-wicket defeat to PBKS, their second loss at home this season, managing a meagre 162 for 7, which was comfortably chased down with 13 balls to spare. Talking about the demanding

wicket at Chepauk, Fleming said, "It's difficult, and we have spoken on the unpredictability of the wickets here before. Batting first makes it difficult for us to judge as to what a good competitive score is. "We had a couple of 200s (before), which was in our minds today. But, the wicket was very sticky. "We also had a good start in the (first) six overs before things became difficult. We also tried a few lefties in the form of Dube and (Ravindra) Jadeja but we just couldn't get anything through the middle. They bowled really well, they got good purchase and held onto it. We just got stifled through the middle, which prevented us from getting a score of 180," he said. With a low score to defend, Fleming was impressed with the commitment and performance shown by English pacer Richard Gleeson, who made his debut last night. "Richard Gleeson was good, and it was a positive. Losing Fizz (Mustafizur Rahman) is disappointing. "Tushar (Deshpande) has a bit of flu going around as well. So, we've had to make a few changes, which is unusual. Again, that's part of it, and we have got the resources," he said. "Just they haven't had the game time to be really comfortable with their roles and us to be comfortable with a game plan, which we're struggling a little." Although veteran opener Ajinkya Rahane managed to get to double figures after a lean phase in the last four games, he didn't last beyond a 24-ball 29. "I thought he (Rahane) was good today. He's been probably a bit too aggressive in what he wants to do," Fleming observed. "Keep in mind, we're batting on wickets here that we don't know how they are gonna play. So, we got to take a bit of a pause to see what a good score is. If you are 3 for 30, the game is pretty much over. "His (Rahane) hitting that was so good last year, is more crisp. It's not for lack of intent. He has doubled up on intent. We're fine with Jinks and the role he plays."

OTHER SPORTS

Füllkrug fires Dortmund to 1-0 win over PSG

AP ■ DORTMUND

Niclas Füllkrug scored and Borussia Dortmund earned a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of their Champions League semifinal. Dortmund defender Nico Schlotterbeck sent a long pass over the top for Füllkrug to control brilliantly with his first touch before firing it past PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma with his next in the 36th minute on Wednesday. "It's not the first time that I've tried to stick the ball in at the near post this season. This time it worked out and I'm even happier that it's in such an important game," Füllkrug said. The win gives Dortmund a narrow advantage before the teams play again in the second leg in Paris next Tuesday, when the French champion will need to overturn the result if it's going to capture Europe's biggest prize before Kylian Mbappé leaves the club. PSG is under pressure to finally win to the Champions League to justify more than a decade of huge investment from its Qatari owners. Dortmund's win ensured it qualified for the tournament next season and it gives the Bundesliga five teams in the expanded tournament. Dortmund is assured of finishing at least fifth. Roared on by most of the 81,365 fans present, including the famed "yellow wall" behind one of the goals, Dortmund made the busier start and maintained its intensity for the whole game. The home team ran 119.7 kilometers - almost 10



more than the visitors. Defender Lucas Hernández went off injured after trying to stop Füllkrug from scoring. It looked like Hernández suffered a left leg injury. PSG pushed hardest early in the second half, when Mbappé hit the right post before Achraf Hakimi struck the left post. Gregor Kobel saved Mbappé's next effort and Dortmund survived the pressure. Füllkrug went on to miss further good chances for the German team, while Marquinhos made a crucial block to deny Julian Brandt late on. "It would have been nice if we could have made our counterattacks count to get a second goal at the end," Dortmund veteran Mats Hummels said. "But now we have to come through in Paris." The visitors missed chances, too.

Ousmane Dembélé should have scored on his return to Dortmund when he blazed a shot over late, then Vitorino flashed a shot wide of the left post. "We tried to keep the ball from them but it's so difficult because they have a lot of quality," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "They are a great team on the ball and off the ball. Today in that environment they were great in both aspects of the game. I think we had maybe a lack of intensity in the first half, but in the second half we created clear, clear chances. But we couldn't score." Dortmund coach Edin Terzic only made his first substitution in the 83rd, when he sent on veteran Marco Reus for the exhausted Karim Adeyemi. The winner of the two-leg tie will play either Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the final in London on June 1.

WOMEN HOCKEY TEAM



Salima replaces Savita as skipper

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mid-fielder Salima Tete on Thursday replaced veteran goalkeeper Savita Punia as captain of the 24-strong Indian women's hockey squad for the Belgium and England legs of the FIH Pro League starting later this month. Navneet Kaur has been named her deputy for the tour. "I am happy that I have been appointed to lead the team. It is a big responsibility and I am looking forward to this new role. We have a strong squad and it's a mix of experienced and young players," Salima was quoted as saying in a Hockey India press release. "In the upcoming Belgium and England legs of the FIH Pro League 2023-2024, we look to put our strong foot forward. We have worked on areas where we needed to improve," she said. Savita had captained India during the failed Olympic qualifying campaign and the pro league matches at home after that. Barring three changes, the squad was the same that took part in the Bhubaneswar and Rourkela legs of the Pro League in February this year. Defender Gurjit Kaur, mid-fielders Sonika and Nisha and

striker Beauty Dungdung have been dropped and were replaced by Mahima Chaudhary, Manisha Chauhan, Pretti Dubey and Deepika Soreng. The matches in Belgium will begin on May 22 and end on May 26, while the England leg will commence on June 1 and conclude on June 9. India will play against Argentina, and Belgium twice during the first leg, starting May 22 against Argentina. During the London leg, the team will take on Great Britain and Germany. India are currently placed sixth in the FIH Pro League table with eight points from as many matches. Salima was recently honoured with the prestigious Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of the Year in the women's category at the sixth Hockey India Annual Awards. The goalkeeping responsibilities will rest with Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam, while the defensive line-up includes Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Monika, Jyoti Chhatra and Mahima. The midfield will be marshalled by Salima, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Navneet, Neha, Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur, Manisha and Lalremsiami.

Real Madrid can clinch Spanish league title

AP ■ BARCELONA

Chasing another Champions League crown, Real Madrid already has its fingertips on the Spanish league title. The 14-time European Cup winner could clinch the Spanish league on Saturday when Madrid hosts Cadiz and Barcelona visits Girona if everything goes its way. Madrid can lock up title No. 36 with four games left in two scenarios: If Madrid beats Cadiz and Barcelona fails to beat Girona, or if Madrid draws with Cadiz and Barcelona loses at Girona. Madrid leads Barcelona by 11 points and has the tiebreaker with Barcelona in its favor entering the round. Madrid has been the runaway favorite since it beat Girona,



then its top challenger, in February and quashed a half-hearted rally by Barcelona in a clasico victory last month. With the domestic title apparently a question of time, Madrid's priority is its Champions League semifinal with Bayern

Munich. Madrid earned a 2-2 draw in Germany thanks to Vinicius Junior's brace on Tuesday, Bayern comes to Madrid next Wednesday to decide who will face Paris Saint-Germain or Borussia Dortmund in the June 1 final. Led by Jude Bellingham, Vinicius and veteran midfielder Toni Kroos, Carlo Ancelotti's side has lost only once in 33 league games in this campaign. Ancelotti rotated his starting lineup for the last round where Madrid won at Real Sociedad, so it is likely that he will also rest some key players against a Cadiz side that is in danger of relegation. The team from southern Spain is in 18th place, inside the drop zone, and five points behind Celta Vigo, the last team clinging to safety.

AP ■ MADRID

Carlos Alcaraz's bid to win a third straight Madrid Open title ended with a three-set loss to Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals. The second-seeded Spaniard got off to a good start but then was outplayed by the seventh-seeded Rublev, losing 4-6 6-3 6-2 at the Caja Magica centre court on Wednesday. Alcaraz, who had already struggled in a three-set win over Jan-Lennard Struff on Tuesday, looked out of sorts and was mistake-prone toward the end. It was his first tournament after missing Monte Carlo and Barcelona because of a right forearm injury. The 20-year-old Alcaraz had arrived in Madrid saying he would be happy to play three or four matches in the Spanish capital. Already in a hole in the third set, Alcaraz pressed the forearm during a stopover. He was wearing a long sleeve over the injured arm.

Alcaraz loses to Rublev in Madrid Open quarterfinals



"Today probably I felt more in the forearm than yesterday's match. I mean, playing three hours yesterday, I knew that I'm going to feel something or I'm going to think about it even more," the third-ranked Alcaraz said. "Playing someone like Rublev that I couldn't push him to the limit in every point is tough." Alcaraz plans to play in Rome to continue his preparation for the French Open later this month. "I'm going to go to Rome. I'm going to work to be close to 100% or in a good way to play Rome, but I'm going to decide these days. But I think I'll be OK," he said. "I have to work hard if I want to go to Rome with good feelings, without pain, without thinking about my forearm, but it's going to be a slow process. I guess, I have to be patient in that way."

Alcaraz was trying to become the first player to win the clay-court tournament three straight times. He hadn't lost on Spanish soil since 2021. Rublev, seeking his second ATP 1000 title after winning Monte Carlo last year, will play Taylor Fritz in the semifinals. The world No. 8 was solid from the start and overpowered Alcaraz with 30 winners. "The serve saved me a lot of times today," Rublev said. "The key was I was completely calm the whole match. I did not say one word, even if I was losing. That was the key and I was able to serve even better

near the end. In the beginning, I was not serving that well but little by little, after set one, I served better and better and finished really well." The 12th-seeded Fritz defeated 22nd-ranked Francisco Cerundolo 6-1 3-6 6-3. It was the 250th tour-level win for Fritz, who is the third American man to reach the Madrid semifinals and first since Robby Ginepri in 2005. Andre Agassi won the Madrid title in 2002. Cerundolo, the Argentine who upset world No. 5 Alexander Zverev in the fourth round, was trying to reach his second ATP 1000 semifinal. Top-seeded Jannik Sinner withdrew because of a hip injury, saying he didn't want to risk making it worse. Sinner defeated Karen Khachanov on Tuesday and was scheduled to face Felix Auger-Aliassime in

the quarterfinals on Thursday. **SABALENKA ADVANCES:** Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka defeated 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva for the second straight year in Madrid to reach the women's semifinals. The second-seeded Sabalenka didn't face a break point on her way to a 6-1 6-4 win in Wednesday's quarterfinals. She had beaten the teenage sensation in straight sets in the fourth round last year. The two-time Australian Open champion has won 10 straight matches in Madrid and is trying to match Petra Kvitová's three titles in the Spanish capital. Sabalenka will next play fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina, who saved two match points en route to a 4-6 7-6(4) 7-5 win over Yulia Putintseva.